



Agenda Item 11

Falkirk Community Trust Recovery

Falkirk Council

Title: Falkirk Community Trust Recovery
Meeting: Emergency Executive
Date: 25 June 2020
Submitted By: Chief Executive

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to set out Falkirk Community Trust’s approach to recovery planning.

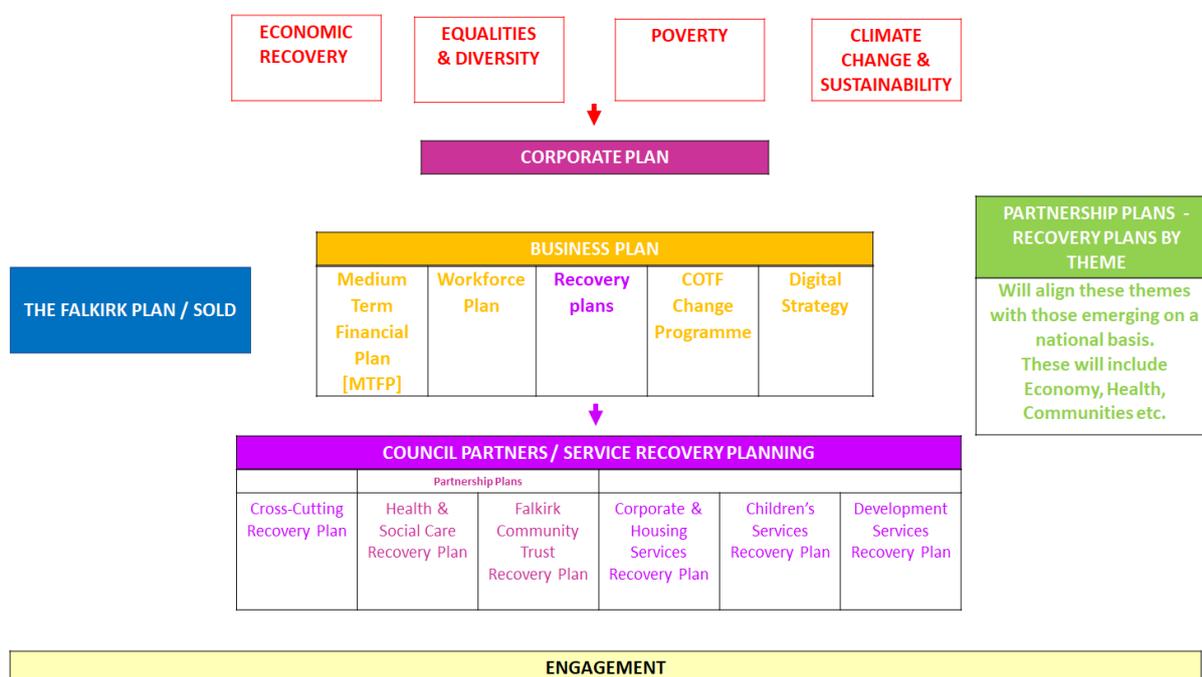
2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 It is recommended that the Emergency Executive:

- 1) Endorses the proposed approach to reopening culture and sport facilities and services as outlined in Appendix1.
- 2) Notes the information on the financial implications and that further reports will be presented should any decision be required on funding for the Trust.

3. Background

3.1 In line with the Scottish Government’s recovery route map, the Council’s strategic framework encompasses the recovery plans for Council Services and Partners. This was presented to the Emergency Executive on 11 June 2020.



- 3.2 This report outlines the recovery position and Business Strategy of Falkirk Community Trust, with a particular focus on meeting customer needs and ensuring financial sustainability of the Trust.

Falkirk Community Trust – Recovery

Phase 2 – Play areas open 29 June 2020

- 3.3 In Phase 2, play areas at the Helix, Callendar Park and Muiravonside will open. The financial viability of opening the Plaza café and Callendar Park Kiosk is being looked at. It should be noted that the Toilets will remain closed in line with Government Guidelines.

Phase 3 anticipate 9 July 2020 at earliest or 15 July 2020 (based on tourism announcement)

- 3.4 In Phase 3 it is proposed that the majority of facilities we operate can reopen, though there is some uncertainty over the range of provision that is covered by the reference to Gyms, which appears to cover sports and leisure provision. Work is ongoing with sector colleagues to seek to clarify the guidance. Given the requirement for social distancing limitations, our focus will be on a health and fitness offer in the first instance with the likelihood of access for athletics training.
- 3.5 It is proposed that prior to opening any facility, a financial modelling exercise is undertaken to assess the likely costs of opening, to ensure compliance with Government guidelines, understand the customer capacity achievable, projected income and the resulting net deficit so that an understanding of the overall position can be agreed and approved as needed.

