



Falkirk Council

21st Century Action Plan

A Strategy for Modernising Government

2005 - 2008

LIST OF CONTENTS

Item	Page No
1. Vision	3
2. Executive Summary	4
3. Introduction and Overview	5
4. Falkirk Council in Context	6 - 16
5. What Falkirk is aiming to achieve by 2008	17 - 20
6. Delivering the Modernisation strategy	21 - 22

1. VISION

- 1.1 This document sets out a revised Strategy for 2005 – 2008 through which Falkirk Council will continue to plan the delivery of modern, customer-focused services. The plan highlights the actions we will take to deliver modern public services that ensure high levels of customer satisfaction. Following initial publication of our 21st Century Government Action Plan in 2001, work has been ongoing throughout the Council to achieve the objectives set out within it. As with any strategic vision, the ways in which we work to achieve our vision change over time, with technological innovation and new priorities leading to the exploration of new and innovative methods of working.
- 1.2 The modernising government agenda has included exploring new dimensions of joint and partnership working in the way we develop and deliver our services. Local partnership working with other agencies such as the NHS and the voluntary sector has led to development of a web-based community portal in the Falkirk Online project, and the Single Shared Assessment project for securely sharing care information between health agencies and local authorities. This shared view of public sector services seeks to break down the barriers of ‘who does what’ which often confuses our customers.
- 1.3 Our strategy also adopts a multi-channelled approach for accessing our services, allowing citizens to choose how, where and when they wish to access Council information and services, whether in person, by writing to us, over the phone or through the Internet.
- 1.4 The plan is above all intended as a working document that will be added to over time, providing a framework for the different initiatives already underway in delivering the modernising government agenda. It also identifies areas for further development and establishes a programme of further action.
- 1.5 The plan will also be used to consider the resource implications of delivering the modernising government agenda, helping identify further opportunities for joint and partnership working and further actions required to progress this agenda.
- 1.6 To achieve these aims it is recognised that there must be clear links between this strategy and the Council’s strategic planning and management process, as set out in Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Plan.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 **Part 1** Introduction and overview.

2.2 **Part 2** of the plan outlines the agenda for 21st Century Government and gives a brief summary of some of the modernising initiatives already underway, as well as explaining the context and environment in which Falkirk Council operates both in terms of modernising service delivery and modernising our decision making structures.

2.3 **Part 3** sets out a vision for where we would want to be in 2008. It recognises the Scottish Executive's target of delivering all relevant government services electronically by 2005 and the need to join up with other public services in meeting the needs of our community. Six *key strategic objectives* have been established to deliver this vision:

- To improve access to public service information and services using a multi channelled approach, and the 'joining up' of Council, other Government and partner service information e.g. social work/ NHS/ voluntary sector.
- To integrate front office and back office systems and processes to improve operational performance and achieve a stronger customer focus.
- To involve key stakeholders and customers in helping shape and improve our services through the introduction of a Council-wide strategy for citizen consultation and communication (including reporting back on performance).
- To deliver staff training and development programmes that will result in highly motivated, customer-focussed employees throughout the Council.
- To work in partnership with others to share learning experiences across the wider public sector to ensure best value for the public pound.
- To support individuals and communities to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to participate in the modernising government agenda, ensuring there are no barriers to inclusion or access.

2.4 **Part 4** of the plan outlines a staged approach to delivering the modernisation strategy and discusses how the range of modernising projects underway combine to enhance customer service and efficiency of service delivery.

3. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

- 3.1 Our 21st Century Government strategy will adopt a multi-channelled approach for accessing our services. Citizens will be able to choose how, where and when they wish to access Council information and services, whether in person, by writing to us, over the phone or through the internet, using whichever method best suits their own personal circumstances.
- 3.2 Service delivery will be improved through mapping out all our key business processes and redesigning them where improvements are necessary to improve either efficiency or effectiveness. We recognise that there is no point in streamlining customer contact channels if we do not update our business processes.
- 3.3 Much of the modernising agenda has focussed on electronic service delivery. While this is only one way we can improve services, we appreciate it is becoming increasingly important to our customers. The Council has an extensive programme of electronic service delivery (ESD) and regular progress updates are published on the web site and by the Scottish Executive under its 'Open Scotland' banner.
- 3.4 21st Century Government will be a programme of change and learning. We understand the most important ingredients in improving customer services are our employees. We must ensure they have the appropriate skills and organisational structure to deliver the high quality services our customers expect and deserve. As such, change management is a major cross-cutting theme in of all our modernising programmes.
- 3.5 This strategy sets out our strategic priorities. We will develop action plans to underpin each of our objectives and thus ensure we are achieving our aspirations.

