

Falkirk Community Trust



Enquiries to: Maureen Campbell
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Date: 10 November 2020

Bryan Smail
Chief Finance Officer
Falkirk Council
Municipal Buildings
Falkirk

Dear Bryan

The Board met on 5 November to consider our Business Plan submission for 2021/22.

As you are aware the Trust is facing unprecedented financial challenges in the current year and is most appreciative of the confirmation that the Council will meet the year end deficit which is currently estimated to be £1.3m. This does not take account of any support we may receive from the Scottish Government Income loss support scheme, the recently announced Job Support Scheme, extended Furlough Scheme, or any additional sector specific funds that might be announced in the coming months.

Our planning assumptions for 2021/22 are predicated on an expectation that COVID related guidelines and restrictions from Government will continue be in place, to some extent, for much of the 2021 calendar year. This means that venue capacities will continue to be reduced to accommodate social distancing guidelines and some activities may not be able to be delivered in the same way as before.

Where a digital option can be offered we have either set these up already, such as access to online fitness classes, motivational and inspirational interviews, eBooks and magazines or are in the process of creating them e.g. on line personalised fitness support. However our primary business is in bringing people together to actively participate in a wide range of sport, physical activity and cultural programmes, most of which cannot be delivered remotely.

As requested by the Council, we are gradually reopening our facilities upon confirmation that essential checks and associated works have been completed and our staff are inducted and trained in our new ways of working. I'm pleased to report that the majority of our venues are open or scheduled to open. Customer feedback is very positive particularly in respect of people feeling safe, energised and reconnected. Nevertheless overall customer confidence across the culture, sport and fitness sector remains weak and is expected to be so for most of the coming year.

The financial implications of the modified services, most of which require a higher staff/customer ratio, limitations on capacities and enhanced cleaning and maintenance regimes, is considerable. Pending any asset based decisions from the Strategic Property Review, we have modelled our financial position assuming retention of the current portfolio of facilities, (excluding our future operation of the Grangemouth Golf Course), current staff and operating

arts heritage libraries fitness sport parks outdoors

within current guidelines around capacity and consequent customer numbers along with the associated income projections. Taken together this gives an overall expenditure budget of £20.345m and a projected income of £15.993m resulting in a deficit of £4.352m if the service payment was to be retained at the same level as 20/21 for 21/22. If the service payment is to be reduced, as the Council currently expects by at least £1m, then the gap would be increased accordingly.

Directors have acknowledged the financial challenges they face and recognise their fiduciary duty to identify a balanced budget for 2021/22. A number of potential savings totalling £4.5m have been identified. However given the scale of the income shortfall it inevitably includes proposals that would see the Trust withdraw from a number of key venues and would include significant organisational change and consequent job losses. The Board is of the view that it would be premature to publish such proposals in advance of the public consultation on the Strategic Property Review and prior to any discussion and agreement with the Council on criteria that might be applied were such draconian and unpalatable savings to be applied in the coming year.

I have therefore been asked to share the attached contextual information in respect of the 2021/22 Business Plan with you in response to the requirements of the Funding Agreement.

Appendices to Report

Appendix 1 – Fees & Charges 2021/22

Appendix 2 – Capital Programme 2021/22

Appendix 3 – Business Development Approach

Appendix 4 – Grangemouth Golf Course Transfer

Appendix 5 – Having a Lasting Impact, Improving Lives

Appendix 6 – Annual Report 2019/2020

The Board request a meeting of the Joint Working Group to outline their position in more detail and to agree a constructive way forward that will help ensure the continuation of valued, local community services at such a time of need.

Yours sincerely

Maureen Campbell OBE
Chief Executive

Falkirk Community Trust

Subject: Business Plan 2021/22
To: Council Submission
Date: 10 November 2020
Author: Chief Executive

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the development of the 2021/22 Business Plan.
- 1.2 It is written in a period of exceptional change and unpredictability as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Customer income in the current period has been virtually non-existent and customers are being cautious about returning to services as they reopen. It is expected that it will be sometime before customer confidence will be restored. Income levels are unlikely to return to previous levels leaving a huge gap in finances and there is concern about the general health and well-being of the community in not being to access local community services

2. Background

- 2.1 The Business Plan for 2020/21 was approved by the Trust Board in December 2019 and submitted to the Council in January 2020 for consideration at their meeting in early March 2020. The plan noted that it was being prepared in a period of continued uncertainty, largely attributable to the delay in the approval and implementation of the Council's strategic property review (SPR). The public consultation for the SPR has yet to be completed and a final decision on the implications for culture and sport assets will not be known until spring of 2021 at the earliest. The preparation of the joint five year savings and investment plan for culture and sport is subsequently delayed. The Council Chief Executive noted in his report to Council on 4 December 2019 that "The Trust will be limited in the savings options it will be able to bring forward without an agreed strategic framework being agreed." This statement is still relevant in respect of 2021/22 as the SPR work is continuing.
- 2.2 The 2020/21 plan identified savings totalling £1.25m. The Council agreed that the Trust should progress only those savings that were not directly impacting on facility provision and did not lead to job reduction. The subsequently agreed level of savings, totalling £373k, were incorporated into the Trust budget. The Council reinforced the importance of awaiting the outcome of its SPR deliberations before considering asset related proposals and any savings that could be delivered in that regard. The Council agreed that the alignment with Council employee terms and conditions should be maintained.
- 2.3 The impact of COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the delivery of community services and Trust business. The majority of sites were closed on 20 March 2020 with only parks available for public use. Most of the income over the period has been lost and it is anticipated that there will be a very gradual return over the next financial year. Recent Government support schemes including the Coronavirus Job Retention Fund Scheme has been invaluable in helping to retain jobs and provide income to compensate, in part, for the loss of customer income. It is expected that the Trust will have received over £2.5m from the Coronavirus Job Retention Fund Scheme in this financial year and this will increase as a result of the most recent announcements and once it is clear what staff are needed to keep facilities operating in the coming months in line with industry guidelines.

