

The background of the slide features the Falkirk Council Coat of Arms. It is a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a saltire (X-shaped cross) on a blue field. The top-right quarter shows a stag's head facing left. The bottom-left quarter shows a sailing ship on wavy lines representing water. The bottom-right quarter shows a lion passant guardant. Above the shield is a crown with four fleurs-de-lis. Below the shield is a ribbon with the motto 'A'NE FOR A'.

## **Agenda Item 5**

# **Falkirk 2022 Delivering Best Value: Best Value Strategic Action Plan - Final Update**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Falkirk 2022 Delivering Best Value:  
Best Value Strategic Action Plan - Final Update

**Meeting:** Executive

**Date:** 11 April 2023

**Submitted By:** Chief Executive

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report is the final update to the Executive on the [Best Value Strategic Action Plan](#), 'Falkirk 2022 Delivering Best Value', which was in place from February 2022 - March 2023. It also sets out the intent for follow-up improvement work to be undertaken in 2023/24, to ensure the Council continues its focus on achieving Best Value.
- 1.2 [The Council Plan](#), approved by Council in September in 2022, was developed with the Best Value Strategic Action Plan at its heart, and the ongoing Best Value work planned for 2023/24 will work to support the delivery of the Council's vision and priorities.

**2. Recommendations**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Executive:**

- (1) Notes the progress made on the Best Value Strategic Action Plan between December 2022 – March 2023 and the subsequent conclusion of the plan.
- (2) Notes that further Best Value improvement work will be factored into the Council's 2023/24 strategic plans which will be subject to Elected Member consideration later this year.

**3. Climate Change Implications**

- 3.1 This report does not have a direct effect on climate change.

**4. Background**

- 4.1 The Council has a requirement to fulfil its obligations, as per The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which places statutory duties on Councils in relation to Best Value and Community Planning.
- 4.2 The Council is committed to its Best Value obligations and has now largely implemented its Best Value Strategic Action Plan, which was based on the recommendations from the [Best Value Assurance Report](#) and the Accounts Commission Findings ([see report to Falkirk Council 15 February 2022](#)).

- 4.3 The Council's approach to collaborative leadership is central to the work on the Best Value Strategic Action Plan. For Falkirk Council this means:

"By working together, we will achieve more for the Falkirk area. We will:

- Create an environment of trust, mutual respect and collective ambition in which all can contribute fully and openly.
- Establish a culture where everyone is clear about their individual and collective responsibility to deliver best possible outcomes.
- Make informed decisions using our collective knowledge and skills, ensuring everyone has the opportunity and the confidence to contribute."

- 4.4 The collaborative efforts of Officers and Elected Members across the Council, means that we can now bring the 2022/23 Best Value Strategic Action Plan to a close, albeit that a number of additional actions will now be taken forward as part of the proposed next steps as set out in Section 5. This report is the third and final update, (previous records of progress were noted in the [23 August](#) and [06 December](#) 2022 Executive reports).

## **5. Considerations**

- 5.1 The Best Value Strategic Action Plan was largely implemented by March 2023, as per agreed deadlines. The plan concentrated on the following themes to address the recommendations set out in the [Best Value Assurance Report](#):

- Leadership
- Transformation
- Performance
- Capital
- Communities
- Falkirk Community Trust
- Equalities.

- 5.2 Various reports on these themes, including the resultant Council Plan and Financial Strategy, have been considered by Elected Members during the lifecycle of the Best Value Strategic Action Plan. To bring the plan to closure, this report includes:

- Appendix 1 - Best Value Detailed Performance Report. An overview of progress made against the key actions, between December 2022 – March 2023, the final reporting period of the Best Value Strategic Action Plan.
- Appendix 2 – Case Studies. Four supplementary case studies, showing in detail, the progress made on the Leadership, Transformation, Performance and Equalities themes to demonstrate the impact of improvements delivered.
- Next steps for 2023/24.

- 5.3 To deliver the Best Value Strategic Action Plan, progress was reviewed by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) on a quarterly basis. A number of case studies were reported to the Executive in December 2022 and four are appended to this report to provide detail on the progress made.

## Next Steps

- 5.4 As part of this review process, CMT recognises that while the Best Value Strategic Action Plan has been substantially implemented within the timelines set, there is more to do. For example, while CMT feels that significant progress has been made on issues linked to the financially sustainable position of the Council, the Council's ability to take difficult decisions and to work collaboratively to achieve the change required, more work is clearly required. CMT has committed to undertaking an evaluation of what's been delivered so far, and to build into 2023/24 plans, the necessary follow-up improvement work to ensure the Council continues its focus on achieving Best Value.
- 5.5 The evaluation process will take account of the scale of the financial challenge facing the Council, as a result of global events and associated inflationary pressures, rising energy costs and interest rates. Collaborative leadership will be critical to this and to supporting communities and running a financially sustainable Council. To that end, the evaluation will focus on progressing the work on collaborative leadership to continue to support effective decision making, partnership working with communities, equalities, delivering the Council of the Future Transformation and Improvement projects, and the Capital Programme. For note, the Best Value Falkirk Community Trust theme is now closed, and future savings identified will flow into the Financial Strategy.
- 5.6 To do this, two self-assessment exercises will be conducted to fully evaluate the impact of the Best Value Strategic Action Plan. A Chief Officer Workshop will take place in April to facilitate this, to ensure that any learnings from the year-long plan are harnessed and, if not already done so, have a mechanism in place to drive further progress into strategic plans under review / development for 2023/24. Elected Members will also be asked to attend a workshop to conduct the same exercise in tandem. The outcome of the self-assessments will be reported to Scrutiny Committee in June 2023 and will feed into the refresh of The Council Plan and Financial Strategy as appropriate, both of which are due to report to Council in September 2023.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 Consultation and collaboration are central to Council's approach to achieving Best Value. Consultation was undertaken with Elected Members in the development of the Best Value Strategic Action Plan. This report provides an opportunity for Elected Members to review the progress made now that the plan is complete.

## **7. Implications**

### **Financial**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The work undertaken on the Council's Best Value actions has contributed to the development of the [Financial Strategy](#) for the Council and hardwired into the [2023/24 budget report](#).

### **Resources**

- 7.2 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

## **Legal**

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

## **Risk**

- 7.4 The Council will be subject to a further Best Value Assurance process in 2023/24. There are significant risks to the Council's reputation if Best Value actions and subsequent changes stemming from this are not implemented and may impact the Council's ability to deliver on the Council's priorities, redesign services and support effective decision-making to enable this. The Council's corporate risk register records relevant risks and mitigations in relation to Best Value as appropriate.