4. FALKIRK COUNCIL IN CONTEXT

4.1 Since our first 21st Century Action Plan was approved, the Council has made significant progress towards achieving our vision. We established key actions that we were going to undertake in order that we could focus our work and ensure best use of all our resources. Our key actions included:

- developing the Council's network of One Stop Shops into a network of Public Service One Stop Shops;
- Council services to be available outside standard working hours where there is a demand (whether they be delivered through a network of public service One Stop Shops, multi-media contact centres or via Falkirk Online);
- customer contact to be carried out through call management centres that have been transformed into multi-agency contact centres offering information and advice, and instigating actions – often by jointly provided agencies;
- internet access and email to be free to all citizens at their local library;
- local services to be provided electronically via PCs, digital TV and mobile phone formats, where appropriate;
- public services are co-ordinated around key life episodes for citizens via Falkirk Online;
- smart cards to be used for public transport passes, to pay for school meals, and to authenticate transactions such as on-line voting;
- the Council's website to be used to encourage public consultation and debate on the Council's priorities and service improvement, and
- high capacity local networks to be in place to support the continued growth of internet use.

4.2 We have made significant progress on many of these core objectives.

Falkirk Online

4.3 In December 2000, the Scottish Executive announced that Falkirk Council in partnership with SEFV, BP and Falkirk College, had been awarded £400,000 from the Modernising Government Fund to support the 'eFalkirk' project (now Falkirk Online). The project approved by the Scottish Executive included the investigation, scoping, development and implementation of a community portal providing access to government, community-based and commercial services.

4.4 Since 2000, work has been ongoing on the development of the Falkirk Online business plan. This included an external review of the initial eFalkirk business plan that highlighted a number of concerns over the viability of the project as originally proposed. It was recommended that the project be repositioned back to its roots as a vehicle to achieve the vision and themes of the Strategic Community Plan. Following discussions, the Falkirk online steering group, expanded to include the Police, Falkirk CVS and NHS Forth Valley, agreed that a more incremental approach should be taken to implementing the initiative and that speed and timing of implementation be adjusted accordingly.

4.5 The incremental approach is looking at the sub-division of Falkirk Online into the following areas of activity:

- the development of local and relevant content (to be delivered through the community portal);
- to ensure access to equipment by individuals, communities, agencies and businesses – at home, at work and via the network of public access points in libraries, schools, learning centres, public offices etc.;
- addressing the digital divide and social inclusion by ensuring access for all;
- upskilling and coaching – to ensure people across all sectors have the skills and confidence to use ICT to its full potential;
- provision of a high speed ICT network infrastructure (to connect public sector organisations in delivering eGovernment, as well as connecting to learning centres and other community based facilities);
- Business Development – to help ensure our small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can benefit from a digital economy, both for providing services online and for improving their own internal administrative processes;
- upskilling and providing web access for the community and voluntary sector including developing web access for Community Councils etc.; and
- joining up public sector services using Falkirk Online as a tool.

4.6 As an outcome of the review of the Falkirk Online project the following areas are being progressed as a matter of priority:

- a project team was recruited to design, deliver and maintain a community portal for the Falkirk Council area;
- a community portal is being developed and will be live and accessible by the end of 2005; and
- work is being commissioned by a forum of public sector agencies within the Forth Valley area to investigate the scope for developing a public sector broadband network across the Forth Valley area, providing sufficient capacity to meet the ever-increasing demand for information and data sharing.

4.7 In addition to the funding from MGF1, SEFV (Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley) have approved £130,000 for the development of this important project.

4.8 The development and scoping work for Falkirk Online has been completed with several key elements of the project now in place. This includes the development of the voluntary sector database commissioned by CVS Falkirk and District, the purchase of a comprehensive search tool and the procurement of content management system that will allow citizens easy access to the citizen of all partners' content.

Customer Relationship Management/Citizens Account

4.9 An important element of the Council's approach to delivering better services to our customers is the 'Access to Better Services' project, which has attracted Modernising Government Fund 2 funding. The aim of this project is to develop a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) model that can support the proposed Citizen's Account (citizen identifier) and provide a link between front office and back office systems through a single point of access.