- 2.4 The Council commitment to paying the full service payment for the year along with their willingness to underwrite the shortfall of income, totalling over £1.2m has been vital for the Trust's survival. The Trust's initial projection in May of this year forecast a deficit of approximately £4m however this has been significantly reduced given grant awards, job retention scheme funds and our ability to generate income where possible, e.g. immunisation centres within three Town Halls. This deficit may further reduce in the coming months given the extension of the furlough scheme and increased income from customers, assuming no further government restrictions.
- 2.5 The venue operating systems have been changed to facilitate social distancing and advance booking has been introduced for many activities to ensure all customers are registered for Trace and Protect purposes. The reduction in capacity across the majority of our venues is likely to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

3. Developing the 2021/22 Business Plan

- 3.1 At the Board meeting in August 2020 the following principles and outcomes were agreed:

Principles for Savings Proposals 2021/22

- Income is unlikely to return to 2019/20 levels in 2021/22
- Our focus will be on reducing expenditure
- Opportunities for short term capital investment are limited and unlikely to have a material financial impact in 2021/22
- Opportunities for service development will need to be self-funded from savings or external funding e.g. NHS, Public Health Scotland or Lottery programmes

Outcomes

- We will be operating from fewer buildings with fewer staff
- We should now consider severance options including compulsory redundancy
- We should now reduce the range of services available
- Our expenditure will be reduced
- The business will be financially viable and can rebuild in future years

- 3.2 During the course of the Directors' business planning workshops the Board:

- Noted increasing uncertainty around COVID-19 and the longer term impact on operating arrangements in terms of whether buildings and services would be affected by intermittent operating restrictions from the Government
- Noted increasing uncertainty around customer confidence and likelihood of generating significant income from customers in 2021/22
- Noted the principal costs of people (59% of costs) and property (12% of costs) and their lack of control over such items
- Acknowledged that the Council would be unlikely to support proposals that include the full withdrawal from facilities and compulsory redundancy of staff, however the current levels of uncertainty and financial position may require the Council to revisit their current view.
- Agreed to produce a balanced budget business plan, in accordance with their fiduciary duties, recognising that there could be no other option but to include proposals that would affect people and property.

4. Financial Forecast 2021/22

- 4.1 In order to identify the potential scale and scope of the 2021/22 income gap an assessment has been completed having regard to the following assumptions:

High Level Assumptions

- Schools continue to operate in accordance with their normal times of opening throughout the academic year, enabling staff to attend their work and not undertake childcare duties
- All Venues to remain open in 2021/22 pending the outcome of SPR
- Staff/customer ratio has increased due to operational requirements for managing customers in with current guidelines and environment
- Asset condition continues to deteriorate impacting on venue operation and reputation
- Staff wellbeing, confidence and engagement negatively impacted by Pandemic and uncertainty over the Council decision
- That the Council accept the Business Plan of Grangemouth Golf Club to enable the Club to operate and manage the site from the 1st of April 2021
- Impact of the Council decision on taking the Business in house is uncertain
- Uncertainty about an extension of the UK Government Job Retention Fund Scheme or similar for 2021/22 financial year
- Uncertainty about whether the Income support scheme being developed by Scottish Government and COSLA might offer some support in 2021/22

Income

- Social distancing measures and restrictions on capacity of venues continues through 2021
- Footfall will be reduced as a consequence of social distancing measures
- Customer confidence will take time to rebuild especially if there are periods of enhanced restrictions and shutdown
- Income growth projects are likely to be hard to deliver in an uncertain market place
- Council service payment will be reduced

Expenditure

- Staff costs will remain fairly consistent, though additional staff may be required to fulfil the management requirements of the new operational plans
- Property costs will be the same or higher due to increased requirements e.g. ventilation

- 4.2 The unique context of a global pandemic has restricted capacity and reduced customer demand in traditional income generating services. The fluctuating market and Government restrictions mean that our business cannot generate revenues to offset the expenditure of staff, buildings and services. Our usual approach to identifying budget savings options in the current environmental context is not sustainable; it limits our opportunity for recovery and future growth and re-investment into our services. Of most serious consequence will be the impact on areas of our community most in need post-COVID. The culture and sport facilities and services are much valued by the community at large and the long term damage to the general health and well-being of the wider Falkirk community will be immeasurable should these services be placed at risk at such a time when the public health of the nation is of such a national priority.
- 4.3 The Trust has reviewed the income potential for each income generating site, taking account of the above assumptions and concluded that income in 2021/22 overall is estimated to be between only £2-3m. In comparison with previous years the resultant shortfall is estimated to be between £4.5m and £5.8m. With expenditure on people and property similar to previous years, added to this the minimum reduction in service payment of £1m being requested by the Council, the overall position is very bleak.

Clearly if the other £3m or £5m service payment reductions options were to be included in 2021/22, culture and sport services would need to be almost entirely withdrawn.

5. Alternative Options

5.1 In terms of alternative means of achieving a balanced budget in 2021/22 the options appear to be a reliance on Government support schemes to mitigate the impact of the pandemic such as:

- An income loss support scheme similar to that announced by the Scottish Government for 2020/21 on 9 October 2020. The exact scope and scale of which is still be determined.
- An extension of the Job Support Scheme or Coronavirus Job Retention Fund Scheme or similar assuming that we could operate with fewer staff and offer a reduced service in the short term to protect jobs in the longer term.
- Accessing support funds from Creative Scotland, **sportscotland** or similar bodies.

5.2 At the present time there is no certainty that any of these funds will be carried into 2021/22. Announcements have generally been made just a few weeks before coming into force and the guidelines and criteria on eligibility have also been released at short notice.

5.3 The final and most significant source of alternative support lies with the Council. The Council has already agreed to finance the deficit for 2020/21 however it is acknowledged that the Council's financial position for 2021/22 is also under considerable strain.

6. Identifying a Constructive Way Forward

6.1 It is suggested that a meeting of the Joint Working Group takes place to allow for further dialogue to take place before any communication to staff, Trade Unions, communities and customers.

7. Supporting Information

7.1 The following paragraphs present a summary of the salient points and contextual information outlined on more detail in the attached appendices.

7.1.1 Fees and Charges

Appendix 1 sets out our planned approach to fees and charges for the coming year. It is proposed that prices are retained at the current level. It also includes a proposal, for discussion, to introduce a "community membership approach" that would have an annual charge protecting prices at the current level. A new set of charges approximately 20% above the current level would be introduced for those not taking up the membership offer.

7.1.2 Capital Programme

Appendix 2 sets out proposals for the allocation of the 2021/22 capital programme budget of £508k. It also provides an update on the spend for previous years. It highlights the redevelopment of the health and fitness facilities at the Mariner, completed just prior to lock down and gives an updated position in respect of the withdrawal of the Stenhousemuir Gym expansion proposals.

The most significant announcement however is the decision taken by the Council on 30 September to proceed with the new Council HQ and Arts Centre. The project will incorporate a new library for Falkirk as well. This is a huge commitment from the Council to ensure the continued provision for the performing arts in the area. The detailed brief and project plan along with the exact location of the project are still to be finalised.

However the positive commitment to proceed ends years of uncertainty particularly for the arts community.

7.1.3 Business Development Approach

A high level summary of our approach to continuing business development in venues, outdoors and online is provided in Appendix 3. In addition the Trading Company has considered how to revive its retail and catering offer in the coming year. Funding bids are also submitted to relevant programmes for on-going and new project support.

7.1.4 Grangemouth Golf Club

Appendix 4 provides an update on the dialogue with the Golf Club. Discussions have been constructive and the Club Committee continue to work toward having a business plan for approval by the Council to enable them to take on the management of the course from April 2021.

7.1.5 Polmonthill Snowsports Centre

The Ski Club have expressed an early interest in considering a community transfer of some kind for the Snowsports Centre. This is unlikely to impact on 2021/22 however it is worth drawing this to the Council's attention in their deliberations in the context of the SPR.