Approach to Re-opening

- 3.6 It is the Trust's view that it is important to take the earliest opportunity to reopen facilities, when the Government guidelines allow, to ensure the local community has a sense of the importance both the Trust and the Council places on the vital role community facilities play in relation to their general health and well-being. A planned and phased approach should be taken when re-opening facilities to the general public. This cautious approach sits alongside the Government's plans to continue to suppress the virus and avoid a second wave of the pandemic.
- 3.7 The following facilities have therefore been selected for re-opening when the country moves to the implementation of Phase 3 of the Government's route map:
- Callendar House (excluding the Tea Room)
 - All existing Libraries (modified service)
 - Helix Visitor Centre and Plaza café
 - Grangemouth Stadium
 - Mariner Leisure Centre's Health & Fitness facility
 - Stenhousemuir Gym
- 3.8 However, the opening times for all of the above will need to be reduced to accommodate our ability to provide appropriate levels of staffing at each site and to minimise any health and safety risks for customers. Additional operational arrangements will need to be introduced at all of these sites involving booking systems, customer flow layouts, ancillary facilities and so on. The services that

will be delivered from the above will not be the same as before the 'lockdown' and it will be some time before such pre-lockdown usage levels are achieved.

- 3.9 The proposal is that all libraries open for a limited time for a collection service. This will require customers to select books online in advance and book a time to come into collect their books to avoid queues and a lengthy wait. Guidelines around access to books is that browsing is not possible, hence the click and collection option. We are looking at a mechanism to allow pre-booked access to PCs however that may take some time to agree a suitable safe protocol for cleaning after each customer. The Homebound library service will restart again following the introduction of relevant protocols.
- 3.10 In line with other theatres, the FTH is likely to be 'dark' for performing arts related work for the rest of the calendar year and possibly to March 2021, as result of social distancing requirements, lack of product availability, programming constraints and viability associated with both professional and voluntary sector performances. After much consideration and deliberation we have taken the decision to postpone the 2020 Pantomime to 2021. An announcement about the postponement of the autumn programme and Pantomime will be made in the next few days.

Potential Loss of Income

- 3.11 A significant issue for all councils, is the loss of income reflecting the reduction in fees and charges for services that are currently not being provided during the current lockdown. This includes leisure services which may bear a potential loss of customer income at £3.2m for the year. Once the country starts to emerge from the lockdown it may also be some time before income gets to the levels currently budgeted. This is a particularly significant risk for Falkirk Community Trust.

Job Retention Scheme

- 3.12 Falkirk Community Trust have made an application through the UK Government's Job Retention Scheme with c£1.1m claimed for employees furloughed during March, April & May. The Job Retention Scheme is aimed at maintaining the current workforce by placing employees on furlough and then applying for a grant that covers 80% of employees' usual monthly wage costs, up to £2,500 a month, plus associated Employer NI contributions and the minimum employer pension contributions.
- 3.13 The first application to the Scheme has proved successful. An overall update on the financial impact of this is reported in the Revenue Budget report to be considered by the Emergency Executive.

4. Considerations

- 4.1 Falkirk Community Trust has submitted a recovery plan to resume service delivery in a phased approach as set out at Appendix 1.

5. Implications

Financial

- 5.1 The recovery plans should be considered in the context of strategic priorities and against the financial constraints. There are limited resources and clear decision-making on how we use them is essential, prioritising for the most vulnerable in our communities and working with our communities.

Resources

- 5.2 Lessons learned and our recovery process, will enable decision-making on how resources should be best used to deliver on agreed priorities.

Legal

- 5.3 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Risk

- 5.4 If recovery plans are not considered against priorities, there is a risk that resource decisions will be made that will detriment progress in recovery.

Equalities

- 5.5 An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) is not required for this report.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 5.6 An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required for this report.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The recovery proposal in Appendix 1 outlines the immediate plans for Falkirk Community Trust to phase in the opening of sites for community use.

Chief Executive

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Date: 18 June 2020

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Falkirk Community Trust Recovery 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 Community Trust

Subject: Falkirk Community Trust Recovery Plan
Meeting: Falkirk Council Emergency Executive
Date: 25 June 2020
From: Chief Executive, Falkirk Community Trust

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper sets out the proposed initial reopening plan for Trust managed facilities, as part of the Scottish Government Route Map to recovery under the COVID -19 Pandemic. It recognises the financial uncertainty and risk to the Trust, largely as a consequence of the immediate loss of customer income. It notes the likely impact of increased costs associated with the facilities reopening while customer capacity is restricted due to government guidelines on social distancing and the time required to rebuild customer confidence, to take part in sport and culture activities in public buildings.
- 1.2 The Government has set out a route map that shows when certain types of activity can restart. This is currently in Phase 1 with Phase 2 likely to be announced on 18 June. While it's uncertain when Phase 3 will definitely begin, a recent announcement in respect of tourism related businesses being able to open from 15 July 2020, conditional on Phase 3 being underway, suggests that it is possibly sometime from 9 July 2020, if the current 3 weekly phasing were to be replicated.
- 1.3 This report summarises our openings in Phases 1 and 2 and seeks Council agreement to our plan for Phase 3, most notably in taking a staged approach to reopening a limited service in a few key locations. We will take time to learn from the operational practicalities and customer feedback to consider expanding and developing access to additional sites and services as appropriate.

