

The Strategic Community Plan 2010 – 2015: Moving Forward Together

Our Vision

The Falkirk Strategic Community Plan 2010 – 2015, 'Moving Forward Together' sets out the things we need to do to ensure we meet our vision for our area. Over the last 10 years we have seen the area change significantly, with a growing population, becoming one of the safest areas in the Country, more visitors coming to the area and increasingly being seen as a place to do business. We have seen the development of the Falkirk Wheel, the Falkirk Stadium and the replacement of all of our secondary schools in addition to new houses, supermarkets and libraries and the opening of the new Forth Valley Royal Hospital

The last 10 years have very much been about the public sector working with the third sector to achieve the vision for our area. The next 10 years must look more and more to utilising the strengths and creativity of individuals and communities that exist within each area in Falkirk if we are to continue to achieve our vision.

When we set out the vision for our area 10 years ago we hoped that by working together we would make a difference - we would become the 'Place to Be'. We know we can build on our success over the last 10 years and continue to change for the better. The years ahead are going to be challenging, but we have the resilience and enterprise to address these. This plan sets out the challenges we face, our approach towards meeting these challenges and the outcomes we need to achieve if we are to realise our vision

This Strategic Community Plan:

- Re-affirms our 20 year vision for our area;
- Sets out the nature and scale of challenges and change which the area faces in the years ahead;
- Highlights our high level outcomes and priorities for the next 5 years; and
- Clearly specifies and recognises the contribution our communities and the Third Sector can make towards the attainment of our vision.

Our aspirations for the area remain high with our vision remaining valid. The vision includes:

- The legacy of our past and the potential of our future are protected.
- Our area is at the centre of Scottish life.
- Our future is one of the most culturally diverse and distinct areas in Scotland.
- Our future has investment in jobs, learning homes and leisure for all.
- Our area is the place to be in the third Millennium.

Our Challenges

Our area has changed significantly in the last 10 years since our communities set the challenge of working together to achieve a common vision for our area. We have moved from an area of decline to an area of growth and with this we have experienced many opportunities and challenges. If we wish to continue to grow and prosper then we must be aware of the changing nature of the world we live in and what opportunities this gives us but also how to mitigate the affects of the challenges it poses.

We anticipate that our population will continue to increase. This increase will be due to the number of births increasing as well as people living significantly longer in addition to people and families continuing to recognise the quality of life offered in our area. The number of people who will live to be over 85 will increase significantly which will place particular demands on our health and social care services. The demand for housing will increase with people moving into the area and also a lot more single person households. While having an attractive place to live is a good thing, it can lead to additional pressures on our basic infrastructure e.g. roads, services etc.

While our health is improving with people living longer, there are still significant inequalities in health across our area. Where you live and whether you are male or female can affect how long you will live. On average the difference in life expectancy is over 13.6 years between men and women. At the extreme end the difference between the lowest life expectancy for a man and the highest life expectancy for women is 18.8 years.

During the lifetime of this Community Plan, the funding of public services in Scotland is expected to fall significantly. This will undoubtedly affect the way in which services are delivered and organised. In order to deliver services we employ people and indeed the public sector is the largest employer within the Falkirk Council area. In the period 1998 to 2008 significant changes have taken place in employment with the number and proportion of people employed in the manufacturing sector reducing significantly, although the productivity and value produced by this sector has increased substantially. During the same period increasing numbers of people were employed in the public, transportation and communication sectors. We expect to see a continuing change in the sectors in which local people are employed in the years ahead.

10 years ago, when we determined the vision for our area, unemployment in Falkirk was above the Scottish average, especially amongst younger people. Significantly, it is starting to be higher again, particularly amongst younger people, with approximately a third of unemployed people aged between 16 and 24. The number of young people claiming job seekers allowance is above the Scottish average. We will also see a growth in those aged 16-24 available to join the workforce against the Scottish trend, which reflects the growing number of young people in our area.

Over the last few years there has been a significant increase in the levels of debt people are dealing with. In addition to the increased numbers of people accessing debt and money advice services, the level of debt and where that debt is owed has changed over the last 10 years with significantly more owed in mortgages.

