

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the University of Alberta crest. The crest is a shield divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant shows a building, the top-right shows a stag's head, the bottom-left shows a sailing ship, and the bottom-right shows an eagle. Above the shield is a crown with four floral motifs. Below the shield is a banner with the motto 'ANNE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 5

The Corporate Plan 2020-2022 – Communities

Falkirk Council

Title: The Corporate Plan 2020-2022 – Communities

Meeting: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12 November 2020

Submitted By: Director of Corporate and Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Members will be aware of the refocus of the Council's priorities included in the new Corporate Plan covering the period 2020 – 2022, approved by Council on 30 September 2020. The new priorities are People - Communities, Place - Enterprise and Partnership - Innovation. This report provides performance information on the People - Communities priority of the Corporate Plan.
- 1.2 Reports on enterprise and innovation will follow for future meeting.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

Consider the performance of the Council against the priority of Communities within the Corporate Plan.

3. Background

- 3.1 Reporting the Corporate Plan as One Council provides an overview of the impact our actions are making and identifies where improvement is required while working towards each of the three priorities.
- 3.2 This is the first report since the adoption of the reviewed Corporate Plan Priorities and provides a summary of the actions Services have been taking to deliver on our Communities priority.
- 3.3 The Communities priority is about:
 - Enabled communities
 - Poverty and equalities
 - Education
 - Social Care and
 - Where we live

- 3.4 Our Corporate Plan priorities will be delivered through our Council of the Future Change programme and business as usual activities. The key Council of the Future projects within the Communities priority are Developing the Falkirk Plan, Advice Spokes and Hubs, Closer to Home, Succeed Today/Excel Tomorrow, Transformation of Roads and Grounds Maintenance, Analogue to Digital/CCTV and Redesign of Housing Property Services.

4. Update

- 4.1 The summary below provides a brief narrative for the actions we have undertaken within each of the Communities priorities.

Work to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of all

The Housing Team has developed an early intervention approach to debt by providing budgeting advice and support to tenants - especially those affected by the Welfare Benefits Reform. This will help support tenants who find themselves in a financially challenging position to maintain their tenancies effectively.

To support the challenges of our client groups who are suffering from dementia, approximately 71 front line housing staff undertook awareness raising sessions to develop their understanding of the illness, the challenges their clients may be experiencing and how they can assist them to meet their challenging needs. To further support the wider client groups housing staff undertook a review of Registered Social Landlord and council developments for older people, looking at a wide range of communal facilities in these developments. Additionally, the division has improved accommodation for young people leaving care using grant funding through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Community Learning and Development Service (CLD) has been working with young people and their family to deliver activities (Falkirk's Summer Takeaway) that encourage cooperation and learning within the family. For example, young people who attend Falkirk High School and their families were encouraged by CLD staff and school based staff to actively participate in developing a project. This provided food and digital devices support to enable engagement and learning, ensuring a non-stigmatised approach was taken to address food insecurity and learning loss. As a direct result of participating in Falkirk's Summer Takeaway, families reported their mental health had improved as they felt less isolated.

As well as improving participants health and wellbeing, Falkirk's Summer Takeaway improved their participation in learning with 72 individuals participating – a 91% participation rate.

Colleagues within the Emergency Planning Team have developed a public facing web page which provides information on resilience. This will be used to

post public information when issues arise and is aimed at providing a clear 'go to' web page which will ensure the public has the latest support information.

As with many organisations the restrictions that came with the Covid-19 lockdown resulted in all of Go Youth Trust programmes and activities to be cancelled. This gave Go Youth Trust the opportunity to pivot as an organisation and focus on what the current needs of our young people and families were, who was delivering what already in the community and what resources were available. Working with Children's Services staff, Go Youth Trust established an alternative provision. The Trust established an activity pack programme called "Boredom Bags" and started to deliver these packs to young people in communities across Falkirk which included emotional literacy activities, stress relief toys, games and craft materials. As these were delivered staff and volunteers got the opportunity to check in with parents and families to see how they were coping. As a result of these conversations 26 families were further supported with weekly phone calls or visits from Go Youth Trust volunteers.