2. Current Phase – Phase 1 (Effective since 29 May 2020)

- 2.1 The Parks at Callendar Park, Kinneil Estate, Muiravonside Country Park and Helix have been open since lockdown began. Car parks were initially closed at the request of the Police to deter visitors from outwith the local area, however most of these are now open. No ancillary facilities, such as toilets, are available. There have been some issues with fly tipping and excessive litter, however on the whole access has worked very well, with most visitors observing social distancing. Some staff are on site to undertake minimal routine maintenance and manage emptying of bins, litter collection and site supervision.
- 2.2 Grangemouth Golf Course opened on 29 May with support from Grangemouth Golf Club. The modified management arrangements are working well and feedback from customers is positive. In spite of good season ticket sales the financial impact of the early season closure and the operating restrictions in terms of course capacity means that we expect the course deficit for 2020/21 to increase from £50k to £90k.
- 2.3 The Tennis courts at Dollar Park and Zetland Park are open and operating fine. No income is being received as it is not cost effective to collect fees and it is helpful to offer a service, particularly to families, for households to exercise together.

3. Phase 2 – Play areas open 29 June 2020

- 3.1 In Phase 2, play areas at the Helix, Callendar Park and Muiravonside will open. We are looking at the financial viability of opening the Plaza café and Callendar Park Kiosk. It should be noted that the Toilets will remain closed in line with Government Guidelines.

4. Phase 3 anticipate 9 July 2020 at earliest or 15 July 2020 (based on tourism announcement)

- 4.1 In Phase 3 it is proposed that the majority of facilities we operate can reopen, though there is some uncertainty over the range of provision that is covered by the reference to Gyms, which appears to cover sports and leisure provision. We are working with sector colleagues to seek to clarify the guidance. Given the requirement for social distancing limitations, our focus will be on a health and fitness offer in the first instance with the likelihood of access for athletics training..
- 4.2 It is proposed that prior to opening any facility, a financial modelling exercise is undertaken to assess the likely costs of opening, to ensure compliance with Government guidelines, understand the customer capacity achievable, projected income and the resulting net deficit so that an understanding of the overall position can be agreed and approved as needed.
- 4.3 As the majority of staff are Furloughed at present we will be thinking carefully about which skills and expertise are needed at each phase of opening and to identify appropriate staff to return to work. Not everyone can or should, return at the same time. This will help with the financial position as access to the Job Retention Fund is available in some form until October this year.

5. Approach to Re-opening

- 5.1 However, It is important to take the earliest opportunity to re-open facilities, when the Government guidelines allow, to ensure the local community has a sense of the importance both the Trust and the Council places on the vital role community facilities play in relation to their general health and well-being. A planned and phased approach should be taken when re-opening facilities to the general public. This cautious approach sits alongside the Government's plans to continue to suppress the virus and avoid a second wave of the pandemic.
- 5.2 With this in mind the following principles were created with the intention of determining which facilities should and could re-open:
- The health and safety of customers and staff to be at the forefront of any service delivery
 - The general health and fitness of the community to be supported
 - The financial costs of a reduced service provision should be assessed and a funding source agreed
 - The capacity to generate some income should be assessed
 - One centrally located heritage facility to be operational
 - A modified library service to be delivered from existing facilities
 - The capacity to offer an appropriate takeaway food and beverage offering
 - One sport and recreational facility to be operational within each of the three localities