7.1.6 Having a Lasting Impact, Improving Lives

Appendix 5 provides an insight into some of the Trust's achievements and the impact of our work over almost a decade. It shows the diversity of venue and services improvements that have made a positive difference to people of all ages and backgrounds. It clearly demonstrates the value of the Trust and its services. The 2019/20 annual report is also attached for Members' information. However it is worth restating the high level achievements in that year. In particular 5% growth in year on year customer income, 25% increase in external funds awarded compared to the previous year and continued growth in participation by young people. The service payment from the Council represented 54% of our overall income continuing the year on year reduction from 72% in our first year of operation.

The theme for the annual report for 19/20, attached at Appendix 6, was inclusion and it includes many examples of projects that reached out to those who found it more challenging to fulfil their potential. There are heart-warming examples of lives changed as a result of individual participation in Trust led programmes. It is also clear that many of our venues make an important and valuable contribution to the area's tourism offer. This will be even more vital in the recovery and renewal phase as we seek to welcome back national and international visitors when the time is right. Meantime our services, particularly our parks, have been a key resource for families and people of all ages to look after themselves in recent times. We intend to expand and build on this work in the coming year.

7.1.7 Helix Business Plan

The Helix Business Plan will set out our intent for the Park in the forthcoming financial year of 2021-2022. This takes into account the strategic objectives laid out within the Scottish Governments 'Scottish Tourism Strategy 2030' and the VisitFalkirk Tourism Strategy.

The Helix has played a key role in the regional destination development plans and this will continue, however there will be a greater emphasis on the local domestic markets, as the expectation for continued restrictions on the national and international markets will continue well into 2021/22.

As a significant tourism and community asset, footfall to the site has continued to remain high throughout the pandemic and future growth plans must be aligned to maximising

that footfall and potential spend per head these opportunities bring. However reduced capacity within the Visitor Centre will need to be offset by either new income streams and/or an increased pricing strategy.

The Helix has developed an excellent reputation as a national event stage, but as restrictions on events are likely to impact on the ability to attract large crowds, the focus will be on the development of small but numerous community activities with partner organisations, to generate maximum impact with whatever restricted funds may be available.

A number of financial models have been developed for the trading and the charitable incomes for the site, along with cost control measures, primarily within staffing. These targets for income and cost control will be challenging, and will be very much dictated by the Government restrictions in place at any given time.

Quality will continue to be a key emphasis, albeit within the confines of a restricted budget. The high standards set for the site since the Parks opening, emulating the quality of the initial build infrastructure, will be upheld. The Trust will continue to invest in ensuring the quality of the visitor experience is not diminished while pursuing the reduction in deficit funding. The goal is to continue to strive to retain the sought-after 5 star VisitScotland grading, the Green Flag status and achieve the Silver Green Tourism Award, demonstrating the Trust's ambition to ensuring the site is a quality, 'must visit', destination.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The table below shows the 2020/21 budget, the 2020/21 forecast and the 2021/22 outline budget taking account of the revised income projections. This clearly shows the gap of just under £4.5m to be addressed.

| | BUDGET 2020/21 | PROJECTION 2020/21 | PROPOSED BUDGET 2021/22 (Pre Savings) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Employee Expenses | 13,009 | 11,537 | 12,742 |
| Property Expenses | 2,398 | 1,813 | 2,330 |
| Transport Expenses | 191 | 145 | 163 |
| Supplies & Services | 4,119 | 2,178 | 3,526 |
| Third Party Payments | 685 | 121 | 684 |
| Support Services | 806 | 806 | 806 |
| Capital Costs | 94 | 207 | 94 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 21,302 | 16,807 | 20,345 |
| Service Payment | 10,896 | 10,896 | 11,502 |
| Job Retention Scheme | - | 2,322 | - |
| Other Income | 10,391 | 2,358 | 4,576 |
| Contribution from/(to) Reserves | 15 | 15 | (85) |
| TOTAL INCOME | 21,302 | 15,591 | 15,993 |
| BUDGET GAP | - | - | - |
| NET EXPENDITURE | - | 1,217 | 4,352 |

9. HR Implications

- 9.1 In the current year over 90% of Trust staff were placed on furlough for a very lengthy period. They have been most appreciative of the certainty of job protection in that period especially receiving 100% of their normal pay. However the pandemic and the extended closure period has created uncertainty for them in terms of their future employment prospects. The recent announcement of the Council review has added a further layer of uncertainty for everyone.
- 9.2 The financial shortfall is such that if there is no specific support from the Council, jobs will be at severe risk. It is vital that the discussion on the Business Plan with the Council considers the impact on jobs and people, the majority of whom live locally.

10. Risk Implications

- 10.1 The principle risk arising from the report is the future viability of culture and sport services and subsequently the general health and well-being of the Falkirk community.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 The future financial uncertainty created by the current pandemic is placing the services we deliver and the Trust itself under unprecedented pressure. With customer income at its lowest level since before the Trust was established almost a decade ago, ongoing uncertainty about future customer confidence, coupled with Government guideline restrictions around capacities and what services are able to be offered, the viability of continuing to offer all services at pre-Covid levels without Council support is not possible.
- 11.2 The appendices to the report and the annual report for 2019/20 clearly articulate the community value and impact of our services.

Maureen Campbell OBE
Chief Executive

Fees & Charges 2021/22

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The fees and charges for 2021/22 are usually considered on an annual review basis with the key changes being referred to in Audit & Performance Sub-Group meetings and subsequently contained within the annual Business Plan.
- 1.2 This year's circumstances are however unique and the normal review process has not taken place.
- 1.3 This paper concludes that the most appropriate option for the 2021/22 financial year is to 'freeze' all of the existing fees and charges as it is vital that the Trust considers how it recovers its usual level of footfall and customer visits in general as a priority.

2. Background

- 2.1 A review of charges is normally undertaken each year which takes into account consultation with relevant groups of staff, reference to customer feedback and any relevant information from other comparable services, but with a focus on the generation of additional income.
- 2.2 The normal review process attempts to adhere to the previously adopted 'key principles' from November 2012 as shown below:
 - FCT 'charges' should not be seen by potential customers as a 'barrier to their participation'.
 - Concessionary charges should ensure that those who can least afford to pay for our services are supported the most.
 - FCT charges should be easily accessible and simple to understand.
 - The timing of the introduction of any revised charge should consider the impact this will have on customers.
 - Charges can be flexible with the ability to offer promotional discounts at appropriate times to actively promote new services or boost falling attendances.
 - Charges will be levied which fully considers local competitors and neighbouring Trusts' and Local Authorities' charges.
 - Charges will enable improved levels of income generation, where market rates and the ability of our customers to pay, allow.
- 2.3 The key objective of ensuring that customers perceived the services being delivered as representing good 'value for money' was considered important.
- 2.4 To ensure the Trust supported those in the community with the greatest needs, the Trust has continued to place a strong emphasis on ensuring that the concessionary charges, set out within the Go Card scheme, were at realistic and affordable levels.
- 2.5 Such reviews were set against the background of the Trust's annual performance, the ongoing reduction to the Trust's allocation of funding from the Council, the number of competitors in the marketplace, a desire from the Council to maintain prices at relatively low levels and of course the condition of Trust operated facilities at the time.
- 2.6 The 'price point' for Trust services has proved to be a vital part of the Trust's marketing strategy and whilst work remain focussed on ensuring that prices were not a 'barrier to participation', the Trust strived to increase the amount of income generated to reduce its reliance on Council support, through increased levels of income.