## **Equalities**

- 7.5 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report. Nevertheless, whilst work has now been done to set up the necessary infrastructure to embed equalities into the work of the Council and improve accountability, further actions will be built in to 2023/24 plans to achieve the wider changes required.

## **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 7.6 There are no direct sustainability/environmental impact implications arising from this report.

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 This report brings closure to the 'Falkirk 2022 Delivering Best Value Strategic Action Plan' and aims to give assurance that the Council continues to focus on its commitment to achieve Best Value. Further improvement work will be factored into the Council's 2023/24 strategic plans which will be subject to Elected Member consideration later this year.

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## **Chief Executive**

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**Date:** 11 April 2023

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Best Value Detailed Performance Report  
Appendix 2: Case Studies

## **List of Background Papers:**

[Best Value Assurance Report](#)  
[Best Value Strategic Action Plan](#)  
[Report to Falkirk Council 15 February 2022](#)  
[Report to Executive 23 August](#)  
[Report to Executive 06 December 2023](#)

## Best Value Detailed Performance Report: December 2022 – March 2023

## LEADERSHIP THEME – Owner: Director of Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services

## BVR 1 - Elected members and senior officers need to work more constructively together to lead the council more effectively and decisively

Action	Deadline	Progress
Ensure a comprehensive induction programme is developed for all Members and ready for implementation	31-May-2022	<p><b>Action is complete.</b> A comprehensive induction programme and statutory training for Elected Members has been delivered and is now complete.</p> <p><b>Update March 2023:</b> Further training opportunities were identified and a number of additional training sessions were held in 2022/23. Ongoing training needs will be identified via 121 sessions with Elected Members and a continued programme of training rolled out into 2023/24.</p>
Develop a cross-Council understanding of what 'collaborative leadership' means for Officers and Elected Members	30-Sep-2022	<p><b>Action is complete with further work to be done.</b> A definition of 'collaborative leadership' has been developed and considered by the Council's Leadership Forum and Corporate Management Team. This is now being used as the baseline on which further development is being planned.</p>
Define what is required by Members and Officers to deliver Best Value	30-Sep-2022	<p><b>Action is complete.</b> A 'frequently asked questions' document has been produced and circulated to Elected Members to define Best Value. Multiple Best Value briefings have taken place with Officers since the time of the Best Value Audit in 2021. Collectively, the work of Elected Members and Council has culminated in the production of The Council Plan, approved by Council on 28 September 2022 alongside the Financial Strategy, which are the core strategic plans that drive Best Value across the organisation.</p> <p>The recent Audit Committee also heard the reinforcement by EY Auditors that it is the responsibility of all elected members to deliver Best Value. Discussions linked to this are being progressed through the Financial Strategy Group.</p>
Develop a new Corporate Plan and supporting Business Plan	30-Sep-2022	<p><b>Action is complete.</b> The approval of The Council Plan with a refreshed vision, set of priorities aligned to the Falkirk Plan, projects, actions and success measures sees the accomplishment of this strategic action. The Council Plan was complemented by the Financial Strategy which strengthens the strategic direction of the Council and embeds the Council's commitment to achieving Best Value.</p>

Action	Deadline	Progress
Implement a programme of collaborative leadership development for Officers and Elected Members. - First phase for officers - Members, with further phases thereafter.	31-Dec-2022	<p><b>Action is complete with further work to be done.</b> The formal appraisal '360 feedback' process has been undertaken by Chief Officers. Work is ongoing to provide feedback to Officers and the process will be rolled out to the next level down of employees by 2024. Organisational Development resource has now been identified to drive development activities to support Chief Officer development plans and further work will be done to roll this out to Service Unit Managers.</p> <p>A range of activities for Elected Members is up and running including fortnightly 'Lunch &amp; Learn' briefing sessions on operational areas of the Council, more in-depth briefings on strategic issues, specific training on key topics such as media skills and equalities, which has been done jointly with Chief Officers.</p> <p>A collaborative approach was taken to reviewing and producing the final version of The Council Plan. This resulted in Falkirk Council approving The Council Plan and the associated Financial Strategy. The Financial Strategy Group involving Officers and Elected Members is fully operational and played its part in the Council budget-setting process for 2023 / 24. It is supported by a Terms of Reference and has a critical role in ensuring that as a Council we are more able to create a shared narrative, to tackle multi-year challenges collaboratively. Work is also being undertaken by an external adviser, with Elected Members, to support collaborative leadership.</p>
Define our culture – what does it look and feel like – and embed this across the Council based on the Council values of Responsive, Innovative, Trusted and Ambitious	31-Dec-2022	<p><b>Action is largely complete with some further work to be done.</b> A definition of culture has now been considered. This will be further progressed through a programme of work to support culture change which is underway. There is a continued focus on frontline employee development in this area and will be undertaken in 2023.</p>
Ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities – Elected Members and Officers – commencing as part of the Member induction process in May 2022 and developing this across the year	31-Mar-2023	<p><b>Action is still in progress.</b> A draft of Elected Member roles and responsibilities is under development following the delivery of the Elected Member induction programme in May / June 2022. Further work is being done to refine this based on the Improvement Service information for Elected Members.</p>
Develop a programme of briefings and activities to ensure strong working relationships amongst Members and with Officers with a sustainable on-going training programme for Members – first phase complete by March 2023 and further phases thereafter	31-Mar-2023	<p><b>Action is complete with some further work to be done.</b> Lunch &amp; Learn briefings have been successfully delivered, with more planned for the remainder of 2023. This included two key sessions in February 2023 - a development session on equalities and a media development session. There has also been an extensive set of briefings in relation to key reports and issues being considered by the Council. Briefings will continue as appropriate throughout 2023 and on-going thereafter.</p>



## TRANSFORMATION THEME – Owner: Director of Place Services

**BVR 2 - It is crucial that the council makes far greater progress in delivering its transformation programme and in making savings, given the scale of the challenges it faces**