More and more we are aware of how our actions affect the environment and our climate. We must reduce the negative impact we have on our area in terms of carbon emissions, waste etc not only the sake of future generations but because the financial penalties of not doing so are significant.

Responding to Challenge

In meeting our challenges we must be both creative and innovative. We need to build on our strengths and ensure we further develop and deepen partnership working. Our area has a culture and strong tradition of partnership working which is both mature and successful and provide a solid foundation in responding to the challenges we face. We must build from out from this foundation into a wider ranging partnership with our communities. Community Planning provides the natural over-arching framework to achieve this. In working with communities we

must ensure that they are more self sufficient and resilient. In this new age citizens will be more resilient, independent and have higher self aspirations to improve the areas in which they live as well as their quality of life. Community Planning partners will be there to support both citizens and communities through this period of change. Our partnership working with citizens, local communities, business and the Third Sector will be vibrant, creative and progressive towards the mutual realisation of our vision and outcomes.

We must ensure that local services are fit for purpose, efficient and flexible. The coming years are likely to see a change in the way in which public services are both organised and delivered. Foremost will be the need to secure services which cost less, maintain service quality and have the ability to cope with both rising and diverse demands. Implicit in this is being clear about what services are needed and valued by both citizens and communities. We will also have to challenge what services can be provided in different ways and by different means. In pursuing this we must continue to focus on realising our outcomes and on making a difference for our citizens and local communities.

While the agenda may be challenging the area has many strengths on which it can build and move forward. The area enjoys a pivotal location in central Scotland with excellent transport links to Scotland's major cities and further afield. Through Grangemouth the area provides a natural gateway in and out of Scotland to the rest of the world. We have a proud and strong industrial heritage with many important industries and key sectors still represented and located in the area. These not only provide continuing employment opportunities but also a workforce which is skilled and attractive to new business investors. The area is also well placed to tap into emerging sectors and opportunities such as tourism and the potential and expectation for the green economy in Scotland. The area traditionally enjoys a good reputation for the quality of life it offers which has been further enhanced in recent years by significant regeneration.

We must bind the area's strengths to the strengths of individuals and communities to have and develop the types of communities we want to live in. The greater sense of partnership with individuals and communities will build on the proud tradition of communities across the Falkirk Council area that have a strong sense of identity and community spirit that supports and helps their neighbours. Public agencies, the third sector and indeed the private sector must look for opportunities to support communities to help themselves.

Sustainable Falkirk

To achieve our vision:

- The quality of our infrastructure will help promote the growth of the local economy
- We will be greener;
- We will improve the built environment; and
- Our open spaces will be attractive, accessible and safe

Sustainability Challenges

Sustainable Development looks at managing the impact of the actions we take today will have on future generations. This includes dealing with the causes and impacts of climate change. This is an area which is subject to an increasing amount of legislation including mandatory carbon reduction targets all of which impact on public sector organisations. One of the tensions we face in the Falkirk Council area is promoting the opportunities associated with the petrochemicals

sector at Grangemouth, continuing economic growth, while maintaining the quality of the local environment and reducing our carbon footprint. The impacts of climate change are already being felt with more incidences of severe weather such as heavy rain and flooding.

In order to ensure we have a sustainable future we must also reduce our waste and energy consumption. We have over the last number of years increased what we recycle dramatically – moving away from landfill to alternative ways of reusing or disposing of our waste. We have also seen the Scottish Government set challenging targets for waste reduction. To achieve these we must look a new ways of minimising waste and disposing of that which we have differently.

Over the last 20 years we have seen an unprecedented increase in the number of cars on our streets. This not only has an impact on the environment but potentially also impacts on our health, as we choose not to walk, even for short journeys. However, recently, we have seen an increase in the number of children walking to school, more people using the train to commute and an increase in the popularity of cycling. The area has developed a comprehensive paths network that opens up our towns, villages and countryside to more people than ever.

