

The background of the slide features the Falkirk Council Coat of Arms. It is a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a castle tower. The top-right quarter shows a stag's head with antlers. The bottom-left quarter shows a sailing ship on water. The bottom-right quarter shows a bird with spread wings. Above the shield is a crown with four fleurs-de-lis. Below the shield is a ribbon with the motto 'AINE FOR A'.

## **Agenda Item 4**

### **Revitalising Falkirk Town Centre – update report**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title: Revitalising Falkirk Town Centre – update report**

**Meeting: Falkirk Council**

**Date: 22 January 2020**

**Author: Director of Development Services**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. As agreed at the Council on 12 November, this report updates the Council on the immediate measures taking place to support Falkirk town centre. .

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Council agrees to note the progress of the work taking place to revitalise Falkirk town centre.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The Council is committed to a programme of supporting the regeneration of its town centres in the face of increasing pressures being experienced particularly through changes in shopping habits which have reduced town centre retail spend. The recent decisions to invest in town centres have been taken in this context. They have also been influenced by current town centre vacancy rates which are proportionately higher in Falkirk, Grangemouth and Bo'ness than other town centres in the area. The report to Executive on 14 January noted that Falkirk town centre currently accommodates c2200 jobs in 497 units. Between 2008 and 2015 it experienced a 27.3 % drop in jobs and had the highest reduction in shop numbers, at 15.2%, in Scotland. The vacancy rate increased to 16% in 2019.
- 3.2 Retailer and other town centre stakeholders in Falkirk have noted a significant drop in footfall following the closure of major units in the town centre e.g. Marks and Spencer and Watt Brothers. Recent work by CACI retail analysts has shown that Falkirk has dropped from 7<sup>th</sup> in 2010 to 19<sup>th</sup> place amongst retail centres in Scotland. It has a total annual retail spend of £249m, £105m of which is spent on comparison goods. CACI do note that, while working predominantly as a local centre, Falkirk has a comparison goods potential catchment (across the Forth Valley etc. area) of £890m. This highlights an opportunity to attract further retail spend to the town with the right offering.

## 4 Considerations

- 4.1 Following agreement by the Executive in March and June of last year, a *Revitalising Falkirk Town Centre Partnership* was established. This was formed as an outcome of a working group of town centre stakeholders which had set out a proposed vision for the town centre and a Town Centre Action Plan to help realise this vision. The action plan sets out a series of measures to deliver transformational change for the town centre. The terms of reference for the Partnership were agreed and these are now being taken forward by the partnership group, meeting quarterly to review progress. The *Revitalising Falkirk Partnership Group* met for the first time on 3 December 2019 to:-

- Articulate vision and strategy
- Drive forward work identified in the action plan
- Feedback on progress
- Engage wider town centre stakeholders
- Prepare a project/workplan
- Agree and take forward the Falkirk town centre action plan.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 24 March 2020. A copy of the action plan with an update of progress is attached at Appendix 1.

- 4.2 To assist town centre regeneration, the Scottish Government launched a £50 million pound fund. The Council's share of this is £1.976m. The Town Centre Capital Fund projects, approved by the Executive on 10 December 2019 are intended to stimulate and support place based investment and to encourage town centres to diversify and flourish. Work is taking place to make arrangements for commitment of the capital funds by March 2020. The list of actions proposed for Falkirk includes proposed expenditure of £1.16m in Falkirk, on the following items:

- ***Car Park and Signage Audit*** - including ticket machine infrastructure, options to improve the user experience and business satisfaction and technical advice.
- ***Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS II)*** - opportunity to protect Falkirk town centre heritage properties. Appointment of consultants to develop a future funding proposal and identify and prioritise a grant intervention for the town centre.
- ***Public Realm improvements to Newmarket Street and Lintriggs*** - appointment of consultants to deliver an enhanced scheme for improved pedestrian safety and enhancement of this area of the historic town centre.
- ***Luggage lockers*** - at rail stations to support local tourism expectations.
- ***Exploration of Falkirk High and Grahamston station opportunities*** – to improve accessibility and connection to town centre in connection with recently completed Abellio Scotrail Station Travel Plan.