Action	Deadline	Progress
Review the transformation programme and identify elements that are working. Remove the elements that do not significantly add value, find solutions to the barriers that have previously emerged, and create a faster delivery and decision-making framework	30-Jun-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> Various consultations took place with senior officers involved with the Council of the Future (COTF) change programme to inform the review led by the Director of Place. A comprehensive proposal on significant changes to the COTF programme was presented and agreed at the CMT meeting on 6 June. This included changing COTF to concentrate on driving forward savings proposals, reviewing projects in scope, improving governance, enhancing performance reporting and updating the approach to the Change Fund.
Harness the resources of the PMO (Project Management Office) team and Change Fund to support the priority transformation projects in the Business Plan so there is increased capacity within the Council	30-Jun-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> The report agreed on 6 June reduced resources within the PMO team to improve the return on investment for the Council and ensured capacity in the team was aligned where the biggest impact could be made.
Review and improve the milestones used to monitor progress within each project to ensure there is clarity of progression and more effective scrutiny	30-June-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> A review of the project reporting has been undertaken and project managers are now consistently updating progression through agreed workbooks which accurately track status.
Review and strengthen the way these transformation projects are reported to Corporate Management Team and Council	31-Aug-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> The Executive agreed the new governance arrangements for Council of the Future (COTF) on 23 August 2022.  Reporting to Council has come via the development of robust proposals for decision-making at Committee as agreed in the Transformation review (e.g., Waste, SPR, ZBB Transport & Libraries).
Develop a new robust Business Plan that is outcome focussed, has realistic timescales linked to the transformation programme, and named responsibility for delivery	30-Sep-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> Now incorporated into Leadership action: "Develop a new Corporate Plan and supporting Business Plan". <b>Update March 2023:</b> The five-year Council Plan was approved in September 2022 and this included commitments around the delivery of financial sustainability including the transformation programme.  The Council agreed a new approach when it approved the Council Plan 2022/27, and this removed the need for a one-year Business Plan.



Action	Deadline	Progress
Review additional areas that are suitable for transformation within the Council. Where appropriate add these to the transformation programme to create a stronger roadmap of how the Council budget gap will be closed	30-Sep-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> The approval of The Council Plan and Financial Plan on 28 September 2022 included a refreshed set of COTF transformation projects based on the project criteria agreed as part of the governance arrangements. This will be subject to further review in the coming period.

## PERFORMANCE THEME – Owner: Director of Children’s Services

### BVR 3 - The council should continue to improve its approach to reporting performance to elected members and the public to support more effective scrutiny

Action	Deadline	Progress
After May 2022 Election, we will review and refresh Performance Indicators to reflect what's in the new Corporate and Business Plans	30-Sep-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> With the approval of The Council Plan on 28 September 2022, came an agreed Performance Management Framework. Key aspects of this include: A set of success measures that will be reported on at 2022/23 year-end. Will be subject to annual refresh, as reported in The Council Plan. A cycle of performance management reporting was agreed for quarterly updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Services will review Service Plan performance updates, every second quarter from Dec 2022.</li> <li>- Elected Members, via Scrutiny, will review The Council Plan performance updates every other quarter (mid-year and end of financial year from 2022/23.).</li> </ul> In doing this, the nature of performance management and reporting has changed for Falkirk Council, with a more streamlined set of performance indicators, including Local Government Benchmarking indicators, strategically aligned to the work of the Council and ready for measurement and review in a systematic cycle of reporting.
Remove duplication of reporting and make sure all Council reporting is meaningful, clear and simple to understand (including areas such as risk, finance, statutory areas, Council of the Future) and host in Falkirk Performs	30-Sep-2022	<b>Action is complete with further work to be done.</b> With the approval of The Council Plan on 28 September 2022, came an agreed Performance Management Framework, as per above action update. The projects, actions and success measures in The Council Plan are focused on delivering on the Council's new vision and priorities to support continuous improvement across all Council areas, linking with partners, with the new Performance Management Framework in place to facilitate effective scrutiny and public performance reporting on progress.

Performance will be reported using Power Bi and do the necessary systems integration work to make this happen. Our performance information will be clear and simple to understand for anyone reading it	31-Dec-2022	<p><b>Action is complete, with additional work now being taken forward.</b></p> <p>There is a clear focus on ensuring performance information is clear and simple to understand for anyone reading it, using the tools being deployed across the Council, as per the Strategic Performance Management Framework approved as part of The Council Plan. The Council Plan end-of-year reporting will be supplemented with an online Power BI Dashboard in Falkirk Performs (reporting period ends 31 March) and will focus on performance reporting of Council Plan performance indicators, with links to full suite of Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) results. Scrutiny will review the end-of-year report in June 2023.</p> <p>The Data, Insight Performance &amp; Strategy (DIPS) Council of the Future programme of work - is underway to make further improvements in the Council's approach to creating &amp; managing data, insights, performance &amp; strategy, which includes the next phase of the Power BI programme.</p>
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## CAPITAL THEME – Owner: Director of Place Services

### BVR 4 - The council needs to better manage its capital programmes to deliver planned projects

Action	Deadline	Progress
Undertake a comprehensive review of the Capital Plan to ensure proposals for delivery in 2022/23 are free of optimism bias and a delivery plan is in place	28-Feb-2022	<p><b>Action is complete.</b></p> <p>This work was completed prior to the Capital Budget being agreed in March 2022. The exercise led by the Director of Place and Finance identified a number of projects that needed to be reprofiled into future years in line with expected delivery and means the Capital Plan activity for 2022/23 should be in a more accurate position for reporting purposes.</p>
Review Council-wide governance arrangements for the Capital Programme to ensure there is an effective mechanism for monitoring, intervening and reporting	30-Jun-2022	<p><b>Action is complete.</b></p> <p>A new governance proposal was presented and approved by CMT on 25 April 2022. This included the formation of the new Strategic Asset Modernisation Board led by the Director for Place Services in partnership with the Chief Finance Officer. This Board includes senior representation from across the Council, has agreed Terms of Reference, and reports into CMT on a monthly basis. The first meeting of the new monthly Strategic Asset Modernisation Board took place in May 2022.</p>