If people are to use our parks, paths and open spaces then they must be attractive. With the increase in people using our open spaces, we have also to be aware that we need to protect some vulnerable species and ecosystems. Our area with its marshlands provides a significant eco system for wildlife. The very marshes that make this attractive to certain species are there due to the areas proximity to the Forth and thus the potential for severe flooding. We know our area i.e. homes, businesses and services, is one of the most at risk of flooding in Scotland.

The pressures of growth not only have an impact on the natural environment but also on the cost of maintaining our infrastructure, including roads, paths, buildings etc. With future reductions in public spending our ability to maintain, never mind improve our infrastructure will be severely tested.

Future Priorities

In facing these challenges we must be creative and act in a balanced way. This is not only about the things that we do but the way we behave as a society. The window of opportunity to achieve a significant turnaround on the impact of our actions on our environment is finite. Action must be taken now if we are to safeguard the legacy for future generations. In order to achieve our aspiration to realise development which is sustainable we will:

- Manage and mitigate the impact of climate change and tackle it's causes;
- Promote our open spaces, paths and parks as an attractive place to exercise and travel around the area;
- Promote waste minimisation, recycling and other forms of waste disposal;
- Reduce our carbon footprint; and
- Promoting and realising increased use of sustainable forms of transport.

Community Action

Citizens and communities across the Falkirk Council area can make a meaningful difference on sustainability and in turn help improve their local environments by taking personal action to reduce their environmental impact. This can include community litter picks as well as reducing the amount of litter dropped, utilising public transport or walking when ever practical. Communities have been instrumental in reducing the amount of waste going to landfill by increasing their recycling. Thanks to your efforts we are now moving towards recycling 50% and

beyond of the waste we produce. Local industry and businesses are doing their bit but we need to redouble of efforts with them to achieve the progress we want to make.

Fairer Falkirk

If our area is to thrive then we must utilise all of our communities' strengths. Unfortunately the ability and opportunity some communities and individuals have does not allow them to fully participate in all of the available opportunities in our area. In order to realise a Fairer Falkirk we must ensure:

- The wealth and prosperity of our area will increase;
- People will have equitable access to local health, support and care;
- Our housing continues to meet the needs of people who live and may wish to live in our area;
- Our citizens continue to access critical services that meet their needs; and
- Disadvantaged communities will benefit from better services.

In recent years positive economic growth has meant that our approach on poverty has focussed on targeting the geographic concentrations of poverty; with less focus on specific vulnerable groups for example older people and children. The impact of the recession means that many more individuals in our communities may experience poverty, perhaps for the first time. Recent evidence notes that unemployment particularly amongst young men is increasing, there are increased demands on our debt advice services and there are increases in homeless presentations. While facing significant cuts to the public sector, the full impact of the financial recession has yet to be realised. In this changing environment, services will experience increased pressure as demand increases from individuals facing difficulties.

In order to achieve the vision for our area, we recognise that we need to support our most vulnerable people and communities. All of our citizens must be given equality of opportunity, equity of access to services and the ability to play an equal part in all aspects of community life.

Challenges to Fairness

We have always recognised that some people within our community are more disadvantaged or vulnerable than the population as a whole. However the impact of the recession has the potential to increase the incidence and effects of poverty across our communities.

Unemployment and lack of access to opportunity can be a key contributing factor to both poverty and deprivation, particularly for our young people. The reasons for this are complex but mean that we have communities where there are significant differences between the poorest and the richest. These inequalities need to be tackled.

The reality of poverty is that it affects many aspects of people's lives. Poverty can limit the ability of people to achieve their full potential with children likely to experience poorer health, achieve less well at school and thus poverty becomes a generation issue. Poverty also places restrictions on people's ability to take control of their own lives.

A few communities within the Falkirk Council area have problems of multiple deprivation. We will need to ensure that these communities do not disproportionately experience the worst effects of the recession. We face continuing challenges with the number of people who present as being homeless and a lack of suitable housing to provide homes for all who need them. We also want

to ensure that we treat all our citizens with dignity and respect and celebrate the different contributions they can make to our communities and lives.