- **Wi-Fi** – provision of a digitally managed service to the town centre – providing town centre user connectivity and digital opportunities.
- **Public Art** - Explore and deliver opportunities for Public Art to High Street and Grahams Road.

- 4.3 At the 12 November Council meeting, concerns over town centre access and circulation and the potential for opening up the east end of the High Street were raised. This included the potential to amend the pedestrianised area of the High Street. These measures are included in the action plan and work is taking place on this. It will be important to consider this work in the light of work also taking place on the delivery of the Council's civic headquarters (HQ) and arts centre project. The implications of this project for access, circulation and parking will be considered in more depth at that time.
- 4.4 It should be noted that, in addition to the work focusing on Falkirk, measures will be pursued to support the regeneration of Grangemouth and Bo'ness town centres via the Town Centre capital funds. Engagement activities are also underway with town centre stakeholders in both locations. It should be noted that the town centre action plan is dynamic. It will continue to change and develop as actions are taken and respond to changes in the town centre's performance. It is also worth noting that, in addition to the work focusing on Falkirk, measures will be pursued to support the regeneration of Grangemouth and Bo'ness town centres via the Town Centre capital funds. Engagement activities are also underway with town centre stakeholders in both locations.

## 5. Consultation

- 5.1 A programme of consultation with all key stakeholders is underway and underpins all elements of project delivery. A town centre Communications Group has been established to develop and implement a communications strategy to drive forward a programme of engagement, consultation and controlled project updates. The group includes partners from Forth Valley College, Scottish Enterprise, Falkirk BID, Healthy High Street and key services from Falkirk Council

## 6. Implications

### Financial

- 6.1 The Town Centre Capital Fund award has attracted £1.976m to support the projects outlined. These funds are to be committed within the financial year 2019-20. The measures being pursued in the action plan are being pursued using existing Council, BID and partners resources. Were additional measures considered necessary to support the town centre, these would require further financial support from the Council, town centre partners or external sources.

### Resources

6.2 Nil.

6.3 Legal

Nil

### Risk

6.4 There are no risk implications arising from the report's recommendations at this point. A risk matrix is being established for the delivery of the Town Centre Capital Fund programme.

### Equalities

6.5 No equality and poverty impact assessments are required

### Sustainability/Environmental Impact

6.6 Environmental impact of the measures contained in the action plan will be assessed as appropriate through the planning process.

### Council of the Future

6.7 Town centre regeneration is an important element of the '*Investing for inclusive growth*' workstream of the Council of the Future initiative.

## **7. Conclusions**

7.1 A range of measures to help revitalise Falkirk town centre is underway at present. Further updates on this work will be presented to members in due course.

---

Director of Development Services

Author – Jacquie McArthur, Economic Development Officer, Name, 01324 590973,  
jacquie.mcarthur@falkirk.gov.uk

Date: 14 January 2020

## **Appendices**

1. Revitalising Falkirk : Town Centre : Action Plan

### List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- Falkirk Town Centre Action Plan
- CACI – Retail Market Summary, September 2019