- 4.10 The customer contact point pilot commenced in January 2005 and is scheduled to run, in two phases, until July 2005. The first phase was concerned with handling contacts (both telephone and e-mail) relating to the Council's special uplift service, taking telephone calls for internal property repairs and acting as the main Council switchboard. In the very near future reporting on pest control and roads and lighting faults will be added. The contact point is currently staffed between 8am to 5pm, with employee working hours weighted to give greater coverage during the morning's peak demand time.
- 4.11 During the second phase we plan to expand the range of services offered and extend the hours during which they are available. The 2004 customer satisfaction survey showed that 74% of respondents would welcome the Council offering extended working hours, with the majority of respondents preferring longer weekday opening. However, the ability to extend the contact centre's opening hours will be wholly dependent on the willingness of staff to be flexible and to accept altered working hours.

One Stop Shops

- 4.12 Work is underway to offer improved service and opening hours at all of the Council's One Stop Shops, based on a successful pilot at Callendar Square where staff from Housing and Social Work Services and Corporate and Commercial Services provide a single point of contact for all non-finance related enquiries. At Carronbank House in Denny it is envisaged that the One Stop Shop will provide services on behalf of the local housing, finance, social work and registrars offices using existing staff.
- 4.13 Of the remaining One Stop Shops, work is ongoing at Bo'ness, Camelon, Grangemouth and Stenhousemuir to incorporate a One Stop Shop adviser into the housing team in the same way has been successfully piloted at Callendar Square.

Corporate Management Information Systems

- 4.14 The overall aims of this project are to consolidate the vast amount of corporate information currently available in separate systems within the Council such as payroll, employee information etc. The aim is to ensure that meaningful corporate information is available to allow informed decision making by managers within the Council.
- 4.15 The aims and objectives of this project are:
- to develop a Corporate Management Information System (CMIS) that will:
 - (i) give the Corporate Management Team and service managers access to management information derived from the Council's financial and human resources systems;
 - (ii) be available using browser technology and reporting facilities; and
 - (iii) streamline operating procedures so as to minimise duplication of input and maximise outputs for users.
 - (iv) inform corporate and service level decision making by giving management access to accurate and reliable information;
 - (v) minimise distribution and maintenance costs by making the information available to authorised users from any location using browser-based technology;
 - (vi) improve data accuracy by collecting data once; and

(vii) where appropriate, streamline operating procedures by using appropriate technologies to join-up data held in the Council's financial and human resources systems.

4.16 The main holders of corporate information and therefore drivers of this project are Finance Services and Corporate and Commercial Services. To date, this project has proved productive in terms of encouraging the 'joining up' process between Council Services, with both services working co-operatively to provide corporate information on issues such as absence reporting. Joint solutions are also being sought for the replacement of systems such as payroll and personnel, which will result in a reduction of duplication and increased reliability of information available.

Falkirk Net

4.17 Falkirk Net is the brand name for the Council's internal knowledge management system, providing people with access to all the necessary information and services they require. Its development is based on the Council's web site and intranet site that can also be used as a medium to host many of the other Modernising Government initiatives.

4.18 It is a technology system that will:

Provide staff with all the necessary information and services they need to do their job efficiently and effectively; and support all external customer/citizen interactions; through whatever service channel citizens choose (assisted or unassisted).

4.19 This project has mainly focussed on the development of information provided through the Council's web site. The current site contains in excess of 5,000 pages of content, but also has increased capacity for people to conduct business online. For example people can now do the following:

- request a special uplift;
- apply for a job;
- provide comment or complaint on any Council service or on a specific issue;
- request a library book;
- check availability of library items;
- report benefit fraud;
- pay their Council tax, rent or non domestic rates;
- view Council tax accounts;
- view rent accounts;
- businesses can download tender documentation; and
- search the business property register.

4.20 The use of the web site to get information or request a service is increasing all the time. In 2004 there were over 522,000 visits to the site and in the first quarter of 2005 there have been over 223,000 visits already. Feedback on the site has also been very positive. In a recent online survey of users;

- 78.5% found what they were looking for;
- 83.16% said the information was easy to find; and
- 94.85% said they would visit the site again.