Where a family was identified as struggling financially Go Youth Trust provided "Parent SOS" vouchers which gave the family £25 of ASDA vouchers per child in the family. £3,300 of Parent SOS vouchers were distributed in Falkirk alone. Over 500 young people were supported through Boredom Bags over lockdown. Go Youth Trust also delivered 5-7 drop ins a week utilising Zoom and social media. These drop-ins lasted for 1-1.5 hours and were led by our Youth Work Team. The drop-ins gave young people the chance to play games and also chat about how they were feeling about lockdown and the restrictions. Many conversations focussed on the uncertainty and anxieties that they were feeling. Go Youth Trust also ran various competitions throughout the summer such as art and writing competitions where young people would express themselves through creative arts. Schools were instrumental in supporting families in need and the majority of referrals continued to come from Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and other statutory services. Many schools had families who they were particularly concerned for during the summer break and asked the Trust to continue checking in weekly over the break.

Ask, listen and act on what our communities tell us

To develop the Falkirk Plan, the Community Planning Partnership Improvement Group has undertaken a Joint Strategic Analysis of data and is developing nine ward level engagement plans and engagement toolkits. This will enable community organisations to undertake their own engagement exercises with their residents. Third sector organisations that work with more vulnerable and more difficult to engage communities of interest have also offered to assist in having conversation with the people they work with. The Community Planning Board approved the high level engagement plan and approach on 8 October 2020 with feedback to ensure the timing is appropriate and does not interfere with Falkirk's community pandemic response should this be required again in the near future.

To support tenants to scrutinise and have their say in how their rent money is spent, the Housing Team engaged with tenants in October 2020. The engagement took place to consider the rent increase consultation. This was well received and will inform the decision that Members take on the rent increase when the Council considers this in January 2021. Building on the work undertaken to engage with our tenants, the service has established further resident's groups including those within our supported accommodation units and Travelling Persons Site.

Via our Community Warden Team, in conjunction with the Area Housing Teams, the services have worked to nurture stronger communities by encouraging people to become more involved. The team has worked alongside communities to build a strong community approach to challenges such as anti-social behaviour and issues with mixed bins. This approach has ensured the service has the most accurate community feedback with which to inform our decisions. Developing on from this, the service has increased visibility of our Housing Officers within communities, despite current COVID-19 restrictions. This is beginning to see tangible improvements in the feel and look of our estates. The teams work collaboratively with the Community Estate Teams and carry out regular patrols in the community and engage with people building stronger ties with the community and partners.

Working to produce the Local Development Plan (LDP), Development Services reported and adopted the plan in August 2020. This followed on from the conclusion of modifications recommended by the examination reporter. The Action Programme has been finalised, and a programme of updating of Supplementary Guidance is underway. LDP2 is now the operative plan for the area, superseding the 2015 LDP.

Cut red tape to make it easier for communities to make decisions for themselves

Corporate and Housing Services has worked with Services to develop an outline framework for how we will implement Community Choices. The Framework will deliver a Community Choices programme for each ward area. Communities across a ward will be able to put forward ideas for both small grants to deliver activities in their communities and capital grants for larger local infrastructure projects. A panel of local people and Council Officers will ensure eligibility of the projects and align them to development support being offered from a range of partners prior to projects being put forward for a public vote. The Health and Social Care Partnership is working with the Council to ensure the small grant funds are accessible to all demographics in a Ward. The Council of the Future project on Locality Working will review how the Council works with Community Planning Partners to develop practical mechanisms for locality working that are not overly bureaucratic and support local decision making.

Build on new strengths created within our communities

Recognising the value of consulting those with lived experience housing staff launched a peer mentoring initiative within the supported accommodation unit. This provides additional support to households experiencing homelessness helping them to develop their ability to maintain their tenancy and move forward with the challenges they are experiencing.

The Coo Park Food Pantry was already an established community run project. Run by a small team of volunteers, the Food Pantry offers local people in Langlees & Bainsford the chance to buy fresh, affordable, healthy food for the price of a small weekly subscription. The pantry's underlying ethos of 'a hand up, rather than a hand out' became a metaphor for the way the wider community dealt with impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Because the Coo Park Food Pantry know their community, they were able to provide a response that worked. This resulted in getting much needed food and other essential household items out into the households that would benefit from it.