- 2.7 However, given the closure of all of the Trust's income generating sites from the end of March until recently, i.e. approximately six months, matters have changed considerably and the normal review process has not been undertaken as the normal process was no longer relevant.

3 Current Situation

- 3.1 The Audit & Performance Sub-Group, within the circulated papers for its previously planned meeting on the 20th of August, were advised that four months into the period of significant restrictions and short period of lockdown, it was particularly difficult to ascertain how the Trust's existing prices might be perceived by customers. Some in the community may have had more disposable income to hand while others were possibly even more vulnerable than they were before the pandemic.
- 3.2 The 'price point' for Trust services has proved to be a vital part of the Trust's marketing strategy and whilst it is important to ensure that prices are not a 'barrier to participation', the Trust has always attempted to increase the amount of income generated to reduce its reliance on Council support, through increased levels of income.
- 3.3 The current situation is however very different and it was proposed to the Audit & Performance Sub-Group that the Trust's revised prices should achieve the following new objectives:
- Be perceived by the local community as 'good value for money'
 - Support the local community and take cognisance of the additional financial support that some of the more vulnerable may require at this time
 - Support and motivate the local community in their aims to live a fit and healthy lifestyle
 - Maximise income from the more commercially focussed areas of the business, e.g. Trading and the visitor market
- 3.4 To meet the aforementioned objectives the following actions were put in place:
- All existing prices should be retained, beyond their end date of 31 December and be actively promoted as being 'frozen' from 1 January until 31 March (excluding trading prices)
 - Any financial benefit from the UK Government's reduction in VAT should be retained by the Trust
 - Specific offers and promotions should be introduced where relevant as a phased approach to our re-opening plans are delivered, e.g. specific prices for outdoor and/or online health and fitness sessions
- 3.5 All of the above were implemented and communicated where it was appropriate to do so and as and when facilities reopened. For example specific arrangements were put in place for health and fitness members given the start and subsequent withdrawal of the group fitness sessions in accordance with the changing Scottish Government advice and this required personal contact with the relevant members.
- 3.6 Some months on though the situation remains uncertain given the current 'second wave' of the virus. The marketplace is volatile and its long term future unclear. It will be some time before matters settle and for new consumer trends to emerge that will help inform what actions require to be taken in relation to pricing strategies.
- 3.7 In conclusion, the Trust intends not only to freeze its fees and charges beyond the 1st of January, but to continue this 'freeze' (excluding trading activities) from the start of the 2021/22 financial year in April.

- 3.8 Trading related prices however are normally excluded from this annual review process with the need to act quickly and proportionately to any particular increase in the cost of goods and business opportunities that may arise throughout the year. This approach has already been adopted in the car parking charges at the Helix for example when parking charges were reduced in the recognition of the lack of toilet provision but able to be increased again and extended into the month of October given the number of visitors who were still being attracted.
- 3.9 It is the Trust's intention to 'freeze' all Trust fees and charges, that are not trading related, from the 1st of January 2021, pending an ongoing review of the situation in the marketplace as it develops throughout the year.
- 3.10 The Trust will communicate this approach to customers to demonstrate that we care about the general health and well-being of the local community and thereby generate increased support for all that the Trust delivers in the longer term.

4 Future Proposals

- 4.1 Given the current uncertainties, a more fundamental review will be undertaken in the current fees and strategies model in the coming months that will have at its core the potential to increase income, to the potential value of approximately £250k per annum.
- 4.2 A 'community membership' type of approach will be considered. The concept involves a two tier system of fees and charges. The first tier will be open to anyone who wishes to become a 'member' of the Trust and will be sold at a low cost per annum. The attraction to customers will be that as part of their membership they will be able to access a set of fees and charges that are only available to members. It is likely that these fees and charges will be comparable to those currently in place. However, non-members will have a different set of fees and charges that will be at a higher rate than those available for members. This would have the aim of converting casual customers into being more regular customers by joining as members, leading to increased levels of income, increased levels of participation, a database of Trust members for the obvious member engagement benefit, whilst at the same time providing a sense of 'community belonging' and loyalty to the Trust.
- 4.3 Much work will require to be undertaken and analysis considered, as well as appropriate consumer research, to establish the relevant and most appropriate price points to achieve the objectives of the initiative. For example it is vital that specific consideration is given to ensuring that the Trust's original objective of ensuring that 'price is not a barrier to participation' remains in place, so the fees and charges for the Trust's concessionary Go Card scheme for example will require particular attention.
- 4.4 The membership will be open to everyone and the decision to participate in this scheme or not will be entirely that of the customer, who will base their decision on the 'value for money' aspect of becoming a member, in respect of the benefits of joining, e.g. financial savings, in-kind benefits from the Trust, likelihood of increased participation and subsequent health and well-being advantages as well as a sense of contributing to their local community services, as every pound spent with the Trust is reinvested in delivering services.
- 4.5 Updates on the development of this scheme will be shared with the Audit & Performance Sub-Group at the appropriate times.

Capital Programme 2021-22

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council has allocated £508k of funding to the Trust for 2021/22 from its General Capital Programme, whilst referring to the need for projects to acknowledge the Council's 'Council of the Future Framework' and the Council's strategic priorities.
- 1.2 The Audit & Performance Sub Group, who consider the Trust's 'bids', have previously agreed that the Trust's Capital Programme should consist of projects that resulted in one or more of the following outcomes and this approach has been maintained in the 2021/22 process:
- Resolution of appropriate health and safety related matters;
 - Ensure facilities or services continue to operate;
 - Retention of existing levels of usage and/or income.

It was also intended that the delivery of projects that met the aforementioned criteria would also improve the customers' experience and in the attraction of additional income.

2. Capital Programme Allocation

- 2.1 The Trust's senior management team collated requests from its wider Team Leader group and identified and prioritised specific items that were to be included in the Trust's core programme for 2021/22 and these items are shown below:

| Facility/Service | Headline Description of item/project | Estimated Costs |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Grangemouth Stadium | Replace/repair external lighting of track/pitch | 70k |
| Denny Sports Centre | Replacement fire exit | 10k |
| Callendar Park | Repairs to bridge and handrails | 15k |
| Grangemouth Sports Complex | Replacement/repairs to air handling plant | 313k |
| Mariner Centre | Partial replacement of roof | 100k |
| | TOTAL | 508k |

- 2.2 Colleagues from Development Services were asked to consider the condition of the buildings and suggest items that they considered as a priority. Such information is awaited.
- 2.3 This total allocation of £508k has previously been approved by Falkirk Council as part of their three year programme; however, it is left to the Trust to confirm its intentions as part of its annual Business Plan and the list shown in 2.1 above forms part of the Trust's plans that help achieve the three objectives shown in 1.2.