- 4.21 Internally the Council has developed the Council's intranet that provides information to assist in the delivery of effective services. There are currently over 6,000 of content on the intranet.
- 4.22 Services are continually adding content to both sites and identifying opportunities to increase interaction between users and the Council. There are certain issues such as DDA compliance FOI and the effective management of content in general. The introduction of a CMS should ensure that all these objectives are realised.

eCare (Single Shared Assessment)

- 4.23 The purpose of this project is to develop data standards that support joint working between the Councils and the NHS in furtherance of a single shared assessment across the Forth Valley area. It has been successful in having funding recommended to develop a single database to be used by all agencies involved in community care for a single shared assessment i.e. removing current duplication of record keeping and information requested.
- 4.24 Housing and Social Work Services is progressing this project, working in partnership with the NHS and other authorities and agencies across Scotland. While the project has had a number of challenges to overcome, good progress is now being made on this.
- 4.25 Unfortunately an application to progress work on an integrated single assessment for children was not approved, it is hoped that further funding will be made available nationally in the near future to take this important area of work forward.

Document Image Processing and workflow

- 4.26 Document Image Processing (DIP) is the process through which large amounts of information held on paper can be captured and stored digitally. This project has impact across all Council services in terms of document archiving and retrieval. In addition, several Services have specific document imaging requirements. These include Development Services (planning) who have requirements to capture large images of plans and Finance Services who need to store and retrieve large volumes of information currently held only on paper. Potential has also been identified for this approach to be used in processing applications for Council houses.
- 4.27 Another aspect of the project is streamlining the way we work and the processes surrounding this. Workflow is the process whereby information, once captured by data imaging can be directed to appropriate areas for action and tracked at any point as to what stage in a process it may be at. Thus, for instance, an enquiry at a One Stop Shop as to what stage a Council Tax rebate application may be at can be answered accurately. This has application in terms of customer service and sees the beginnings of our approach to more effective Customer Relationship Management.
- 4.28 In recognition of the importance of document imaging and workflow to provision of Council services and to giving citizens better access to information, the Modernising Government Steering Group has agreed that Finance Services will pilot a system with the aid of Modernising Government funding and that the outcomes of this pilot will be transferred to other Services, if appropriate.

Dialogue Youth

- 4.29 The Dialogue Youth Initiative is a national project which forms part of the Scottish Executive's agenda to modernise the way government works. It is a partnership between Young Scot, CoSLA and Scottish Local Authorities and is about delivering services in a way that is convenient, meaningful and relevant to young people, by listening to their views and involving them in decision making.
- 4.30 The initiative was piloted during 2001/02 in 4 local authority areas – Edinburgh, Glasgow, Angus and Argyll and Bute. Their experiences have been used to inform the development of the project and have assisted in the preparation of resource and support materials for other local authorities. The whole initiative, in turn, is supported by the National Dialogue Youth Unit.
- 4.31 The key objectives of the Dialogue Youth Initiative are being taken forward in the Falkirk Council area by a dedicated team funded through the MGF 2 programme, with additional match funding of £62,000 from the Council under the auspices of community safety. These objectives are:
- setting up a Dialogue Youth Unit which acts as a central resource and research base on youth issues;
 - development of a local youth card, based on the Young Scot card;
 - developing and maintaining local portal pages on the Young Scot national youth information portal;
 - supporting existing PSE and Citizenship education programmes;
 - stimulating and assisting the development of partnership and collaborative action on youth issues and services;
 - developing direct contact with young people.

Dialogue Youth Website Development

- 4.32 The Falkirk Council Dialogue Youth web pages went “live” in January (www.youngscot.org/falkirk). Since then they have received approximately 1500 “hits” each month. A group of young people have been trained as web journalists and meet on a six-weekly basis to add content to the portal. The aim is to cascade the training through a group of 100 young people who have indicated their interest in this area of work.
- 4.33 The aim of the localised Young Scot Card is to include locally negotiated discounts as well as national discounts and to make these available for all S1 – S6 young people. In addition, the aim is to provide a single card access to libraries, leisure services and cashless catering. It will also be used as a proof of age identification for young people. A DVD has been produced to publicise the Young Scot Card and will be widely shown to schools and youth organisations.
- 4.34 The last few months have seen concentrated effort put in to consolidate all the different elements involved in the production of the card, which is in the process of being rolled out. This has included training young people to be discount negotiators and technical problem solving, including issues surrounding data protection.