# REVITALISING FALKIRK : TOWN CENTRE: ACTION PLAN

## Appendix 1

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	WORKSTREAMS	PARTICIPANTS	TIMESCALES			COMMENTS/UPDATES
				SHORT TERM (Years 1 & 2)	MEDIUM TERM (Years 3-5)	LONG TERM (Years 6-10)	
Town Centre Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong and distinctive place to live, work and rest</li> <li>Vibrant place for interaction</li> <li>Economic powerhouse (TFI/Investment Zone)</li> <li>Diverse range of uses with culture at its heart</li> <li>Attract people and business back</li> <li>Exploit benefits of heritage</li> <li>Community ‘ownership’</li> </ul>	<p>Communicate the vision via co-ordinated strategy for the project to help us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>express the vision,</li> <li>engage effectively with stakeholders,</li> <li>demonstrate the success of our work,</li> <li>ensure people understand our ambitions,</li> <li>change behaviour and perceptions where possible,</li> <li>provide a ‘go to’ place with current, reliable information.</li> <li>establish new branding reflecting our aspirations for Falkirk</li> </ul>	All	✓	✓	✓	In partnership with Falkirk BID, a specialist PR agent will be appointed to support delivery of a communications strategy for the town centre. This will help to communicate the vision, highlight ambitions for the town, change behaviours and perceptions and highlight successes. It will also act as a ‘go-to’ location for information and updates.
Key Themes: Governance	<p>Town Centre Partnership to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and agree partners/stakeholders</li> <li>Agree Terms of Reference – adoption of Place Principle</li> <li>Decision making/responsibilities</li> <li>More flexibility, less bureaucracy</li> <li>More joined up working</li> <li>Supportive planning policy</li> <li>Agree spending on town centre</li> <li>Project plan</li> </ul> <p>Employment Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities for hospitality, manufacturing, emerging industries, soft skills development</li> <li>College/SDA/Employment and Training visibility</li> <li>Linkage to Investment Zone</li> </ul>	<p>Align to national and local policy inc. Place Principle. Work towards realising the Vision and deliver the Town Centre Action Plan through engagement process.</p> <p>Establish a Town Centre Partnership linking to Economic Partnership to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articulate vision and strategy</li> <li>Progress actions</li> </ul> <p>Establish a Town Centre Forum (annual?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage wider TC stakeholders</li> <li>Confirm actions</li> <li>Feedback on progress</li> </ul> <p>Define role of each partner</p> <p>Determine commitment from partners, including FC Services – planning, roads etc</p>	TC Partnership	✓			<p>Town Centre working group has established vision and action plan. Terms of Reference agreed and being implemented. First Revitalising Falkirk Partnership meeting took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019. Ne3xt meeting scheduled 24 March 2020.</p> <p>Meeting of town centre Forum to be called in Spring 2020.</p>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destination research and metrics</li> <li>Build branding to sell a story</li> <li>Promote Falkirk and town centre as a destination</li> </ul> <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share the vision</li> <li>What has been done</li> <li>What is happening</li> <li>Ambassadors – taxis/shops/etc</li> <li>Build momentum</li> </ul> <p>Visibility and Celebration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wifi</li> <li>Signage</li> <li>Festivals and events</li> <li>Social Media and newsletters</li> <li>Local press</li> <li>Business engagement - ezines/websites/publications</li> <li>Investment Zone</li> </ul>	<p>Establish and Implement Programme of Consultation</p> <p>Establish and implement a Project Delivery Plan for the town centre.</p> <p>Establish and implement a Communications Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Controlled project updates</li> <li>‘Go to’ place for reliable information</li> <li>Engagement tool</li> </ul> <p>Establish a fresh, forward thinking ‘brand’ for national and local audiences</p> <p>Review town centre signage including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Way-finding to and between town centre attractions including names/distances/times.</li> <li>Explore digital signage opportunities</li> <li>Car parking signage</li> <li>Orientation signage for visitors</li> <li>Welcome signage</li> </ul>	TC Forum Partners Owners Industry Experts FC Comms Team Businesses FC Roads	✓			<p>Communications group has been established, aligned with Investment Zone communications group to ensure coordination of messages to promote investment in the area and town centre.</p> <p>Town Centre Capital Fund includes proposals for installation of town centre Wifi. Scoping work has been completed and installation will commence end January 2020.</p> <p>Measures will be initiated for town centre signage. A review is underway and will include wayfinding, digital, car-parking and welcome signage.</p> <p>A report on CCTV was considered by the Council’s Executive in December 2019 and has identified the opportunity to upgrade the current public realm CCTV and establish an in-house digital alarm hub, subject to funding being available.</p>