- 2.4 The Council's process in identifying the needs of its capital programme has however been affected by the pandemic and subsequent lockdown. Usually Trust and Council Service 'bids' would be submitted to the relevant Council Officers and corporate capital planning working group by the end of June for consideration, however this process was delayed with such bids only being submitted in September, with a quick turnaround being required to ensure such information met with the Council's Business Planning process. An earlier indication of the Trust's capital programme items would normally have been shared with the Audit & Performance Sub-Group for their information, which on this occasion has not been possible.
- 2.5 The Council, at its meeting of the 30th of September, agreed to deliver a new HQ and Arts Centre project in Falkirk town centre and that a further report confirming the detailed specification and approach to the procurement of the facility be presented to a future meeting of the Council. They also agreed that a workshop be convened involving representatives of the Council and developer/landowning interests in Falkirk town centre to consider current concerns and opportunities to progress the project.

3 Business Income Strategy

- 3.1 Directors will be aware of the projects within the 5 year Business Strategy, set within the significant funding reductions from the Council that focusses on our need for significant growth from customer income. The Council had approved an additional allocation of £1.1m of funding from their capital programme that would contribute to the Trust's development of level 1 at the Mariner Leisure Centre and to extend the Stenhousemuir Gym. Work was completed at the Mariner and opened to customers in January to great customer feedback, albeit short-lived due to the 'lockdown' of all Trust operated sites due to the pandemic restrictions. The intention to extend the Stenhousemuir Gym with the expectation of the contractor being onsite in January and a subsequent April opening, was unable to progress given the discovery that the commercial landlord was not in a position to grant access to the required adjacent site, for some years ahead, despite an earlier agreed Heads of Terms.
- 3.2 The current pandemic restrictions has significantly impacted on the Trust's ability to attract customers and generate income as is reported elsewhere in the Business Plan therefore the ability to progress with any of the other income generating ideas has been compromised.
- 3.2 The items shown in section 2.1 are indicative of the continued deterioration of the portfolio of facilities that the Trust operate and demonstrate that the Council's capital programme serves mainly as an emergency repairs and replacement fund for the most part and not as a source of funds to help improve the quality of the facilities the Trust operate.

4. General Issues

- 4.1 The Trust's existing 'service level agreement' with the Council's Development Services, in relation to design services and procurement processes is not set up to support the Trust and its need for the quick and effective introduction of new activity areas or refurbishment works to existing areas. Costs for such a service are charged at 11.75% of the capital cost of each project. Therefore, alternative providers of specialist external design services support have

been utilised in the previous year in our agreement with Alliance Leisure in the refurbishment of level 1 of the Mariner Centre.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Regular monitoring of the progress being made with the Capital Programme projects occurs both internally and with Council colleagues, on whom the Trust depend for many of the projects' completion.
- 5.2 Although actions are being taken to progress each of the previously identified items, as regularly reported to the Audit & Performance Sub-Group, these must remain flexible, as often facility breakdown and plant and machinery failures occur unexpectedly, which results in allocations needing to be diverted when required.
- 5.3 The Trust remains concerned about the condition of many of the Council's key facilities, which are operated by the Trust, given the scale of the backlog of maintenance items and the previous reductions and relatively low amount of its allocation of only £508k in 2021/22, which is expected to help support the ongoing operation of many sites in the short term.
- 5.4 The Trust operated facilities are being considered as part of the Council's strategic property review, which is currently exploring how best the Council should manage its assets within the context of their need to reduce facility costs.
- 5.5 The items shown in 2.1 will enable the continued operation of these sites and if possible such allocations will be accelerated to this financial year given their importance to the operation of key sites.

Business Development Approach

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Over the last nine years, Falkirk Community Trust has built a strong brand with solid commercial success. In the current volatile environment (declining funding and customers with less money to spend), we need to adapt our approach to manage risk and spread our sources of income, while also identifying opportunities for growth as people's behaviour changes.
- 1.3 Our venues are vital for the effective delivery of our programmes, however, the unique situation created by the pandemic has highlighted that a "bricks and mortar" only approach is risky and that we can provide similar services digitally to our community. It is now important that we adapt our products and services to meet the needs of our community making best use of technology, our teams, use of our spaces and collaboration with partners.
- 1.5 While new developments will centre on value for money, more choice and encourage development and progression, there are opportunities for developing additional or new service offerings that either enhance our existing customer service, or generate new sources of income.

2. Serving our Existing Customers

- 2.1 This approach is very much about "business as usual" where we focus on the customers and services we know and already do well. Our priority is to define our services and deliver them consistently which will generate more income from what we already do well. The best form of sustainable income generation is to keep our customers for longer, through excellent service and adapting to meet their changing needs.

| Service Development | Aim | Timescale |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Coaching Programmes: Grow the service through increased usage from key age groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12-15 year olds 0-3 year olds | Increase usage amongst 12-15 yrs. Increase usage in the infant market. Generate new income. | April 2021/22 |
| Health & Fitness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of specialist technology (The Retention People) which prompts our team to interact and tailor our service with customers based on their usage patterns Introduction of Personal Training service Development of underused hall space for health and fitness programme | Increase loyalty and improve length of stay. Increase income. | April 2021 |
| Membership Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Community Discount Card. Launch of online & outdoor memberships | Increase Income. Reward community residents with reduced prices if they purchase FCT discount card. | Jan- April 2021 |

3. Digital Development

- 3.1 Our digital operations are getting more and more complicated every day. Like many other organisations, COVID19 has forced us to adapt and move quickly when it comes to technology:
- We had to provide an online booking solution for our customers so that we could proactively manage the capacities of those attending classes/venues.
 - Our website has evolved as a vital information source for our community, providing health and wellbeing advice, as well as offering online services that people could participate in at home.
- 3.2 During the period of lockdown our teams used this time to develop the IT infrastructure required to provide online live streaming of our services, which is due to be in place over the coming weeks. Out of necessity, a large amount of our customer base and operations have moved online and we intend to build on this.