Future Priorities

In order to meet our aspiration for a Fairer Falkirk we will continue to give a high priority to supporting individuals and communities who experience the greatest level of deprivation - those who are the most vulnerable in our society and who have the greatest need. We recognise that access to employment opportunities is a priority for all, especially those on those with the lowest incomes. We aim to help people realise their full potential through access to employment, education and training, thus raising their aspirations in life. We support the right of everyone, no matter their background or belief to have equal opportunity and access to services. We will also support those who experience the greatest impact from deprivation or from the economic recession. We remain committed to fulfilling our obligations to support those who unintentionally become homeless to provide them with access to permanent accommodation. In order to achieve these we will:

- Continue to improve the skills and employability of local people:
- Tackle poverty and its causes;
 - Support people to increase their household income;
 - Promote financial inclusion;
 - Support people back into work or indeed into work for the first time.
- Regenerate our communities;
- Take positive action to support those not normally included in society through access to opportunity and positive destinations;
- Ensure that no-one has a poorer standard of service or opportunity than anyone else;
- Tackle discrimination based on grounds of ethnicity, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation, age, gender or social background;
- Prevent people from becoming homeless, making the best use of available accommodation whilst supporting those who are the most vulnerable; and
- Ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing.

Community Action

There is a need for communities to become more sustainable and self-sufficient. There is also a role for citizens and community groups in helping the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our area through volunteering. Local people can continue to be tolerant of the differences that bring a richness and diversity to our communities as well as building and fostering community spirit.

Growing Businesses & Prosperous People

The key driver underpinning our future prosperity and ability to realise our potential is a local economy which develops and achieves sustainable growth. Local businesses and employers create wealth, employ local people and help them improve their standard of living. Being in employment is important to people's wellbeing and self fulfilment. As well as generating wealth sustainable economic growth underpins entrepreneurship, opportunity and a good quality of life. It is also important that people in employment continue to develop their learning, skills and experience to optimise opportunities as they arise. These are key aspects in securing a positive future for the Falkirk Council area.

The My Future's in Falkirk initiative underpins our progress towards sustainable economic growth. Falkirk Council, the local Business Panel and other key partners have been working on this since 2002 to reinforce the area's capacity for economic transformation and regeneration. This initiative has recently been refreshed through the My Future's in Falkirk – The Way Forward strategy.

Sustainable economic growth is crucial if we are to achieve our visions for this area. We must be ambitious to achieve our economic outcomes. These include:

- Our area will be recognised as having a culture and ethos of aspiration and ambition;
- The wealth and prosperity of our area will increase;
- Our workforce will be highly skilled;
- The quality of our infrastructure will help promote the growth of the local economy; and
- Our profile will reflect our area as a destination of choice.

Economic Challenges

Patterns of employment continue to change. While there has been a decrease in the number of people working in manufacturing in recent years, there has been a marked increase in local productivity. As a result of such changes manufacturing contributes a higher percentage to the local economy than in any other Council area in Scotland. This emphasises the continuing importance of the manufacturing sector to the local economy.

Key industries within the area include the chemicals, transport and distribution, construction and forest industries sectors. These have strong significance to the local economy when compared with the respective Scottish averages. In addition to this, food and drink and tourism have a significant presence within the area's economy and are recognised as national growth sectors. The Grangemouth petro chemical complex and Grangemouth Port are important in both a Scottish and UK context in terms of the significant level of economic activity they generate and the contribution they make to national GDP.

Significant investments have been made through My Future's in Falkirk, to help transform and diversify our economy. In the 2010 Enterprising Britain Awards, we were recognised for the success of My Future's in Falkirk, as the most enterprising area in Scotland. New developments have been created, including the regeneration of the town centres, the creation of the Falkirk Business Improvement District, £20 million of regeneration funds, a 30 acre business park on land reclaimed from the petrochemical industry and a new 33 acre business park on the former Alcan site. Innovative partnerships have also been formed, such as that between INEOS and Forth Valley College to create Modern Apprenticeships and between businesses and support agencies to develop a skilled workforce and create employment. Backing Falkirk's Future aims to ensure that young people are presented with work based training opportunities across the area.