		<p>Introduce digital connectivity with speed and reliability of broadband for businesses, residents and visitors:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make industrial/cultural heritage more accessible</li> <li>• Opportunities to develop health and wellbeing digital hubs</li> <li>• Innovation and business</li> <li>• Commercial opportunities - analytics</li> <li>• Links to CCTV and other bodies</li> <li>• Integral to Communications Strategy</li> <li>• Whats on</li> <li>• Attraction of visitors</li> <li>• Appeal of ‘modern town’</li> <li>• Mobile apps</li> </ul>					Forums held on anti-social behaviour with a view to a coordinated approach incorporating shop-safe, radio link, CCTV, designing out crime etc..
Hubs	<p>Attractions and research to visit the TC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HQ/Arts Centre</li> <li>• Retail</li> <li>• Exploit Industrial heritage</li> <li>• Invest in health and well-being/primary care</li> <li>• Events – must support business</li> <li>• Heritage visitor centre</li> <li>• Civic space</li> <li>• Third sector</li> <li>• Business sector innovation</li> <li>• Business support</li> <li>• Investment Zone</li> </ul>	<p>Support creative industries growth, evening economy. Support for the vulnerable – aged, dependent and lonely, consider technology and asset opportunities</p> <p>Build community pride in Falkirk – tours/taxis/Develop Street Management Plan – tackle busking/begging/business waste/bins.</p> <p>Explore opportunities for collaborative work with key service providers:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forth Valley College</li> <li>• NHS</li> <li>• Active Travel</li> <li>• Business Gateway</li> <li>• Police Scotland – must have a visible presence in the town centre</li> </ul> <p>Promote a competition based programme engaging with the local community to give start up retail businesses the opportunity to test their offer in vacant spaces.</p> <p>Business mentoring support to enhance potential for entrepreneurship in Falkirk TC and encourage innovative entrants to the retail/service mix.</p> <p>Motivational and informative retail workshops targeted at existing offer in a bid to raise awareness of continuous improvement model and overcome apathy and complacency</p>	<p>TC Forum</p> <p>FVC</p> <p>NHS</p> <p>Active Travel</p> <p>Police Scotland</p> <p>Taxis</p> <p>BID</p> <p>FC – Roads and Grounds</p> <p>TEC programme</p>	✓	✓	✓	<p>Partners engaged via Revitalising Falkirk Partnership</p> <p>Work on business mentoring proceeding via BID and calendar of events, promotional events, workshops &amp; business support via Business Gateway being arranged. Welcome pack being prepared</p> <p>Enhancement plan for vacant units being prepared.</p> <p>Good landlord/tenant charter being prepared.</p>
Procurement – HQ/Arts Hub	<p>Deliver ambitious HQ and Art Centre project in Falkirk town centre serving Council and other partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitive dialogue process</li> <li>• Clarity of requirements and assessment criteria</li> <li>• Clear governance and decision making process</li> <li>• Realistic and well planned programme</li> <li>• Assessment of bidders and bids</li> <li>• Outline timescale for delivery</li> <li>• FCT lead as Council’s cultural advisor/operator</li> <li>• Feasibility Study – Arts Centre</li> </ul>	<p>Falkirk Council</p> <p>Falkirk Community Trust</p> <p>Private</p> <p>Other</p>	✓	✓		<p>Report presented to Council Executive 14 January 2020 on HQ/arts centre outlining proposed next steps in development of this project.</p>
Reinvigorate Retail – independents and brands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and support</li> <li>• Inspire new starts, create taster opps</li> <li>• Fill units, interims and pop-ups</li> <li>• Promote unique identity</li> <li>• More of right in right places</li> <li>• Introduce farmers organic markets</li> <li>• Attract brands</li> <li>• Support click and collect</li> <li>• Longer opening hours</li> <li>• Parking – improve, innovate, cashless</li> </ul>	<p>Develop a ‘Good Landlord/Tenant’ Charter – encouraging responsible approach to improving physical appearance of shops and residents</p> <p>Develop a calendar of events/promotions that support local business and ensure wider community involvement and engagement</p>	<p>TC Forum</p> <p>BID</p> <p>Healthy High Street</p> <p>Businesses</p> <p>FC Street</p> <p>Cleansing</p> <p>Partner organisations</p>	✓			<p>(see communications item above)</p> <p>Review of car parking – on/off-street, introduction of cashless parking, click &amp; collect, provision of coach spaces.</p> <p>Development of coordinated events programme underway.