- 4.35 In terms of youth participation, we are working to establish six youth forums across the Council area, based on the boundaries of our existing area forums. Two of the youth forums are already well established and meet on a regular basis.
- 4.36 One of Dialogue Youth's aims is to consult with young people and a variety of consultations have taken place, including changes to the Children's Hearing Systems, healthy living issues on behalf of Forth Valley Health Board, policing in Falkirk with Central Scotland Police and library book selection.
- 4.37 Four young people are now officially representing the Falkirk area on the National Youth Parliament and this move has been particularly welcomed by local MSPs. The next elections to the Youth Parliament take place later this year and these will be actively promoted.

eProcurement

- 4.38 This project, which is being led by Falkirk Council, is undertaking a programme of work leading to the implementation of an e-procurement solution for Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils and Central Scotland Fire Brigade. These partners form a purchasing consortium, the Joint Buying Arrangement (JBA) that was formed following local government reorganisation. The partners are seeking to further develop the consortium by moving towards common processes, procedures and structures and an e-procurement solution.
- 4.39 The main focus of the project is to deliver Best Value by providing more effective, efficient services that are value for money by integrating and rationalising procurement procedures, processes and structures. It will also provide the opportunity to demonstrate enhanced, measurable benefits for all partners. It is also hoped that this project, by streamlining the procurement process, will further open up opportunities to provide savings to other partners e.g. the community and voluntary sector and also open up further procurement opportunities to local businesses.

DNAS (Corporate Property and Master Address Project)

- 4.40 The corporate address gazetteer is an important element of the Modernising Government vision of joined up services. As such it should not be seen in isolation from other projects such as customer relationship management and citizen's account. Geography is the unique thread that draws together information, processes and stakeholders and it is geography, through application of the Council's Geographic Information System (GIS), that is at the root of this project which has successfully attracted MGF2 funding.
- 4.41 The central principal of this project is that local authorities create and maintain a wealth of data about addressees, land and property. The majority of this information is held in different departments and often duplicated many times over across the organisation. In a review of such information within the Council, over 140 databases were found to contain the same or similar information. The key objective of DNAS is to integrate this data for use within the Council and for frontline service delivery by the establishment of single property information point that adheres to common and agreed standards.
- 4.42 One of the exciting elements of this project is the potential to develop a planning portal that will e-enable planning application consultation.

4.43 Opportunities identified for this project include:

- creation of definitive, accessible and sustainable core gazetteer datasets;
- defined national data and metadata standards for geographic information;
- back office - systems integration and data integration using mature interoperable technologies;
- front office - intuitive g-enabled access channels, CRM integration, web mapping;
- transaction improvements - intuitive and innovative applications;
- process efficiencies for land, property, road and address data management; and
- business process and service delivery improvement.

4.44 The Council has now developed its corporate address gazetteer and embedded this within our new planning and development control system. Our next priority will be to roll this out across the Council and thereafter to other partners. This will assist in the joining up existing databases and thus ensuring continuity of service to our customers.

COINS (Committee Information System)

4.45 The COINS replacement project is a Falkirk Council initiative, sponsored through the Modernising Government Steering group and led by Law and Administration Services. The aim of this project is to develop a system to enable online access to Committee agendas, minutes and reports and the associated electronic/automated distribution of these. The Modernising Government Steering group has agreed that this project fulfils MGF1 criteria, as it aims to promote increased community and citizen participation in the decision making structure of the Council.

4.46 While there have been a number of problems implementing the new system, it is anticipated that these will be resolved in the near future in order that we can go live with this system.

Other Projects.

4.47 In addition to the projects noted above, the Council is also supporting the development of the following initiatives:

- supporting remote and home working by providing a flexible and secure means for employees to access information;
- wireless networking in schools;
- implementation of the “entitlement card”;
- providing access to the online prosecutions website to our trading standards, housing, social work and law departments;
- expansion of the Council’s network to improve links to Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils and the Regional Assessor;
- development of digital inclusion through the joint eLearning group funded by the Social inclusion partnership;
- further opportunities to get ICT training for people in our communities;

- development of the 'Peoples Network' i.e. free internet access for people in the community; and
- additional access points to the Council's network for community partners and organisations such as Polmont Young Offenders Institute.

4.48 It is hoped that by taking forward all the initiatives noted above the Council will achieve the aspirations set out within the 21st Century Action Plan. All of the above activity has been undertaken in the context of national priorities.

4.49 The Scottish Executive's strategic vision for modernising government is based around the key themes of:

- customer focus;
- working in partnership;
- openness and accountability; and
- continuous improvement.