Tourism is one of the developing sectors in the area. In coming years the HELIX and the World Heritage status of the Antonine Wall will provide opportunities to further enhance the area's tourist offering and encourage more visitors to come and stay in the area for a longer period.

Underpinning our approach to supporting and improving our economic well being, is the need to ensure that our workforce is highly skilled and this is an attractive environment in which to do business. This will be supported by maintaining an effective partnership with local businesses to

best understand their needs and how to support them to further the growth of the local economy.

Future Priorities

My Future's in Falkirk initiative is the key economic development driver to realise the ambitions for the Falkirk Council area, share its economic wellbeing and achieve genuine outcomes for local people and business. The initiative includes the following four broad areas of activity:

- Growing Business and Employment - developing business locations, providing business support and equipping people with the skills needed for employment;
- Enhancing Business Connections – improving transport infrastructure and services;
- Transforming Places – town centre and other regeneration initiatives, as well the HELIX and tourism; and
- Engaging Young People – promoting high aspirations for our young people and connecting them with the labour market.

Central to these priorities, will be the need to ensure that the Falkirk Council area maintains its position as one of the most attractive to do business with in the UK, with a supply of quality business locations, services, facilities and a skilled ambitious workforce. Priority will be given to assisting people who are unemployed, particularly young unemployed people. This will maintain our aspiration of ensuring a positive destination for our young people on leaving school. Investment will assist key industries providing the greatest opportunities for future growth, wealth generation and employment. Young people will be at the heart of our efforts to transform and regenerate our area. We will continue to develop the area's tourist attractions, products and services.

Engaging Partners

My Future's in Falkirk aims to encourage a range of partners in delivering on our ambitions for the Falkirk Council area. Local business has a key role in helping to secure sustainable economic growth. They have the means to get people into work and provide opportunities for many of our young people. Our 'Backing Falkirk's Future' initiative reinforces this effort. Local businesses have actively engaged in the Falkirk Business Panel and have a continuing important role to play in steering and delivering on our economic ambitions

Young People Who are Confident and Successful

The decisions we take and the outcomes we set today form the legacy which our children and young people will inherit. It is imperative that our actions give our children and young people with the best possible start in life and opportunities to realise a positive and fulfilling life. We need to ensure that society regards young people in a positive way and respects the contribution they can make their communities and quality of life. Our local outcomes for children and young people therefore are as follows:

- Our area will be recognised as having a culture and ethos of aspiration and ambition;
- Our workforce will be highly skilled;
- Our citizens will be supported to make positive health choices and lifestyles in order they can live longer;
- Our citizens and communities will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing;

- Our citizens continue to access critical services that meet their needs; and
- Vulnerable children will be protected.

Specifically for children and young people, we need them to be:

- happy and healthy and enabled to make positive decisions about their own health and wellbeing;
- Achieving their potential through learning and creativity, developing skills and knowledge to make them fulfilled, happy adults; and
- Growing up in a safe environment where they are protected, loved and enabled to enjoy their lives.

It is important that young people as they grow up are respected, loved, supported and encouraged. Our children and young people must be nurtured to flourish and realise their potential. We want children and young people who are responsible citizens, who feel included within their local communities and take up an active role in support of this. We also want our communities to be interested in and interesting to young people.

Challenges to Success

To make sure our young people grow to be confident and contributing members of our community, we must provide them with the best possible start in life. Our Early Year's Framework recognises the right of all young children to high quality relationships, environments and services which will offer a holistic approach to meeting their needs. The framework is built around the following principles:

- Every child and young person to have positive outcomes and the same access to opportunities;
- Identifying children and young people at risk of not achieving those outcomes and take steps to prevent this from happening;
- Where the risk does materialise take effective action to address this; and
- Help parents, families and communities to develop their own solutions.