Action	Deadline	Progress
Identify and develop projects within the Capital Plan that can be accelerated to mitigate against unexpected slippage in the planned programme	31-Jul-2022	<b>Action is complete with further work to be done.</b> <b>Update March 2023:</b> A review of the Capital Plan was undertaken in August 2022 to identify any projects that could be accelerated. None were identified as being ready. Focus has been put by SAMB on Asset Category Leads developing shovel ready projects that could meet this requirement in 2023/24 and future years.
Create and embed the Invest Falkirk service area to deliver on the major capital programmes of the Council	30-Sep-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> Invest Falkirk now established under Head of Invest Falkirk.
Undertake benchmarking work in high-performing local authorities to learn from good practice	31-Dec-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> A benchmarking exercise was undertaken to learn from good practice. The December 2022 SAMB recorded the fact that seven Councils responded to the survey issued. From the responses received, it is clear that there are varied results being achieved and a variety of practices being adopted. Nonetheless, the results have provided a benchmark for Falkirk Council to measure performance against going forward.
Review the business case development, options appraisal process, and project management of capital projects	31-Dec-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> Project management documentation is now in place and in use for both capital and Council of the Future projects.
Undertake post-project reviews for completed capital projects in 2022/23 to identify further improvements	28-Feb-2023	<b>Action is partially complete, with further work ongoing.</b> Projects completed in 2022/23 from each Asset Lead have now been identified for post-project review and these will be taken forward in the coming weeks to generate lessons learned and inform delivery during 2023/24.
Undertake a review of progress in February 2023 to determine the success of the changes, and if necessary, develop a further action plan for 2023/24	28-Feb-2023	<b>Action is complete.</b> <b>Update March 2023:</b> The SAMB undertook a review of progress - with positive feedback received - and an action plan has been developed for 2023/24.

## COMMUNITY THEME – Owner: Head of Housing and Communities

### BVR 5 - The council and its community planning partners need to improve how they manage and report their performance management

Action	Deadline	Progress
Implement The Falkirk Plan. Supported by the Community Planning Partnership Board, all Community Planning Partners will play an active role in the delivery of the Falkirk Plan, delivery plans and locality plans	30-Nov-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> Community Planning Partnership [CPP] Introduction & Learning Session - this session took place in August 2022 at Falkirk High School. The Programme covered a range of topics which focus on roles & responsibilities of the Community Planning Partnership, Community Empowerment in practice, The Falkirk Plan, Locality Planning in Falkirk, together with a networking opportunity across the partnership. Attendees included CPP Board, all partners, all Elected Members, Falkirk Plan Delivery Group Leads, various partnership groups including: Children & Young People, Community Safety, Community Justice. The CPP Programme of Information & Learning Events for 2023 was agreed at CPP Board 13 October 2022.
Report and communicate updates on the delivery of The Falkirk Plan milestones, with scrutiny and performance management arrangements embedded	31-Dec-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> Falkirk Plan Annual Report 2021/2022 has now been published. Falkirk Community Planning Partnership Website is now live and will be updated annually.

### BVR 6 - The council and its community planning partners urgently need to develop and implement locality plans to allow them to better focus on the needs of local communities

Action	Deadline	Progress
Complete and implement Locality Plans – dates and ownership will be clear	31-Dec-2022	<b>Action is complete, with further work to be done.</b> Grangemouth [February 2022] and Denny, Dunipace & Dennyloanhead [April 2022] Community Action Plans are now published. Denny, Dunipace & Dennyloanhead Community Action Plan was presented to the CPP Board in April 2022, in partnership with a Community Member. A draft Bainsford & Langlees Community Action Plan was presented to CPP Board 13 October 2022 and subsequently published. Work is underway to design the delivery and monitoring approach of Community Action Plans. Locality stakeholder groups, with membership from across the partnership continue to meet regularly in all three areas. For the next stage of the work, Officers will report an action plan to Community Planning Board in April 2023 to implement the 9 locality model in a phased and timely manner across the next 2-3 years.

## BVR 7 - The council and its community planning partners need to embed their new approach to community engagement and empowerment

Action	Deadline	Progress
Embed community engagement and empowerment into our culture and embed into the business plan	31-Dec-2022	<b>Action is largely complete, with further work to be taken forward.</b> Community Engagement OLLE Training Module designed April 22 (231 staff completed). Scrutiny and governance arrangements being developed. Community Partnership Team made permanent in 22/23 Budget. Member Induction on Communities 11/05/22 and 23/05/22. Community Partnership Team researched involvement of communities in the procurement process.
Enhance approach to community engagement corporately through increased information sharing and coordination of engagement programmes	31-Dec-2022	<b>Action is largely complete, with further work to be taken forward.</b> Cross service Community Empowerment Action Team (CEAT) relaunched, monthly sessions held. 1300 hours of community engagement planning support provided to 80 projects. Cross-service coordination group (including external partner representatives) in Grangemouth area. Team offer of engagement planning support to community organisations engaging for Community Choices project development purposes.
Ensure we continue to 'horizon scan' best practice in other organisations and learn from this	31-Dec-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> Community Partnership Team in contact with 15 Scottish Local Authorities to share learning, best practice and future collaboration. Community Partnership Team regularly attending training sessions, internalising and sharing learnings with colleagues.

## FALKIRK COMMUNITY TRUST – Owner: Director of Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services

## BVR 8 - The council needs to ensure that it can deliver the benefits envisaged from bringing the services provided by the Falkirk Community Trust in-house by making the difficult decisions required to realise savings

Action	Deadline	Progress
Building on the positive joint work over recent months of the Programme Management Group, ensure that Falkirk Community Trust staff, services, projects and assets are successfully integrated into the Council	30-Apr-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> Falkirk Community Trust staff, services, projects and assets are successfully integrated into the Council.

Ensure that the potential opportunities and benefits of integration are used as a basis for transformation, by integrating Falkirk Community Trust services into the Council of the Future programme and specifically the Strategic Property Review	30-Sep-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> The report on the Review of Integrated Services was considered by Council on 27 October 2022. Following consultation, the Strategic Property Review report was considered by Council on 29 March 2023.
Reviews of Falkirk Community Trust services, alongside existing services in new integrated structures, identify early opportunities for transformation, service improvement, efficiencies and savings, building on the new skill sets available to the Council	30-Oct-2022	<b>Action is complete.</b> The report on the Review of Integrated Services was considered by Council on 27 October 2022.