4.50 The Executive has also set itself four challenges:-

- to encourage innovation and creativity in government,
- to identify and remove blockages that prevent the public sector from being modern;
- to encourage the sharing of knowledge; and
- to put the citizen at the centre of everything we do.

4.51 The modernisation agenda aims to help deliver the following high level policy commitments:

- closing the opportunity gap;
- community planning;
- best value and governance;
- electronic service delivery; and
- partnerships for care.

4.52 All parts of Government are being encouraged to deliver high quality public services, to tackle inequalities, to promote social justice and to renew confidence in our democratic structures.

4.53 Falkirk Council's challenge is to turn these words into reality on the ground where it matters. In taking this forward, we are already responding to the Government's key themes:

Customer Focus

- 4.54 Our customers should not find it difficult to access services from Falkirk Council or other parts of the public sector. They need to be properly informed about which services are available to them, know how, where and when to access our services and be clear on their eligibility for certain services. To ensure this is the case, a family of complementary programmes is being developed across the Council all with customer focus at their heart.

Working in Partnership

- 4.55 We aim to ensure that citizens provide the same information to us only once. We aim to deliver a high quality response, where possible at the first point of contact, and look to deliver more pro-active, personalised services designed around individual needs. A Corporate customer relationship management project aimed at delivering these objectives is now under development. This aims to bring together information from disparate sources, and to present a 'single view' of the Council and its Services for access to by phone, internet or face to face. This is closely aligned to the eFalkirk Community Portal project which has seen the Council work in partnership with bodies such as the NHS, voluntary and community and education sectors. Training, human resource and organisational design issues have been recognised as a major element of this process and partnership strategies for addressing them are under development.

Openness and Accountability

- 4.56 The Council has at the heart of its values openness and accountability. This means ensuring our customers know what services they are entitled to and by the standards they can expect. While we already provide a range of information and feedback on the services we provide, we are constantly seeking to improve.
- 4.57 Falkirk's key strategic modernisation objectives of improving access to Council/government information and joining up Council and other Government services are a key element in achieving this. Access to information over our Council website and the eFalkirk Community portal, along with the enhanced ability to access information from a variety of sources through Customer Relationship Management will all assist in achieving this key theme.

Continuous Improvement

- 4.58 Striving to continuously improve the services we deliver is a constant theme in all the work we do. Since 1997 the Council has undertaken a number of strategic and service based best value reviews. These have led to significant improvements in the services we deliver and the way we deliver them. Over the coming years we know we will have to keep up this work as we are required to ensure further efficiencies in all that we do.
- 4.59 Thorough management control and progress monitoring of the modernisation agenda is key to ensuring continuous improvement. Falkirk's modernisation agenda is underpinned by a structured management process which includes:
- local project teams;
 - project boards (incorporating partners);
 - Modernising Government Steering Group (Senior Officers);
 - involvement with National Programme management;

- a modernising government project managers group, set up to evaluate cross-cutting issues; and
- participation in and leading national programme theme groups, for example change management.

5. WHAT FALKIRK IS AIMING TO ACHIEVE BY 2008

- 5.1 Our vision for 2008 is to consolidate the developmental work already completed, to deliver tangible outcomes from a range of projects and to transform the way we do business to the benefit of our customers and staff.
- 5.2 The achievement of these objectives will involve the co-ordination of a range of functions. The modernisation agenda is not only about technology. Dealing with the issues around people and processes are necessary precursors to implementing major change.
- 5.3 Resource issues such as ensuring that the necessary ICT infrastructures are in place to cope with the demands of modernisation and that sufficient pump-priming resources are available to enable projects to get off the ground must be addressed. To this end communication and consultation, ensuring that the various boards, partners and stakeholders are kept informed and involved in developments is critical.
- 5.4 We aim to develop a network of One Stop Shops that provide 'joined up' access to all Council services as well as services from the NHS, Benefits Agency, Inland Revenue, Employment Services, Police and other Government agencies. We aim to empower staff to be able to resolve 80% of customer enquiries at the first time of asking.
- 5.5 Our website will provide not only information on Council services but be fully transactional to allow services and business processes to be carried out seamlessly.
- 5.6 The Council's own internal organisation will reflect its customer focus, with both front line and back room services working together to ensure a modern, customer facing organisation for the people of Falkirk.
- 5.7 We have set ourselves a number of key objectives to deliver this vision. These are underpinned by a series of ongoing and proposed action points.