4. E-commerce

- 4.1 There has been consistent investment in this area since the Trust came into being, and in particular, over the last 18 months we have successfully implemented our new FCT, Hippodrome and Helix websites, along with a new arts point-of-sale system, Spektrix. Now that this essential technical infrastructure is in place, the next stage is to have all systems working simultaneously to increase income generation through a more targeted approach that meets our customers' individual needs. Further development is required with our sports point-of-sale (till) system, with particular focus on ensuring we are able to take payments online.
- 4.3 The following are some new developments that we are working on/exploring:

| Product Description | Aim | Timescales |
|--|--|---------------|
| Callendar House Takeaway Afternoon Tea | Income Generation | October 2020 |
| - Live Streaming of Fitness Classes - Personal Training Online | Income generation. Bolt-on option to our memberships to generate income. | November 2020 |
| - Kelpies Retail | Generate Revenue by targeting the following markets: - Tourists - Gift Market | December 2020 |

5. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

- 5.1 This is where we use technology to help us better understand our customers through obtaining, storing and analysing information about them and how they use our services. This helps us increase loyalty and develop new services as it allows us to predict and adapt to customer behaviour changes. It also means we can better reward customers for their loyalty, ensure our services are right, our communication more relevant and provide valuable understanding of our customers.

| Product Description | Aim | Product Timescales |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------|
| - Sports coaching account for all customers who sign up for lessons - Provide customer feedback/ tips - Parent access to membership details | Enhanced customer experience | 18 months |

6. Partnering/Connections

- 6.1 We are very good at developing partnerships that deliver quality services to our community. We will explore joint funding opportunities with organisations to deliver programmes that meet customer lifestyle needs. This approach will make best use of our people and will share expertise, resources and competencies for mutual benefit.
- 6.4 To achieve collectively what we cannot individually, and help us target new customers and generate more income, we will identify new commercial partners with whom we could collaborate.

| Potential Partnerships | Aim | Timescale |
|---|---|------------------|
| Joint Funding Opportunities eg social care, NHS, IJB, Cashback for Communities, Kickstart UK, | Inclusion based work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Socially Excluded- Health Needs- Economic Re-generation | April 2021 |
| <u>Joint Ventures/Strategic Alliance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Nutrition – work with known brand/experts.- Health Checks | Income generation and improved customer experience | April 2021 |
| Co-productions | Income generation | 2021/22 |

7. Outdoor/Creative Use of Space

- 7.1 The public parks that we manage have always been popular spaces for the people in our communities, and destinations for visitors and tourists. Throughout the pandemic these spaces have been essential places for local people to enjoy and boost their wellbeing.
- 7.2 As well as continuing to manage and maintain these parks with pride and care, we will explore opportunities to enhance and attract more people to the parks and Falkirk area, and generate more income for the Trust.

| Product Development | Aim | Timescale |
|---|-------------------|------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Outdoor Fitness- Boot Camps | Income generation | September 2020 |
| Income Generating Outdoor Activities eg cycle hire/routes, high ropes, flying fox, land surfing | Income generation | 2022/23 |
| Income Generating Outdoor Events Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Outdoor theatre & events- Co-productions- Drive-in-Cinema | Income generation | 2022/23 |
| Proactively re- market Helix space as a location for people to use as a filming or photography backdrop. | Income generation | Spring 2021 |
| Development of Kiosk at Callendar Park to maximise opportunities of the increase passing trade, while cross selling the Tea Room. | Income generation | Spring 2021 |

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Falkirk Community Trust**Grangemouth Golf Course 'Transfer'****1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Following the previous updates to the Board, this paper describes the current situation on the Trust's intended withdrawal from the operation and management of the Grangemouth Golf Course from the end of March 2021, with the intention being to 'transfer' this role to the Grangemouth Golf Club.

2 Background

- 2.1 As part of the Trust's Business Plan for 2020/21 following another request from the Club to the Council that requested the Trust continue the operation of the facility for another financial year, the Council agreed to allow more time for the Club to plan their future operation of the facility. The Council provided an additional £50k of funding to the Trust to enable the continued operation of the facility until the end of March 2021.
- 2.2 Directors will recall the Trust's 2018/19 Business Plan action that had the Trust's withdrawal from the management of Grangemouth Golf Course with the opportunity for Grangemouth Golf Club to undertake the operation and management of the site as a whole from April 2019.
- 2.3 It would be fair to say that the Club has found great difficulty in preparing an appropriate Business Plan that may be considered by both the Trust and the Council that would provide a degree of comfort that such a 'transfer' of management responsibilities would provide a long term sustainable resolution to the annual operational deficit, which although has significantly improved in recent years, remains an operational deficit of around £50k per annum.
- 2.4 Both the Council and the Trust have financially supported the continued operation of the facility in recent years, however, given the ongoing funding reductions to the Trust from the Council and indeed the Council's current financial position, further support will not be possible beyond the end of March 2021.
- 2.5 Trust staff have been advising the Club over the last three years in support of their preparation of a Business Plan that requires to be considered and approved by the Board and subsequently the Council, before such a 'transfer' can take place.

3 Current Position

- 3.1 In essence such a 'transfer' would effectively entail an adjustment in the current lease arrangements between the Council and the Trust, together with an extension and amendments being granted by the Council to the existing lease that the Club has for the use of the 'Clubhouse'. This arrangement is not a 'Community Access Transfer' by definition but is effectively a local community group being permitted to operate and manage a golf course facility asset that will remain under the ownership of the Council.
- 3.2 Previous reports to the Board in recent years on this matter have expressed concerns about the Club's lack of progress in their preparation of a Business Plan that described their future operation and management of the facility as a whole. However, much progress has been made by the Club since their AGM in December of 2019 and the subsequent appointment of key office bearers, i.e. Club Captain and Club Secretary in particular.

- 3.3 A revised timeline that indicated key milestones and approval meeting dates was prepared and agreed with Club representatives early in the year and it was most pleasing to receive a first draft of a Business Plan that had been produced by the Club within a few months. The Trust responded positively to this version however highlighted a number of incorrect assumptions that had been made by the Club that the Trust requested be amended.
- 3.4 On the 20th of March, all Trust services and facilities were closed, apart from the operation of the four strategic parks, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and this has understandably resulted in a considerable disruption in the Club's preparation of their Business Plan.
- 3.5 Similarly, the focus of Trust staff had inevitably been required on the maintenance of the parks, communication with staff and the implementation of the furlough scheme, communication with customers and stakeholders and of course the re-opening of the course itself, from the 29th of May, which was the first opportunity to do so in accordance with the Scottish Government's guidelines. The Club has indicated their pleasure and appreciation of the hard work of Trust staff in being able to re-open so quickly, when in other areas courses had been left unmaintained for a period of some months.
- 3.6 Several meetings have subsequently taken place with the Club representatives with the aim of getting things 'back on track' and still with the intention of the Trust's withdrawal and the Club's management of the facility from April 2021. A revised timeline was proposed to the Club which anticipated a completed Business Plan by the Club that was able to be shared with the Board at its November meeting, for reference to the transfer of the facility within the Trust's Business Plan that is to be submitted to the Council by the 15th of November.
- 3.7 A positive meeting was held with Club representatives to specifically discuss the T.U.P.E. regulations as in such a business transfer, the four permanent members of staff currently employed by the Trust will effectively be entitled to be transferred to the new business, i.e. the Club and with their current terms and conditions. Such legislation does not however make provision for the transfer of their current occupational pension benefits and although the Club has assumed the full costs for these, further discussion with the Club and of course consultation with the staff and their relevant Union, will also be required.
- 3.8 Council Officers have a key role in this project as amendments will be required to leases and of course the Club's negotiation with the Council's asset team will be necessary to agree terms and so on. Similarly the Club's Business Plan will require to be submitted to the appropriate Council Committee for approval which will be undertaken by a Council Officer in a similar manner to the approach adopted for the transfer of the Woodlands Games Hall to Woodlands Community Sport Limited.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The general membership of the Club seem to have more confidence in the progress being made by their key office bearers in their preparation of the Business Plan. Support from Club members will be vital in the months to come as the Club Committee attempt to ratify the Business Plan with their general membership before being considered by the Council. The increased communication processes put in place by the Club's officer bearers has proved invaluable in this respect, albeit this had been most challenging for them given the current pandemic.
- 4.2 There remains much for the Club to do alongside Trust and Council Officers and in the specific areas of the transference of staff and the financial assumptions being made in relation to the lease arrangements with the Council. The Trust is not yet in a position to recommend the Club's Business Plan to the Council. However, the Trust remains supportive of transferring the facility to the Club and remain hopeful that substantial progress can be made for the Club's Business Plan, supported by Trust staff and be in a position to be considered by the Council in the coming months.