Some young people come from vulnerable, chaotic circumstances and as a result do not have access to the same support, guidance and opportunities as their peers. Our children, who are looked after by the Council in our role as Corporate Parents, have less support and opportunities than other children. As a consequence of this and the circumstances that led them to be looked after means that their outcomes in later life are poorer. This situation must not continue.

Much work has taken place to identify young people at risk of leaving school without securing a positive destination. There is a danger with the on going recession that the progress made in this area will be lost. Continuing effort is needed to further improve the educational attainment of our young people. The application of digital technology is also bringing about a learning revolution in the classroom. We need to ensure that we optimise the potential which the digital age offers.

Young people while needing to be protected, nurtured and encouraged also need to understand their responsibilities to their families and neighbours. There appears to be a wider gap between younger people and older people within communities by way of their understanding each other lives, points of view and actions. We must work together to make sure that as young people

understand the consequences of their behaviour to themselves and others, and that mutual tolerance is improved.

Young people are our future wealth creators and will shape and develop both quality of life in which we live. Today's adult generation have an obligation to promote the right behaviours amongst young people so that they are positive role models for the future. Intrinsic in this, will be harnessing young people's natural enthusiasm, vigour and commitment. Young people have a very important role in challenging family behaviour towards more positive outcomes, such as on healthy eating. Families can also benefit for children and young people's natural appetite for learning.

Future Priorities

Our responsibility is to create a positive environments and opportunities which young people can flourish and benefit from. We also have the opportunity now to create an ethos of self responsibility and sustainability, whilst being conscientious citizens who are willing to help others and make a positive contribution to our society. In meeting these outcomes we need to:

- Keep our children in a safe environment;
- Improve opportunities for looked after and accommodated children and young people;
- Improve educational attainment with a focus on literacy and numeracy and securing positive destinations for our young people;
- Give priority to supporting young people at risk of not entering employment, education or training; and
- Improve the knowledge and skills of young people in the digital age.

Community Action

We will enable our young people to take responsibility for their own lifestyle and to make the right choices. Parents have a responsibility to be positive role models and create an environment of social responsibility, aspiration and self fulfilment. We will seek to secure appropriate and meaningful contributions from young people towards the realisation of our vision, outcomes and helping to secure a positive future for them. Older and younger people also have the opportunity to come together on inter generational opportunities to help improve understanding, respect and tolerance. There are many opportunities for children and young people to act as effective messengers to help improve the health and wellbeing of their own family members.

Safer Communities

The Falkirk Council area is one of the safest places to live in Scotland with high crime clear up rates. This is something we want to maintain. How safe people feel is a key aspect of a community's quality of life and an important factor in making decisions on where to live, where to locate businesses and many more significant decisions in people's lives.

The outcomes to achieve our vision include:

- Our citizens will be protected;
- Vulnerable children will be protected; and
- Our citizens will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and well being.

Safety Challenges

While our area is one of the safest in the country with regards to crime, with the increase in the number of elderly people and single person households, we have to ensure that people feel safe within their own homes and communities. While generally communities are safe, we know there is an increasing risk from the internet, serious and organised crime, etc. We anticipate that there will be an increase in the number of vulnerable adults living alone who will need both support and re-assurance.

We need to ensure that the investments being made in our town centres are underpinned by local people feeling confident that they will feel safe when they visit them in the evening or at night.

Public protection will remain a key priority but particular focus needs to be given to protecting vulnerable children particularly as technology continues to develop. However we also know that other potentially vulnerable people e.g. older people living alone, are also being targeted by unscrupulous groups. As we know that many people are living longer, on their own and potentially far from their immediate family, we must make sure they feel safe and secure in their own homes.

The level and impact of both alcohol and substance misuse is an issue which goes to the heart of our approach to make our communities safer. The impacts of using and abusing such substances can be wide ranging for individuals, families and the wider community.

Future Priorities

In order to further improve people's confidence in their communities and tackle the issues on Community Safety which people have told us are important, our future priorities should include:

- Keeping our communities safe and improving public confidence and satisfaction in the area in which they live;
- Antisocial Behaviour which includes Public Disorder; Vandalism; Noise; Dog Fouling; Litter and Fly-tipping;
- Safety which includes Home Safety; Road Safety and Fire Safety;
- Public Protection which includes Domestic Abuse, Protecting Children and Sexual Crime;
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse which includes Adult Alcohol Abuse, Underage Drinking, and Drug Abuse.