Strategic Objectives

- 5.8 Our strategic objectives to deliver 21st Century Government are:

Objective 1

To improve access to Public Service information and services using a multi channelled approach, and the 'joining up' Council, other Government and partner service information e.g. Social Work/NHS/Voluntary sector.

Key Actions:

1. Improve access to Council/government information and services using a multi-channelled approach i.e., in person, through One Stop Shops, via a call management system and by delivering access to online information and transactions via the Internet.
2. Provide an enhanced advice and information service through a network of advisers with access to a full range of customer information, at One Stop Shops and other front-line customer contact points.

3. Introduce a rationalised call-handling service to provide clearer points of contact for citizens and businesses.
4. Provide services that are structured and packaged around the needs of individual citizens and businesses, thus ensuring high levels of consumer satisfaction and improved organisational effectiveness.
5. Implement our customer first strategy and the commitments contained therein.
6. Develop a single share assessment in line with national guidelines to support an integrated children service.
7. Facilitate the availability of Council & Committee Information through a further development of the Council's web site and out new community portal.
8. Facilitate mobile working (PDA/tablets) and thus improve the customer contact experience.
9. Introduce wireless networks in schools – will assist broaden access to ICT systems without cabling rooms.
10. Through iFalkirk - increase transactional use of the web / meet ESD targets i.e. ability to complete entire transactions electronically.
11. Review the way we deliver our ICT services to ensure we are using our resources as efficiently as possible. This will include reviewing out ICT infrastructure.
12. Introduce the national concessions card for older people and thereafter introduce a smart card for younger people and other service users.

Objective 2

To integrate front office and back office systems and processes to improve operational performance and achieve a stronger customer focus.

Key Actions:

1. Explore efficiency savings through 'horizontal' integration – e.g. employ common systems between services of the Council. In the first instance this will focus on the following issues:
 - (i) Procurement
 - (ii) Asset Management; and
 - (iii) HR
2. Establish Standards: all new systems adopted by Falkirk Council to be compliant with BS7666 eGovernment Interoperability Framework (eGIF) / Open Scotland Information Age Framework (OSIAF).
3. Ensure future systems purchased are capable of integration.
4. Requirement to create capacity within the authority to achieve modernisation i.e. : resources / knowledge / training systems necessary to allow ongoing maintenance & development of systems.
5. Address issues of Data custodianship: Database / CAG administrators will be required to maintain database quality & integrity.
6. Establish an ongoing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) project plan.

Objective 3

To involve key stakeholders and customers in helping shape and improve our services through the introduction of a Council-wide strategy for citizen consultation and communication (including reporting back on performance).

Key Actions:

1. Establish publicity reported Performance Standards.
2. Reinforce service priorities of customer service as primary outcome.
3. Complete the review of the corporate complaints procedure.
4. Determine customer service standards.
5. Seek customer feedback e.g. through the biannual customer service questionnaire.
6. Establish customer focus groups for areas of service delivery.
7. Examine the benefits of establishing a 'People's Panel'

Objective 4

To develop staff training and development programmes that will result in highly motivated, customer-focussed employees throughout the Council.

Key Actions:

1. Encourage the adoption of a customer service attitude within the Council and include this in Corporate Induction process.
2. Make best use of any overlaps in themes within modernising government programmes e.g. change management, business process re-engineering & back office integration.
3. Develop guidance on training/re-training for individuals required to undertake new roles as part of any change process.
4. Develop a training programme for individuals required to work together/in partnership with new colleagues.
5. Develop a package of leadership behaviours against which managers can be assessed with a view to identifying training needs for managing the change process.
6. Develop a staff training and development programme that will result in highly motivated, customer-focussed employees throughout the Council.

Objective 5

To work in partnership with others to share learning experiences across the wider public sector to ensure best value for the public pound.

Key Actions:

1. Develop a National Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) for Customer Service.
2. Train a shared team of SVQ customer service assessors.

3. Identify methods and mechanisms for assessing return on investment.
4. Complete our review of community engagement and ensure appropriate standards and good practice are adopted as a result of this review.
5. Develop guidance/good practice on techniques for working with Trade Unions, including recommendations on involvement of trade unions in the change process.
6. Identify contractual and remuneration issues which need to be addressed as part of any change and develop a package of good practice for dealing with these.
7. Explore further opportunities to add value to our customers through the provision of joint, shared or hosted services.