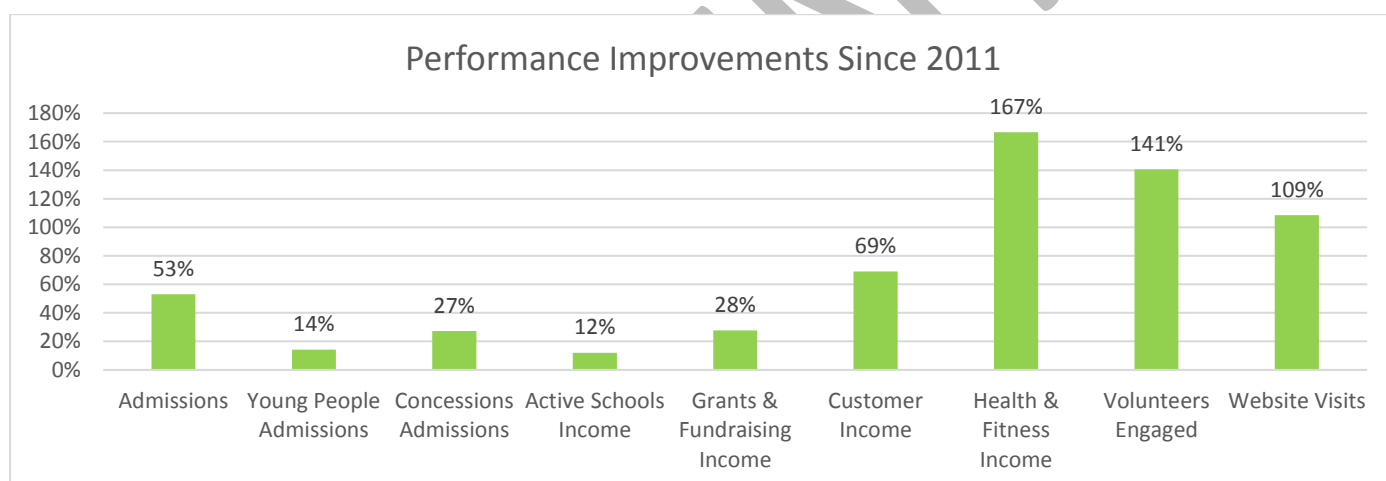
- 4.3 The Trust understands that in general the Club members remain willing to operate the facility and believe that they have never been in a better position in which to do so, given the work undertaken in recent months by key office bearers within the Club. The very nature of such a Club however is that it is very dependent upon the skills, abilities and willingness of Club members to undertake such a complex role and the revolving nature of their office bearers in recent years has clearly demonstrated the issues that can occur when depending on such a Club structure to undertake a management role of such a facility.
- 4.4 No plans have been made by the Trust to operate the course beyond the end of March 2021, in relation to the setting of charges, promotional activity for season ticket sales, event planning and course development work and has therefore not been included in the Trust's Business Plan 2021/22. There is therefore no alternative but to transfer the operation and management of the facility as a whole to Grangemouth Golf Club other than to close the site with the obvious levels of dis-satisfaction about such an outcome, were this to occur.
- 4.5 The Trust will continue to support and guide the Club as they work towards a successful transfer of the facility as a whole from the 1st of April 2021.

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Having a Lasting Impact, Improving Lives

1. Creating an Organisation with Purpose

- 1.1 In July 2011, Falkirk Community Trust was established by Falkirk Council, with the purpose of giving a new lease of life to the delivery of much valued community services. The Trust has been at the forefront of the development of culture and sport in the Falkirk area, delivering inspiring services and encouraging widespread participation.
- 1.2 Customer income has grown by 69% to over £7m annually, business rate relief of over £1million each year and over £5million has been raised in grants and external funding. We have reversed an annual trading company loss of £250,000 and have generated profits of more than £1.4m over the last five years, all of which have been re-invested in service delivery.
- 1.3 Admissions across our services have climbed by over 50%, and community volunteering has more than doubled. Income and engagement with vital community health and fitness services have increased by 166%. A targeted approach to investment in specific sites (The Mariner Centre, Grangemouth Stadium, Bo'ness Rec, Carron Gymnastics Centre and Stenhousemuir Gym) has transformed them from challenges into facilities that are attractive to customers and therefore more financially sustainable. The dashboard below demonstrates the key performance improvements delivered since the Trust's inception:



- 1.4 Falkirk Community Trust's team is dedicated to helping our community become happier, fitter, more creative and to help them realise their potential. Our services touch people at all stages of their lives, from buggy walks to pre-school gymnastics classes, to Active Forth fitness programmes for people with health conditions.
- 1.5 No matter their age, level of fitness or cultural interests, we are there for our community when they need us most: when they need to get out of the house, when they need to get fit, when they need to feel uplifted, when they need to get away from it all. We are there when it matters to them.

2. Making a Difference when it Matters Most

- 2.1 When customer suffered a cardiac arrest at home in 2016, little did he know, in that terrifying moment, Falkirk Community Trust had saved his life.
- 2.2 Following major heart bypass surgery our customer was attending Forth Valley Royal's Cardio Rehab class where he met the Trust's Active Forth team who convinced him to join the fitness programme which could be tailored to his specific needs. His fitness gradually returned however, in 2016, a sudden cardiac arrest required immediate emergency care and the fitting of a cardioverter defibrillator. During that procedure, the Cardiologist Surgeon said that our customer's improved level of fitness saved his life.

- 2.3 It wasn't long before he was back at the Active Forth classes, undertaking a tailored gym programme and complementing it with Tabata (High Intensity Training) and Aquafit classes. In 2018, he completed a charity walk from Glasgow to Polmont, raising £1500 for the British Heart Foundation. The customer acknowledges that this would not have been possible without the help and support of the Trust's gym team.