Work in partnership with communities to ensure decisions and services are right for them

When the country went into lockdown in March 2020, Falkirk Council Services and Falkirk Adult and Social Care Partnership worked closely with Falkirk's Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) to develop plans and build capacity to support people who were at risk of not being able to provide themselves with essentials and those at risk of isolation. During lockdown, Falkirk RVS recruited 60 people, who supported over 700 clients in the Falkirk area with food and medication deliveries as well as regular companionship phone calls and latterly 'garden gate visits'. Each client's needs varied widely from one off assistance in an 'emergency' to those requiring at least weekly food and medication deliveries and/or emotional support several times a week. Falkirk RVS volunteers worked tirelessly to ensure that communities were safe, secure and equipped with everything they needed to get through the lockdown period. They helped with housing issues, maintenance problems, household administration and signposted their clients to other sources of support as appropriate and they worked with people who not only had physical disabilities but also poor mental health, addiction issues and other social problems such as homelessness and abuse. Falkirk RVS currently have 150 clients still registered for support either because the lockdown has resulted in a fear of returning to 'normal life' or because their support needs have changed during the lockdown period and they are now no longer able to provide for themselves as before but have no other consistent support in place as yet.

Form stronger ties with our communities and partners to improve the lives of our most vulnerable

The Enabled Communities – Lessons Learned from Covid19 report was approved by Council Executive Committee in October 2020. This report

outlines how the Council worked as an enabling body with communities and with CVS Falkirk in a liaison role with our community and third sector leaders which formed stronger and more direct ties with our most vulnerable communities. It outlines the further development of this approach.

Community Learning and Development Service (CLD) supported Denny and District Community Network to organise a series of conversation workshops to pull together a local community action plan. Critically, the conversations enabled relationships to be built and individuals and organisations had shown a general willingness to work together. With the emergence of the pandemic, the commitment and motivation from individuals and organisations existed within the Denny and District area to address some of the challenges that Covid-19 presented. For example, some community groups within the Denny and district area were part of a community food consortium. This enabled two community food aid providers to offer emergency food access points throughout the Covid-19 lockdown period. The providers intend to establish food pantries in the very near future, together with two community growing areas.

Raise aspirations and help everyone live independent and fulfilling lives

Corporate & Housing Services has reviewed the allocations policy to provide more control and choice over housing options and improve tenancy sustainment and satisfaction within social housing in the Falkirk Council area. This was approved by Members earlier this year and introduced in October.

Ensure children and young people thrive in their education/training

To try, where possible, to keep young people and children in their own home, the housing service implemented new measures to minimise them experiencing homelessness and prevent eviction. This included developing an eviction panel and building a process of further prevention strategies where private landlords and RSL's inform the Council of forthcoming evictions. Where eviction cannot be prevented, the service has increased the allocation of mainstream social housing lets to home seekers to reduce any periods of homelessness.

Succeed Today, Excel Tomorrow (STET) strategy consists of six transformational sub-projects, two of which are aligned within the Strategic Property Review: Investing in our ASN Schools and Investing in our Primaries. These projects will meet the demands of a changing demographic and ensure that our schools are efficient, modern and enhance learning. There has been considerable ongoing background work, consultation and preparation with parents and staff to draft a set of proposals which is ready for wider community consultation. Significant progress has also been made with Connected Falkirk (the transformation of learning and teaching across Falkirk through the development of a world-class digital learning environment). The procurement contracts for both infrastructure (WiFi upgrade across the estate) and equipment have been concluded and a 'sprint team' has been appointed to deliver the roll-out of the 17,000 devices which have been procured,

alongside an intensive training and support programme for staff. In addition to this, 1,700 young people who are 'digitally excluded' are being prioritised to get their devices first and 800 families will also be provided with MiFi devices enabling their homes to be connected to the internet.

Safeguard our green spaces and maintain a transport infrastructure that is sustainable and fit for purpose

Colleagues in Development Services have established the Council's Road Safety and Sustainable Active Travel programme, the Cycling, Walking, Safer Streets (CWSS) programme, and the structural roads investment programme, on a rolling basis to contribute to improvement of the transport infrastructure serving the Council area. The structural road investment programme is in progress with works across the entire Council road network.