- 5.3 The following facilities have therefore been selected for re-opening when the country moves to the implementation of Phase 3 of the Government's routemap:
- Callendar House (excluding the Tea Room)
 - All existing Libraries (modified service)
 - Helix Visitor Centre and Plaza café
 - Grangemouth Stadium
 - Mariner Leisure Centre's Health & Fitness facility
 - Stenhousemuir Gym
- 5.4 However, the opening times for all of the above will need to be reduced to accommodate our ability to provide appropriate levels of staffing at each site and to minimise any health and safety risks for customers. Additional operational arrangements will need to be introduced at all of these sites involving booking systems, customer flow layouts, ancillary facilities and so on. The services that will be delivered from the above will not be the same as before the 'lockdown' and it will be some time before such pre-lockdown usage levels are achieved.
- 5.5 The lessons learned from the opening of the Grangemouth Golf Course, tennis courts and continued operation of the four strategic parks will be referred to as plans are implemented to re-open the aforementioned sites. Similarly, any lessons learned from these sites will be adopted as we move to re-open other additional sites at some time in the future, yet be determined and in accordance with the priorities of the Council and its Strategic Property Review
- 5.6 The proposal is that all libraries open for a limited time for a collection service. This will require customers to select books online in advance and book a time to come into collect their books to avoid queues and a lengthy wait. Guidelines around access to books is that browsing is not possible, hence the click and collection option. We are looking at a mechanism to allow pre-booked access to PCs however that may take some time to agree a suitable safe protocol for cleaning after each customer. The Homebound library service will restart again following the introduction of relevant protocols.
- 5.7 Trading is unlikely to be viable anywhere, other than the Helix and Callendar Park Kiosk, due to restrictions. Takeaway options will be a priority. Other cafes will be considered when there is evidence of demand and arrangements allow for a viable business.
- 5.8 In line with other theatres, the FTH is likely to be 'dark' for performing arts related work for the rest of the calendar year and possibly to March 2021, as result of social distancing requirements, lack of product availability, programming constraints and viability associated with both professional and voluntary sector performances. After much consideration and deliberation we have taken the decision to postpone the 2020 Pantomime to 2021. An announcement about the postponement of the autumn programme and Pantomime will be made in the next few days.
- 5.9 Clearly there are significant staffing and financial implications associated with all of the above and we will be seeking assistance from Council colleagues in that regard. In addition, modifications and alterations to buildings may be required to comply with guidelines as well as preparing each building for opening through comprehensive building maintenance checks and associated work. Buildings can only open if it is safe to do so and so the date of opening will be conditional on availability of appropriate resources to support us.
- 5.10 Consideration of opening additional sites will be an ongoing exercise and the Council will be consulted and advised accordingly.

6. Phase 4 Anticipate 30 July at the earliest

- 6.1 FCT Stadium office opens and additional sites are considered for opening subject to relevant community need and business considerations including financial modelling.

7. Extended Learning Estate

- 7.1 It is proposed that Trust staff provide enhanced support to children of key workers over the summer period. It is proposed that in partnership with Childrens' Services, care will be provided at Grangemouth Stadium, Falkirk Town Hall and St Bernadette Primary or the former Carrongrange School.

8. Strategic Property Review

- 8.1 Trust staff continue to contribute to various Council working groups. The SPR is particularly relevant to the future viability of the Trust and the range of services that can be supported in the future. The condition and suitability of all Trust managed assets needs to be considered alongside future priorities for both the Trust and Council as well as the community aspiration and expectations. The Trust remains committed to working with the Council to ensure that the area has a culture and sport portfolio befitting its ambition and community need.

9. Staffing Implications

- 9.1 Trust staff have been very supportive of our approach in closing facilities and in the lockdown period. Securing their agreement to furlough was essential in offering the Trust access to financial support through the Job Retention Scheme. However, this is a time limited initiative. Staff are understandably anxious about the longer term prospects for the Trust and what it means for them personally. The Council support, in its early commitment to support the payment of Trust staff at 100% of pay, has been greatly appreciated.
- 9.2 As we move through each phase, communication with staff is vital. We will be doing all we reasonably can to give assurance, while recognising the financial constraints we are likely to face for some considerable period of time.
- 9.3 Decisions about the continued access to the Furlough scheme and any other support available will be considered at each step of the journey.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 The financial position continues to be highly uncertain. With virtually no income from customers in Q1 and Q2 looking like a very limited offer, our early assessment is that income could be reduced by somewhere between 75% and 85%. This would have significant consequences for the viability of the Trust going forward and so constant dialogue and discussion with the Council will be essential. Thus far the Council has expressed its support for the Trust, however understanding the level of financial risk and options to mitigate the associated impact are essential for future decision making.
- 10.2 The Trust external auditors are likely to take a strong interest in our ability to demonstrate our trading capacity and that we are a going concern in governance and financial terms. The letter of support that is normally provided from the Council is likely to need to be strengthened and more specific in the current climate. It may be that the auditor will also have regard to the Council's ability to provide ongoing support, given the financial pressures it faces too.

11. Conclusion

11.1 This report is primarily to inform the Council of our proposed reopening proposal and to seek agreement to proceed as set out here. It shows the proposed facilities to open in the initial stages of the Government Route Map Phase 3, when most culture and sport facilities can open. We note that a phased approach to considering the opening of additional sites will be brought forward having regard to customer demand, affordability and availability of staff.

12. Recommendation

12.1 The Council is asked to endorse the approach set out here.

Maureen Campbell OBE
Chief Executive