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome back for new</li> <li>Communication between existing</li> </ul>	<p>Welcome pack for all new businesses – detailing business support, contacts, details of meetings, maintenance, good tenant information.</p> <p>Produce a plan to enhance vacant units that have become vacant/tired/unsightly</p> <p>Work partners to unlock support and establish a co-ordinated Events Programme</p> <p>Establish Street Champions in each area of town to encourage involvement and ownership of built environment and trading opportunities</p> <p>Review of Car Parking for both on-street and car parks including options for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click and collect support</li> <li>Cashless parking</li> <li>15/30 Minutes Free</li> <li>Blue Badge Parking Configuration</li> <li>Coach Parking</li> <li>Park and Ride in Falkirk</li> <li>SMART parking</li> </ul>	Bench-marking – Perth Council				<p>Welcome pack for all new businesses and good landlord charter in preparation</p> <p>Nominations for street champions being sought.</p>
<p>Residential – Extending Town Centre Living</p> <p>Linked to developers proposals</p>	<p>Framework to attract residential developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased offering</li> <li>Physical change that will create Quality of Place</li> <li>Provide flexibility of offers</li> <li>Populate town centre</li> </ul> <p>Offering more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Townhouses – house and garden</li> <li>Apartments</li> <li>Student accommodation</li> <li>Affordable</li> </ul>	<p>Tackle declining population in Falkirk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conversion of underused space for housing</li> <li>Target vacant space – clean-up</li> <li>Encourage further investment in town centre living space, student accommodation and other developments</li> <li>Explore opportunities for Technically Enabled Care facilities for vulnerable people</li> </ul>	NHS FC Housing Landlords Developers Planning Health and Social Care Partnership	✓	✓		Series of developments taking place including recent acquisition of former Burtons Unit on High St/Vicar Street by Bellair.
<p>Infrastructure</p> <p>Detail main connections, intersections and linkages</p> <p>Link to Investment Zone</p>	<p>Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical and technological</li> <li>Transport hub</li> <li>Links to Helix, Falkirk Wheel, Callendar House etc</li> <li>Free bus/tour bus/discounts for attractions</li> </ul> <p>Liveable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a liveable town</li> <li>Improve gardens, parks and open spaces</li> <li>Create a Town Square</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> floor business to ground floor</li> <li>Deal with anti-social behaviour</li> <li>More THI</li> </ul>	<p>Improve connectivity and deliver improved business, resident and tourism infrastructure by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bringing stakeholders together (building asset owners, train operator, bus operators, planning authority)</li> <li>examine scope for public transport interchange</li> <li>review pedestrianised areas.</li> <li>review parking provision</li> <li>Undertake feasibility and develop business case.</li> </ul> <p>Following recent public realm enhancements there exists an opportunity to further enhance the main town centre ‘hub’ to maximise the asset of the historic town centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore opportunities for a CARS 2 Project – Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme</li> </ul> <p>Prepare and bid for Scottish Government 2019 Town Centre and Regeneration Capital Grant Fund – opportunities for High Street Streetscape project - Lint Riggs, Cow Wynd, central core.</p>	<p>Network Rail Abellio</p> <p>Growth &amp; Investment</p> <p>Growth &amp; Investment</p>	✓			<p>Investment Zone bid includes proposals for sustainable transport measures including development of public transport interchange.</p> <p>Town Centre Capital Fund includes measures for upgrade of Newmarket Street/Lint-Riggs.</p> <p>Work underway to review connectivity, linking with relevant stakeholders. This includes consideration of access, pedestrianisation and parking arrangements in the town centre.</p> <p>Electric bike scheme introduced in partnership with town centre Active Travel Hub/Forth Environment Link.</p> <p>EV vehicle charging units being introduced at town centre car parks at Meeks Rd, Melville Street, Westbridge Street, Garrison Place.</p> <p>Consideration of CARS II project for upgrade of heritage properties.</p>