Contract tenders have been received for Zetland Park works and a tender evaluation report is being finalised. The client agreement relating to the community prepared Hertbertshire Castle Park Masterplan has been signed-off and implementation of Phase 1 works will commence soon. Supporting the work across our estates, there is an ongoing review of the transformation of roads and grounds maintenance. This is at an early stage and the outputs of the review will be reported at a future committee.

Ensure people feel safe within their community and live in high quality housing

The Council continues to invest significantly in improving and maintaining its housing stock, with £186m planned improvements over the next five years. This includes the delivery of a range of improvement programmes including roofing and roughcasting; kitchen and bathroom replacement; door and window replacement and a range of energy and home safety measures. 97.8% of our properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and 96.4% meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH). Planned investment will aim to further increase these measures.

A review and design of the Housing Repairs Service has commenced, with the objective for developing a more efficient and effective repairs service, to meet tenants requirements. Improvements to the repairs service are planned to commence from April 2021.

Services continue to maintain standards of street cleansing, environmental health, food inspection, trading activities and safety across communities. The latest LEAMS reports indicate that our scores improved in areas such as Open space; visual impact; smoking litter and dog fouling. In respect of overall performance, we achieved 91.1% during 2018/19 with this being a higher than average performance within our local authority family group. In addition to this, the Services has developed a Litter Strategy which recognises the requirements of the national Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse (CoPLaR) and the Scottish Government's 'Towards a litter-free Scotland'.

The Grangemouth flood prevention scheme continues to progress. Public consultation events were held in summer 2019 to present the outline design proposals, and extensive ground investigation works are ongoing to inform the outline design process. Consultation with industry and core stakeholders continues. Further communication and engagement events are planned for later in 2020 including businesses, communities, STEM programme and other stakeholders.

To ensure that the Council meets equalities obligations and address inequality, discrimination and disadvantage, the governance division will work with Services to support them in their approach to Equality Mainstreaming. This will include ensuring that the Council delivers its new Equality Outcomes quickly and, in a way, which takes account of the needs and aspirations of our communities. Colleagues will work with Services and partners on specific areas such as Gender Based Violence to ensure that a joined up holistic approach is implemented that take forward the outcomes of the review of Gender Based Violence. Additionally, we will support community organisations through the administration of the Small Grants Scheme. Governance staff work closely with a number of equality groups and organisations. This involves consultation with the community including representatives of equalities groups as part of the development of the Corporate Plan. To support this the Council has a system in place to ensure that Equalities and Poverty Impact Assessments are embedded in Services' thinking ahead of decisions being taken that affect the community

The Council is progressing the switch from the current analogue equipment, aiming to begin the move to both the MECS service and our public realm CCTV to digital later this year. In line with the 2023 telephony switch off announced by telephony providers it is essential that the MECS service to the c4k vulnerable MECS users is maintained and enhanced. The new digital service will enable an always on connection to our monitoring service and provide a much safer service for our communities. Digitising the CCTV service will help to improve the detection and prevention of Antisocial Behaviour and crime. It is expected that completion of this will be late 2021.

5. Performance

- 5.1 Determination of appropriate performance information for the new priorities within the Corporate Plan is under consideration by the Executive. Performance information on our three new priorities will be provided in future reports to the Scrutiny Committee.

6. Recent Audits & Inspections; People - Communities

- 6.1 There have been no recent audits in relation to this priority.

7. Implications

Financial

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Resources

7.1.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

Legal

7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Risk

7.3 Reporting performance is essential to allow Committee to monitor the Council's progress towards achieving our priorities and delivering services. It allows us to identify where improvement is required and where we are at risk of not achieving best value.

Equalities

7.4 While we report on equalities information as part of our mainstreaming report, we will seek over the coming months to integrate information on equalities in our performance reports.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

7.5 There are no sustainability/environmental impact arising.

8. Conclusions

8.1 This report provides detailed information on progress made towards the Communities priority within the Corporate Plan.

Director of Corporate and Housing Services

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List of Background Papers:

Falkirk Council Corporate Plan 2020 - 2022