Community Action

Citizens are one of our key assets in reporting and helping to prevent crime. Citizens can play an active role in helping the police solve crime and with other partners to proactively tackle the causes of crime. There a number of different ways in which local people can take part. There are also projects and community based work in which local people can contribute through volunteering. People can be good neighbours to vulnerable, perhaps elderly people who live on their own.

Healthier People

We are all getting healthier and living longer. However the length of time you live can depend on where you live and if you are male or female. We also know that while great strides have been made in health improvement and health care, continuing poor lifestyle choices, such as on

obesity, are storing significant challenges for our society into the future. It is with these factors in mind that our local outcomes in this area are as follows:

- Our citizens will be supported to make positive health choices and lifestyles in order they can live longer;
- People will have equitable to local health support and care;
- Our citizens and communities will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing;
- Our citizens continue to access critical services that meet their needs; and
- Disadvantaged communities will benefit from better services.

Being healthy, feeling healthy and leading a healthy lifestyle are essential to people's sense of wellbeing and is proven to improve life expectancy. People are living longer in the Falkirk Council area and some indicators suggest overall improvements in health and lifestyles. The coming years will see significant changes in the way in health and care services are delivered in the Falkirk Council area.

The area is now served by a new acute hospital, Forth Valley Royal in Larbert and a new community hospital based on the site of the existing infirmary. The new community hospital will place an emphasis on rehabilitation and supporting patients to return to community based care as promptly as possible. In future years the balance of care will shift towards increased self responsibility, community based setting and utilising new forms of delivery such as e-care and telecare.

Health and Wellbeing Challenges

The coming years will see significant growth in the number of elderly people aged 65 plus and over 85. There is also expected to be rise in births and in the number of children and young people. All of these factors have the potential to significantly increase the burden on health and care services at a time of diminishing financial resources. The coming years will see a shift in the balance of care with people taking more responsibility for their own health and lifestyle and much more self management of care. This will focus on much earlier determination of need and as a result acting more proactively. Members of the public will be full partners in improving their health and wellbeing with care increasingly taking place in community. In shifting the balance of care, we will need to ensure that carers and community volunteers are supported. We need to ensure that this change is managed in a sensitive, balanced and consistent manner. There will also be an important ongoing role for the Third Sector in the provision of service and the attainment of health and wellbeing outcomes.

Significant emphasis is being placed on reducing health inequalities and their causes and on early intervention with children and young people and all ages to change generational health challenges and traditional behaviours. Obesity continues to be a challenge to good levels of health in the area as does the pressing need to continue to focus on smoking cessation, alcohol and substance misuse. People's mental wellbeing and prevalence of depression and prescription of medication are issues which continue to pose a challenge.

We are also aware of the need to tackle the underlying causes of health inequalities which is why every aspect of our approach on Community Planning will make a contribution to this.

Future Priorities

Universal health and wellbeing issues will continue to be serviced. Within this however there will be a need to target services and support to those in greatest need. We will also be mindful of the important changes in the provision of health and care services we need to oversee as well as effectively meeting the demands posed by changing local demographics and diversity of need. We will therefore give priority to:

- Harms to people's health, including alcohol, drugs and violence;
- The big killer diseases and associated risks, such as with coronary heart disease or cancer;
- Early intervention to make a positive long term difference to the area's health and wellbeing; and
- Improving mental health and wellbeing.

Community Action

There is an essential role for community led health approaches and for citizens in taking responsibility for improving their own health and wellbeing. Services will be more focused on the most vulnerable individuals and communities. Health and care providers will need to find new and innovative solutions for managing the increased demands which changing demographics will bring and an onus for seeking out community based solutions. This however needs to be undertaken in a manner which promotes a sense of partnership with our citizens. People need to better understand the causes of poor health and wellbeing. Other aspects of this plan will help to tackle some of the underlying causes of poor health and health inequalities. Some of the simple and practical ways in which people can positively change their own health and wellbeing, include:

- Healthy eating;
- Taking exercise or some form of physical activity;
- Keeping active including being mentally active; and
- Seeking help for substance use addiction.