## EQUALITIES THEME – Owner: Chief Officer Health & Social Care Partnership

### BVR 9 -The council should act to fully embed equalities across the council and comply with statutory requirements

Actions	Deadline	Progress
Refresh existing equalities working group with identified equalities leads for each directorate to complete self-assessment and an improvement plan, in line with best practice, subject to regular review and scrutiny to meet statutory requirements	31-Mar-2022	<b>Action is complete with further work to be done.</b> The refreshed Equalities group has been established and is meeting regularly and is co- chaired by the Chief Officer of Falkirk Health & Social Care Partnership and Falkirk Council's Chief Governance Officer.  Equalities lead for each directorate has now been appointed as part of the group. A self-assessment has been undertaken against the Audit Scotland Equalities toolkit mapped across to internal suit actions, which is being used to develop the more detailed improvement plan for the Council.
Establish strategic leadership and leadership at all levels across the council.	31-May-2022	<b>Action is complete with further work to be done.</b> An Elected Member champion has now been appointed and meeting between champion and lead officer has taken place with regular follow up agreed.  Equalities was a core part of the recent Elected Member induction programme in May / June, with an external partner engaged to support these development sessions.
Develop an ambition to address inequality in every aspect of our work and undertake benchmarking work to learn from good practice in other organisations	30-Sep-2022	<b>Action is complete with further work to be done.</b> The Council has expressed its ambition to embed equalities in every aspect of its work and has actioned this through the ongoing BV plan. The council has nominated an Equalities champion and established the Equalities group with representation from each directorate. The equalities group is learning from other organisations and embedding the Audit Scotland self-assessment toolkit to inform the action plan.

A refreshed approach to equalities practice, including training and performance monitoring	30-Sep-2022	<p><b>Action is complete.</b></p> <p>The programme of Equality training is being offered to council staff over the next two months as the basis for embedding consistent equalities practice. The improvement plan based on the self-assessment will provide the framework for performance monitoring.</p> <p>Members of the Equalities group have agreed to participate in the first workshop to pilot the training before wider cross council roll out. Training materials have been prepared and approved by the Group with pilot training session in November.</p>
Develop the vision for Falkirk with reducing inequality at its heart.	31-Dec-2022	<p><b>Action is complete.</b></p> <p>Council Plan is focussed on addressing inequality with formal performance indicators to drive performance improvement throughout the Council and will be refreshed accordingly on an annual basis.</p>
Embed 'equalities first' approach to policy, planning, budget and service redesign.	31-Dec-2022	<p><b>Action is complete with further work to be done.</b></p> <p>Equalities compliance is a statutory requirement for the Council. The Best Value Strategic Action Plan has brought renewed focus and implemented the appropriate infrastructure (Elected Member Champion, Lead Officers, training and Governance structure) to deliver this in a more efficient way. Next Steps: It is imperative that all parties take personal responsibility to deliver and ensure compliance. There are measures to embed equalities in our Strategic Plans which should be implemented with key performance indicators and clear ownership in order to drive this forward.</p>



## Case Studies

Case Study 1 – Leadership

Case study name	Best Value Strategic Actions
<p>BV 1: Elected members and senior officers need to work more constructively together to lead the council more effectively and decisively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a comprehensive induction programme is developed for all Members and ready for implementation.</li> <li>• Develop a cross-Council understanding of what 'collaborative leadership' means for Officers and Elected Members.</li> <li>• Define what is required by Members and Officers to deliver Best Value.</li> <li>• Develop a new Corporate Plan and supporting Business Plan.</li> <li>• Implement a programme of collaborative leadership development for Officers and Elected Members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First phase for officers</li> <li>- Members, with further phases thereafter.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Define our culture – what does it look and feel like – and embed this across the Council based on the Council values of Responsive, Innovative, Trusted and Ambitious</li> <li>• Ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities – Elected Members and Officers – commencing as part of the Member induction process in May 2022 and developing this across the year.</li> <li>• Develop a programme of briefings and activities to ensure strong working relationships amongst Members and with Officers with a sustainable on-going training programme for Members – first phase complete by March 2023 and further phases thereafter.</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	
<p>In the Best Value report in 2018, auditors said that the council would need strong leadership to make the necessary step-change in its pace of improvement. In 2022 auditors said that 'elected members and the corporate management team have not yet demonstrated the collective leadership required to drive the change necessary to deliver the council's priorities. The council has made insufficient progress on key aspects of Best Value...'. As part of the Best Value Strategic Action Plan, the Council has committed to addressing the shortcomings identified by external audit, and the election of a new Council has facilitated a range of collaborative leadership activities to improve the Council's approach to this.</p>	
<b>Aim</b>	
<p>To define Collaborative Leadership and ensure that the roles and responsibilities that accompany that are clear and understood by Elected Members and Officers and crucially, are executed appropriately in order to change the Culture of the Council and deliver Best Value in Falkirk.</p>	

What we did
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A definition of ‘collaborative leadership’ has been developed and considered by the Council’s Leadership Forum and Corporate Management Team. This is now being used as the baseline on which further development is being planned.</li> <li>• A Collaborative approach was taken to producing <a href="#">The Council Plan 2022-2027</a>. Workshops were held with Chief Officers in order to determine priorities, and a collaborative approach taken with Officers and at cross-party, locality-based workshops with Elected Members, where consensus was reached on the construct of The Council Plan, with the new Council vision, priorities, enablers and performance management arrangements. The Council values were also endorsed as a follow-on from previous engagements with employees, trades unions, Elected Members and the public.</li> <li>• The Council Plan was underpinned by the Financial Strategy which strengthens the strategic direction of the Council and embeds the Council’s commitment to achieving Best Value: <a href="#">Financial Strategy September 2022</a>. The Financial Strategy Group involving Officers and Elected Members is also now up and running and supported by a Terms of Reference, has a critical role in ensuring that as a Council we are more able to create a shared narrative, to tackle multi-year challenges collaboratively. <a href="#">Financial Strategy Group DRAFT Terms of Reference</a></li> <li>• The formal appraisal ‘360 feedback’ process has been undertaken by Chief Officers. Work is ongoing to provide feedback to Chief Officers. Development activities will be put in place to support Chief Officer development plans and further work will be done to roll this out to Service Unit Managers.</li> <li>• A range of activities for Elected Members are up and running including fortnightly ‘Lunch &amp; Learn’ briefing sessions on operational areas of the Council, more in-depth briefings on strategic issues, specific training on key topics such as media skills and equalities, which will be done jointly with Chief Officers. 121 sessions with Elected members will inform content going into 2023 and beyond.</li> <li>• A programme of work to support culture change has now been defined, with a continued focus on front-line employee development in this area. An organisational development resource has now been identified to take forward the roll out of this programme over 2023 / 24.</li> </ul>
Impact
<p>Elected Members have an increased awareness and confidence in a number of key areas such as finance, welfare benefits, waste management, suicide prevention, procurement and more. Members are being consulted and listened to via 121 sessions and training will be adapted to their needs.</p> <p>Chief Officers have demonstrated commitment to scrutinise their leadership via the formal 360 feedback process. Officers are working on the next steps for this which will see the process rolled out to the next level of management in the Council by 2024.</p>
Recruitment of a new Organisational Development resource will allow the Council to deliver the necessary changes at pace throughout 2023 and beyond.
Next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council Plan will be refreshed annually and Elected Members will continue to be key in driving that strategy with annual workshops to engage Elected Members contributions (all members, all parties).</li> <li>• 121 sessions with Elected Members will inform content of future Lunch &amp; Learn sessions going into 2023, and beyond.</li> <li>• The formal 360 appraisal process will be rolled out to the Service Unit Managers by 2024.</li> <li>• Culture change will be tackled at pace once the new Organisational Development resource is fully operational.</li> </ul>