Objective 6

To support individuals and communities to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to participate in the Modernising Government agenda, ensuring there are no barriers to inclusion or access.

Key Actions:

1. Promote awareness: ensure excluded individuals and groups are aware of the opportunities that Information & Communication Technology (ICT) can provide.
2. Promote access - disadvantaged individuals and communities must have access to ICT at the time, place, method and price appropriate to their needs and lifestyles.
3. Provide the basic compute and technological skills that will instil individuals with the confidence to use ICT.
4. Ensure that disadvantaged individuals and communities are provided with, or develop themselves, online content and services that they value and wish to use.
5. Identify current provision for citizens, community & voluntary organisations and business in the Falkirk area.
6. Identify gaps in provision, in terms of equipment, training and support available and geographical locations of facilities.
7. Identify funding opportunities/initiatives to take forward the goals of Digital Inclusion, i.e. make provision for those who are identified as being excluded and how gaps in service etc. can be filled.
8. Ensure technical support is available to those individuals who require it, both individuals and communities.
9. Ensure adequate training is available to all sectors to help them overcome the barriers to using ICT.
10. Continue to develop links with Community Access to Lifelong Learning (CALL).
11. Develop a community portal for the Falkirk area, plus marketing associated with the portal to encourage local people to access it.
12. Review provision of community-based learning and devise a strategy for future elearning delivery in Falkirk, integrated with the community learning partnership.
13. Provide improved services based on local need through better access to services, better client or customer feedback and more efficient service delivery. Community portal will bring together content and services from public, community and private sector.

6. DELIVERING THE MODERNISATION STRATEGY

- 6.1 In order to deliver modern customer focussed services it is therefore necessary first to ascertain what our customers need, align this to our ability to deliver then prepare the organisation for new ways of working. This is not a simple task; continuous review and revision will be required to achieve success.
- 6.2 This action plan is subject to constant revision and therefore the content of this document will be subject to constant consultation with our stakeholders in order to ensure that it is fit for its purpose, addressing their needs and driving Best Value services through the Council. It will be subject to formal annual review with account being taken of changing conditions in the intervening period.
- 6.3 Standard communications mechanisms within each Service area are also used to distribute information. The Intranet offers a corporate medium for additional coverage, as do Council media such as the employee magazine and Service newsletters. The Modernising Government newsletter, 'Customer in Focus' is also published on the Council intranet.
- 6.4 Consultation with employees and their representatives is a key element of the change management process and is also a theme of the customer relationship management programme that Falkirk Council leads, with thirteen other local authorities involved in the partnership. Care is now being taken to inform and involve employees in any proposed changes.

Business Process Re-engineering

- 6.5 Business process re-engineering (BPR) is the term given to the practice of mapping and re-evaluating existing processes. This is recognised as a central, cross cutting element of modernisation. A business process re-engineering group looking at standardising mapping systems and sharing good practice is led by Renfrewshire Council. Services are urged to consider looking at process before applying technology.
- 6.6 Looking at process can on its own provide significant efficiency savings. Process mapping is important for a number of additional reasons:
- constructing process maps ensures managers and staff understand all the activities that make up the process – their sequencing, the resources required to complete the process successfully, the standards and performance targets to be met;
 - roles and responsibilities can be clearly agreed and defined, ensuring everyone involved in the process, regardless of where they are in the organisation, knows who is meant to do what;
 - they help ensure that activities and services provided on a multi-service or multi-agency basis are properly integrated and connected so that the customer does not fall into the gaps between departments and different organisations; and
 - they help ensure that customer requirements are properly understood. A key part of process mapping is agreeing the outputs required from the process. By definition such outputs are intended to satisfy customer requirements. The map forces managers to properly understand and define such requirements.

Technology

- 6.7 The final link in the modernisation chain is the application of appropriate technology. A key element of this strategy is to ensure the coordination and application of appropriate systems and adequate infrastructure. Through cooperation with our partners, including the Scottish Executive and through effective internal communication between internal bodies such as the Modernising Government Steering Group and the ICT strategy group we will strive to achieve the best value with the limited resources available to us.
- 6.8 Making best use of available resources is being addressed through sharing of information and experience in the use of technologies between our partners and ourselves. The Scottish Executive is also assisting through work being done on common standards and interoperability.