3. Keeping an Eye on the Past, While Looking to the Future

- 3.1 Falkirk's evolution is a similarly inspiring story. An exhibition curated by the Trust in 2017 told the history of Falkirk in just "10 ½ Objects". From Irn Bru being formulated in Falkirk, to one of the very first prototypes for a television transmitter tested in the area. Like that first transmitter, the Trust is helping to amplify Falkirk's ambition to the world.
- 3.2 With a world-class experience in mind, our Great Place project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and delivered in partnership with Falkirk Council, Scottish Canals and Central Scotland Green Network Trust, launched in October 2018 aiming to enhance the visitor experience of the area's heritage venues. In 2019, the historic Falkirk Steeple was reopened as a Heritage Centre by the Falkirk Local History Society, with the support of The Trust and Falkirk Council. Visitors can now discover late medieval Falkirk where all manner of activities from market trading to proclamations and public punishment took place.
- 3.3 Helix Park and the Kelpies, a 5 star visitor centre, have likewise positioned Falkirk on an international stage, with tens of thousands of visitors from around the globe travelling to the town every year as a result. This multi-award-winning visitor attraction was just one of the major capital development projects that has been overseen by Falkirk Community Trust in the last decade, and increased income levels through the provision of services within the Visitor Centre & Plaza Cafe.
- 3.4 Other developments, of which we are equally proud, include the ongoing evolution of the Mariner Centre, recently awarded 4 star visitor attraction status. The centre now features soft play for children and accessible Changing Places facilities for those customers who require more space and support (including customers with profound and multiple learning disabilities, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, and cerebral palsy). It also offers a wide range of health and fitness classes including a Les Mills Immersive cycle studio, itself a first for Scotland, as well as the equally innovative Shapemaster Hub which is suitable for less able users with more complex needs.
- 3.5 This successful approach to building a robust health and fitness offering for the area is reaping dividends for the community's health. Falkirk has been recognised as the "fittest place in Scotland" according to The Times in 2017, and for the last four years has boasted a higher percentage of school aged girls participating in sport and physical activity than the national average.
- 3.6 Other developments have included: the replacement of the indoor and outdoor tracks at Grangemouth Stadium in partnership with Sport Scotland, reusing the track from the 2014 Commonwealth Games; the development of Stenhousemuir Health & Fitness from a previously empty town centre retail unit into a profit making business unit within 5 years; and investment in outdoor tennis courts at Dollar Park and Zetland Park in conjunction with Tennis Scotland and the Lawn Tennis Association.
- 3.7 This investment in outdoor tennis has already proven to be a grand slam for 679 young people in the Grangemouth area, all of whom are now proud Guinness World Record holders. New York didn't stand a chance when our kids got together, easily setting a new record for the most people continuously "keepy upping" a tennis ball with a racquet for ten seconds.

4. Putting a Spring in the Step of Falkirk's Gymnastics Provision

- 4.1 Gymnastics is a popular sport and, recognising the demand as well as the potential for partnership combined with a lack of suitable local training facilities, the Trust converted Stenhousemuir Sports Centre to open Carron Gymnastics Centre in 2019 as a flagship training facility for the Falkirk area.

4.2 The development made best use of an underused neighbourhood sports centre that was losing money, transforming it into a modern new facility that now breaks even. The centre hosts pre-school gymnastics, development sessions, gymnastics for fun, health and fitness sessions, holiday camps, adult sessions, UKCC training courses and is now home to the competing section of two local gymnastics clubs, Tryst and Stenhousemuir Gymnastics.

4.3 Carron Gymnastics Centre has been a springboard for sport in the area, with our most talented gymnasts and coaches flourishing and representing Falkirk at local and national competitions.

5. Mastering the Art of Community Engagement

5.1 In 2014 Falkirk was awarded a Creative Scotland “Creative Place” Award which recognises areas that have championed arts and culture. Arts community outreach programmes, such as Creative Scotland’s Youth Music Initiative, sit alongside professional partnerships like Imagine Theatre, all of which serve to enrich the cultural lives of the people of Falkirk. The Creative Place Award was the culmination of 10 years of partnership working to deliver a series of arts and cultural projects involving local artists, and to nurture creativity in the next generation.

5.2 More recently our innovative Care Words project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, connects and empowers people who live in care homes through stories, memories and interactions. The project has been incredibly important in combating loneliness and has been shortlisted for the 2020 Community Leisure UK Award for Community Impact.

6. Putting the Fun into Falkirk’s Free Time

6.1 CS Lewis once said that “you can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me” but in Falkirk you can definitely get both.

6.2 A quarter of the local community are members of our libraries, and our digital library services saw a 75% increase in use in 2019. Callendar House Tearoom’s cuppas are that good, they continue to garner five-star reviews on TripAdvisor. And, with family play time at the heart of the Trust’s open spaces, we’re seeing increased use of our popular nature trails at Callendar Park and Muiravonside, soft play facilities and leisure swimming pools – all perfect for that family outing.

7. Creating a Voice for Rare Art Forms

7.1 There’s no business, like show business. Falkirk Community Trust has delivered an award-winning performance in supporting and developing our venues over the last nine years. From Town Halls steeped in tradition to a unique cinema, income from arts venues across the area has increased by 84% during our tenure and the area now boasts a range of popular events including HippFest and Fire & Light, a feature in VisitScotland’s Winter Festivals programme.

7.2 Home to HippFest, The Hippodrome Cinema in Bo’ness celebrated its centenary in 2012. A pioneering venue, the cinema first showed silent films in 1912 and then, as the cinematic art form developed, ‘talkies’. The Trust’s programming team have continued to celebrate the magnificent stars and movies of the silent film era with HippFest. This annual silent film festival showcases an ambitious programme of rare and unique screenings while creating opportunities for engagement and audience development through imaginative workshops, partnerships, talks, and pop-up satellite events. Importantly it has helped the local economy through supporting the hospitality venues in its town centre location.

7.3 In 2019, The Hippodrome won ‘Best Cinema Experience in Scotland’ from nominations made by members of the public.

8. Not for Profit, but definitely to Everyone’s Advantage

8.1 Falkirk Community Trust is committed to delivering genuine value to the people of Falkirk so that every pound spent with us, goes back into improving our facilities for their future benefit.

- 8.2 The community “profit” has been much greater than *anything* money can buy. Saving lives through improving health and well-being and better community health and fitness programmes, or through taking over 2000 children every year through Falkirk’s Learn to Swim programme. Creating opportunities through participation in inspirational Guinness World Record breaking events. Tuning in to silent movie festivals, or tuning out from the demands of modern life amidst the great outdoor setting of Helix Park. Establishing a legacy from which future generations will benefit. For the last decade Falkirk Community Trust has been proud to deliver the things that matter to the people of Falkirk and we are committed to continuing to do so.
- 8.3 With strong financial success, increased community participation levels, 99% of customers saying they would recommend our services, savings delivered to the Council, high customer satisfaction levels, award-winning services, national recognition and respect within the industry for the scale of achievements made within such a short timeframe, it is clear that Falkirk Community Trust may not be for profit, but is definitely working to everyone’s advantage.

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