## Case Study 2 - Transformation

Case study name	Best Value Strategic Actions
<p>BV 2: It is crucial that the council makes far greater progress in delivering its transformation programme and in making savings, given the scale of the challenges it faces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the transformation programme and identify elements that are working. Remove the elements that do not significantly add value, find solutions to the barriers that have previously emerged, and create a faster delivery and decision-making framework.</li><li>• Harness the resources of the PMO (Programme Management Office) team and Change Fund to support the priority transformation projects in the Business Plan so there is increased capacity within the Council.</li><li>• Review and improve the milestones used to monitor progress within each project to ensure there is clarity of progression and more effective scrutiny.</li><li>• Review and strengthen the way these transformation projects are reported to Corporate Management Team and Council.</li><li>• Develop a new robust Business Plan that is outcome focussed, has realistic timescales linked to the transformation programme, and named responsibility for delivery.</li><li>• Review additional areas that are suitable for transformation within the Council. Where appropriate add these to the transformation programme to create a stronger roadmap of how the Council budget gap will be closed.</li></ul>

## Background

The Council channels its work through [The Council Plan](#), which was agreed by Council in September 2023. The Council Plan is framed around the Council vision, priorities, values<sup>1</sup> and three core enablers of, Financial Sustainability, Transformation and Improvement and Valued Sustainable Workforce.

Collectively, these enablers are the engine room of the Council Plan, making sure the Council of the Future (COTF) programme through the 'Transformation and Improvement' enabler drives forward change. The programme needs to be responsive, innovative, trusted & ambitious in meeting the needs of our citizens and continuing to deliver Best Value. Embedded within the Council's [Financial Strategy](#), it is designed to help the Council to deliver on its Financial Sustainability commitments and support the delivery of the Council's vision and priorities, moving projects at pace.

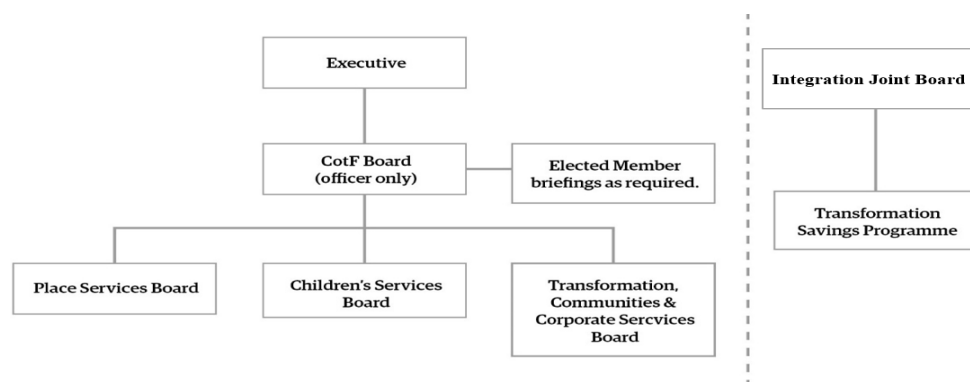
## Aim

To ensure that the council makes far greater progress in delivering its transformation programme and in making savings, given the scale of the challenges it faces.

## What we did

The Best Value Review of Transformation for the Council of the Future (COTF) Change Programme was completed in June 2022. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) approved the recommendations to make the programme concentrate on driving forward savings proposals, reviewing projects in scope, improving governance, enhancing performance reporting and updating the approach to the Change Fund. This was agreed by the [Executive](#) in August 2022.

**The COTF governance model is outlined:**



<sup>1</sup> Responsive, Innovative, Trusted & Ambitious (RITA)

- Three Directorate Boards report into a revised COTF Board which has Officer membership only.
- Board meets on a bi-monthly basis in the month when the Directorate Boards are not meeting.
- The COTF Board would be chaired by the Chief Executive, having received an advance briefing from the Programme Management Office (PMO). Also in attendance would be the Directors, the Chief Finance Officer, Chief Governance Officer, a senior HR representative, the Change Manager, a Comms representative and Chief Officers.
- The role of the COTF Board is to ensure that progress towards the development of corporate savings was being made, take intervention where necessary, and give the Chief Executive the information required to keep the Group Leaders updated. Where it was felt that Councillors would benefit from further information about a particular project then the COTF Board could agree that an Elected Members Briefing be held.

#### **The COTF Project Criteria is outlined:**

All transformation projects in the COTF change programme should comply with the following criteria:

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Definition</b>
1. Strategic Fit with the Council Plan	Transformation project supports one of the three key priorities of the Council Plan or the enablers.
2. Provides a significant opportunity for Transformation	The project will deliver existing / improved / redesigned services at lower cost. The project will generate savings of more than £250,000 in the next 12 months, or £500,000 within 24 months. The only exception would be the projects which are enablers for the wider savings.
3. Positive probability of success	The project has the support of CMT and the lead Director. Ideally there is benchmarking with other Councils that shows it is deliverable. Capacity exists or can be allocated to deliver the project in the next 12-24 months. The project has in-principle support from the Administration pending formal Council approval.

Elected Member scrutiny of the COTF programme is undertaken through reports to the Executive Committee and Council, as appropriate. This includes general programme updates covering the full programme, and reports covering proposals and developments for specific projects at relevant stages of development. This is supported by wider Elected Member briefings as required. The governance approach ensures scrutiny and decision making through the appropriate committee processes.