Involved Communities

If we are to achieve the vision we have for our area and our communities it is important that we play an active part in shaping and developing our local area. Involved communities is a collective term that sets out how we make a difference to our local areas and neighbourhoods and to the lives of our families and neighbours. This includes how we best utilise the potential of the Third Sector to enrich our areas and communities.

Community Challenges

The area's population is expected to continue to grow, with growing numbers of both young and elderly people. This will place demands on both local infrastructure and services. There are also changes underway in people's living patterns with a continuing increase in the number of single person households expected, which carries with it the risk of increasing levels of vulnerability. Both citizens and communities have an important role in helping shape our future direction and priorities. There are a variety of ways to do this through partnership or organisational community engagement.

With local communities being at the heart of realising our local priorities and outcomes is the need for effective engagement and participation so that we can ensure we understand their

influence in shaping and developing their communities. This will include a need to overcome existing inertia and reaching end engaging with people who have traditionally not been involved with this before.

The most recently available profile of the local Third Sector suggests that there are in excess of 700 organisations employing over 1300 people and 3000 volunteers. The local sector is estimated to have an annual turnover in excess of £25 million. The local Third Sector therefore is significant in terms of the services, information and advice and facilities it provides for the benefit of local people and communities. The sector faces continuing challenges in the need to secure sustainable sources of funding from a more diverse range of funders at a time when many funding organisations face continuing financial strain. Our duty is to maintain a vibrant and resilient local Third Sector which can continue to make a significant contributions towards our vision and local outcomes.

WAY FORWARD

We recently conducted a focused survey to which nearly 600 local people responded. This highlights what local people think is important in their communities. Within the survey respondents advised on what they would most like to see in their communities, including:

- There is no drug dealing in our area;
- There are enough houses so no-one needs to be homeless;
- Everybody tries to keep the streets clean;
- There are opportunities for young people leaving school; and
- Everyone has a job.

The survey also confirmed issues which local people think are important but are true of where they live, including:

- There is a lot of support for children who have difficulties at home;
- There are good play facilities for young children;
- The nearest town centres are smart and attractive;
- There are opportunities for everyone to make their voice heard about what matters to them; and
- You can feel safe walking around during the day.

A community plan for a Council area i.e. a strategic community plan can only identify at an overarching, strategic level the issues facing our communities, as well as providing a vision for what we can achieve if we all work together collectively. A community plan needs to take an informed view of the challenges and opportunities facing both the main geographical communities within an area and the main communities of interest e.g. young people, older people and the socially excluded.

Conclusion

This strategic plan must be challenging but realistic in its approach. We must be aspirational but credible in setting out both a vision for the area and what we can all do to achieve that vision. We must be realistic about what can be done with existing resources, but imaginative about what can be gained from better co-ordination of the efforts and resources of the partners and the introduction of new ways of drawing in resources.

This Community Plan spans a watershed period which will see radical changes in the way in which public services are delivered. This will offer both opportunities and potentially an enhanced role for the Third Sector and local communities to make a direct contribution through direct action towards the attainment of our vision for our area and their communities. There will be challenges for all of us in how best to support both the sector and local communities at a time of long-term budgetary restraint and downward fiscal pressure.

The securing of effective and meaningful community action towards the attainment of local outcomes goes to the heart of our priorities in this area. This will include identifying and progressing a practical range of opportunities in which the public and communities can take a meaningful lead in projects to improve their own neighbourhoods whilst securing future community self-sufficiency. Communities will also have ample and meaningful opportunities to participate in influencing decision-making towards the future design and delivery of local public services.

We have often in the past focussed on what the public and third sector can achieve in pursuance of common goals. More and more however, we recognise that our biggest assets are the people and communities within our area. By us all working together, we can do so much more.