#### **COTF Improvement Projects**

The improvement strand of Council of the Future is a programme of efficiency and enabler projects to drive the Council's approach to continuous improvement, cost-reduction and enable the delivery of the Council's transformation projects. Improvement projects are tracked

through Service Plans, with the cumulative financial benefits of the Improvement Programme reported as part of The Council Plan and Financial Strategy updates going forward.

### **COTF Change Fund**

The Council of the Future programme of transformation and improvement projects across Council Services is fundamental to the future of public services in our area. As customers' expectations, aspirations and needs are ever changing, Services need to be agile, flexible and responsive if the Council is to achieve its priorities, meet the needs of our citizens and also continue to deliver Best Value.

To do this and to enable the ongoing change across the Council and deliver on budgetary savings, the Change Fund holds a value of £1m, allocated as part of the 2023 / 24 budget to support this. For note, the Council's 2022 / 23 budget also approved a £1m Change Fund. The approval process for awarding any investment from the Change Fund is part of the COTF governance framework.

### **Impact**

The initial impact of this is seen in The Council Plan and Financial Strategy, where a defined programme of transformation projects, alongside a number of improvement projects, is in place.

COTF has begun reporting to Elected Members as part of Financial Strategy updates, with performance updates reported to Scrutiny twice-yearly, in line with the Council Plan Strategic Performance Management Framework (SPMF). Where Elected Member considerations have been required on specific projects, these have been reported accordingly and have included papers on the Strategic Property Review, Libraries, Transport Review and Sport & Leisure projects.

Savings from the decisions taken from these in-year reports to Elected Members and the full implementation of these decision will be the next measure of impact.

Projects that have benefitted from 2022 / 23 Change Fund investment (£1m agreed in March 22 budget) and allocated following the Best Value Review of Transformation and the development of The Council Plan and Financial Strategy include:

Project	Allocation £'m
ICT rolling programme - <a href="#">Capital Programme Review</a>	0.50
Business Intelligence	0.25
Transformation of Roads, Grounds Maintenance & Street Cleansing	0.10
Organisational Development	0.06
Arts & Heritage	0.05

The Council has undertaken a range of engagement and consultation activities (see example [Consultations & surveys - Budget 2023/24 | Falkirk Council](#)). The outcomes of the various engagement and consultation activities will be woven into COTF projects where relevant and will provide a baseline that can be used to measure any shift in perceptions by the end of the project.

In terms of specific success measures for COTF, they are set out:

Success Measure	Target
Projects will have clear benefits which can be measured.	100%
Projects will be monitored and reported.	100%
Projects will be delivered on time and on budget.	70%

Performance against these will be measured as part of the end-of-year performance report for The Council Plan and will report to Scrutiny on 01 June 2023.

### Next steps

The Council of the Future Change Programme has multi-year projects underway.

The next steps will be to fulfil the delivery requirements for these, ensuring there is a focus on Financial Sustainability and a Valued Sustainable Workforce (enablers) to deliver on Council priorities.

Work will be done to improve the financial reporting in place, with the overall performance of the programme for 2022 / 23, reporting to Scrutiny on 01 June 2023.

In line with engagement and consultation feedback, the projects will evolve and any material project scope changes will be recorded in the refresh of both The Council Plan and the Financial Strategy refresh which will report to Council in September 2023.

## Case Study 3 - Performance

Case study name	Best Value Strategic Actions
BV 3: The council should continue to improve its approach to reporting performance to elected members and the public to support more effective scrutiny.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After May 2022 Election, we will review and refresh Performance Indicators to reflect what's in the new Corporate and Business Plans. The performance indicators need be meaningful to make sure that we can report on progress made against each of these strategic plans and allow effective scrutiny to take place.</li> <li>Remove duplication of reporting and make sure all Council reporting is meaningful, clear and simple to understand (including areas such as risk, finance, statutory areas, Council of the Future) and host in Falkirk Performs.</li> <li>Performance will be reported using Power Bi and do the necessary systems integration work to make this happen. Our performance information will be clear and simple to understand for anyone reading it.</li> </ul>

### Background



As part of the Best Value Strategic Action Plan, the Council has committed to addressing the performance shortcomings identified by external audit. The work undertaken has given the Council a clear view of what needs to be reviewed and monitored to support the delivery of The Council Plan.

#### **Aim**

- To have clear and honest performance reporting to support more effective scrutiny from Elected Members, the public and auditors.
- To host this on a public platform.
- To ensure performance is measurable with clear performance indicators.

#### **What we did**

[The Council Plan](#) – Based on a set of collaborative workshops with Officers and Members, performance management arrangements were agreed by Council in September 2022 to ensure:

The Council Plan has set clear performance indicators, with targets applied.

This was a blend of performance indicators and Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicators.

A mid-year and end-of-year performance report will be reviewed by Scrutiny with a clear focus on driving the delivery of The Council Plan.

This will be the basis of the Council's approach to Public Performance Reporting.

A summary of what's been put in place includes:

- Implementation of the Strategic Performance Management Framework.
- Deployment of Power Bi to complement the main performance system (Pentana) to generate fresh insights to drive strategy, policy, plans and performance.
- [Falkirk Performs](#) – web pages on the Council's website to measure and make publicly available a mix of local and national performance indicators and track how well the Council is performing and where improvements are needed.
- Clear reports hosted on Falkirk Performs twice per year as part of the Strategic Performance Management Framework.
- LGBF – new streamlined report hosted in Power Bi focussing on the basket of indicators the Council has selected to drive performance in key areas (link to full report remains available).
- Power Bi. Business Intelligence team have commenced the roll-out of Power Bi with dashboards including HR / Payroll, Finance, Education and Roads & Grounds.
- The Council's main performance management system is Pentana. A new release is due and a decision on whether to migrate to the new release (cost implications), stick with the current version or move to an alternative option will become clear in 2023. This is a dependency to the Power Bi programme roll out.
- A commitment to implementing the Data, Insight, Performance & Strategy (DIPS) – Council of the Future programme of work. Work on this has already begun to make further improvements in the Council's approach to creating & managing data, insights, performance & strategy, which includes the next phase of the Power Bi programme.

#### **Impact**

- Services have a reduced burden on completing monthly resource-heavy Performance Review Statements.
- Services are now on a rolling performance rota of quarterly reporting as follows:

<b>December</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>September</b>
Local Service Plan Reporting	End-of-Year Public Performance Reporting	Local Service Plan Reporting	Mid-Year Public Performance Reporting

- The first End-of-Year performance report on the Council Plan will be reported to Scrutiny on 01 June 2023. This would typically be an annual report, however, given the timing of the development and approval of the Council Plan at the end of September 2022, following the election and embedding of a new Council, it will focus on the period October 2022 – March 2023.
- The production of the Council Plan and the Performance Management Framework is a critical step forward for Falkirk Council.
- Data and insights will be critical to Council planning during a time of significant financial challenge. The commitment to drive the DIPS programme of work forward at pace will be crucial to supporting decision making and strategic planning going forward and should be the bedrock of information for consultation and engagement exercises.

### **Next steps**

Reporting on overall Council performance has made significant progress over the life of the Best Value Strategic Action Plan. It has helped identify further improvements needed and put the spotlight on the need to assess whether the Council has the right skills, the right information, at the right time to make better decisions and deliver better services for our customers.

To tackle this, Officers have proposed a programme of work which will build on the good work carried out in 2022 / 23. The Data, Insight, Performance & Strategy (DIPS) programme will consist of 5 key project areas to make the necessary changes across the Council as follows:

#### **People -**

Investment into expertise of existing workforce - upskilling. Centrally coordinated local teams working collaboratively in a streamlined, effective and efficient way without duplication.

#### **Data -**

The right information, available at the right time. Rationalise and streamline data flows and information, removing duplication. Services working collaboratively and sharing consistent outputs.

#### **Power BI -**

Provide business-focused transparent and accessible data, evidence and information - which is cross-service, resulting in fresh insights.

#### **Business Architecture, Performance and Strategy –**

Using insights to deliver tangible performance improvements. Reporting performance honestly and clearly. Implement strategy based on intelligence in order to support the development of future policy, plans and projects.

#### **Systems Architecture –**

Automation of systems, processes and data flows including integration to website. The creation of collaborative workspaces. Improved customer journey.

## Case Study 4 - Equalities

Case study name	Best Value Strategic Actions
<p>BV 9: The council should act to fully embed equalities across the council and comply with statutory requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh existing equalities working group with identified equalities leads for each directorate to complete self-assessment and an improvement plan, in line with best practice, subject to regular review and scrutiny to meet statutory requirements.</li> <li>• Establish strategic leadership and leadership at all levels across the council.</li> <li>• Develop an ambition to address inequality in every aspect of our work and undertake benchmarking work to learn from good practice in other organisations.</li> <li>• A refreshed approach to equalities practice, including training and performance monitoring.</li> <li>• Develop the vision for Falkirk with reducing inequality at its heart.</li> <li>• Embed 'equalities first' approach to policy, planning, budget and service redesign. Ensure we continue to 'horizon scan' best practice in other organisations and learn from this.</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	
<p>The Equality Act 2010 challenges organisations to know how age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion / belief, sex, and sexual orientation describe the experiences of local communities, both individually and collectively. Thinking about the relationship between these 'protected characteristics' explains the difficulties and opportunities arising from the diversity of local areas. They are a reminder that the consequences of difference on effective service delivery cannot be avoided either for the provider or the user.</p> <p>Organisations are expected to use this understanding to demonstrate 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act.</li> <li>• advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.</li> <li>• foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.</li> </ul>	
<b>Aim</b>	
<p>To implement a refreshed structure within the Council that will ensure Elected Members and Officers address inequality in every aspect of their work whilst learning from good practice in other organisations and continue to 'horizon scan' to ensure we continue to deliver Best Value now and in the future.</p>	

To ensure the Council executes its statutory duty to maintain compliance with the Equality Act 2010 at all times. Best Value reporting has previously identified significant weaknesses in the Council's equalities arrangements including the absence of an appropriate governance framework, of arrangements for self-assessment and reviewing outcomes, and of reporting progress against its statutory requirements. The intention of the Best Value Action Plan was to implement the required structure, practices and culture in order to fulfil our statutory obligation to ensure compliance and uphold the Council's [Equalities Outcomes](#).

#### **What we did**

- Equalities and Human Rights Working Group is now established, meeting regularly and is co-chaired by the Chief Officer of Falkirk Health & Social Care Partnership and Falkirk Council's Chief Governance Officer.
- An Equalities lead for each directorate has now been appointed as part of the group.
- An Elected Member Champion is now in place with regular meetings with the Equalities Lead Officer.
- A self-assessment has been undertaken against the Audit Scotland Equalities toolkit mapped across to internal actions, which is being used to develop the more detailed improvement plan for the Council. [Equalities Self-Assessment & Improvement Plan](#)

#### **Impact**

The necessary work to engage the right people and embed the right Governance structure across the Council has now taken place.

The Equalities Self-assessment and Improvement Plan is complete. The report on our approach to mainstreaming and reporting on progress with our equality outcomes is due in April 2023 for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

A marked change in Culture has been observed across the Council in everyday working practices and in Committees and meetings with Elected Members challenging Officers on Equalities. This is driving a renewed focus in 'business as usual' activity where Officers are proactively engaging with the Equalities Lead to ensure they're giving the necessary consideration. This is positive change however places an increased burden on the Equalities Lead.

#### **Next steps**

Further training to be rolled out to Services to increase confidence in Officers to get equalities 'right first time' when writing policy, projects and plans, this will also reduce burden on the Equalities Lead and free them up to focus on further development work.

The current Equalities and Human Rights Working Group will be reviewed so that the representatives from Services continue to build more awareness and understanding of their role. It is imperative that representatives take part in regular meetings to discuss the Equality and Poverty Impact Assessments (EPIA) as a group - this is Council policy.

Equalities and Human Rights Working Group proactively engaging with Officers in anticipation of the Council Plan refresh to propose performance indicators with the intention of mainstreaming equalities considerations into 'business as usual' practices and holding officers accountable for this. The proposed Council Plan refresh will report to Council in September 2023.

Services are working with their representatives from the Equalities and Human Rights Working Group however work should continue at pace to improve the knowledge of representatives and to ensure this is cascaded across each service in order that EPIAs are 'right first time' and comply with the Council's equality duties.

Equalities compliance is a statutory requirement for the Council. The Best Value Strategic Action Plan has brought renewed focus and implemented the appropriate Elected Member Champion, Lead Officers, training and Governance structure to deliver this in a more efficient way. It is imperative that all parties take personal responsibility to deliver and ensure compliance. There are measures to embed equalities in our Strategic Plan which should be implemented with new key performance indicators and clear ownership in order to drive this forward.