

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: CORPORATE PLAN UPDATE
Meeting: FALKIRK COUNCIL
Date: 10 DECEMBER 2008
Author: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will recall that, in line with the Council's Strategic Planning and Management System (SPMS), the Council approved a Corporate Plan in March 2008. This Plan covers the period from 2008 until 2011. This report updates Members on progress made towards achieving the outcomes contained within the Corporate Plan and how these are being taken forward through the key policies and strategies of the Council.
- 1.2 Members will also recall that the Council, along with our Community Planning Partners agreed our first Single Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Government in the summer of this year. The Outcome Agreement sets out how our local priorities support national outcomes, along with the indicators we will use to measure progress. This reports progress against these indicators and also notes the requirements for refreshing the Single Outcome Agreement next year.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan sets out the goals and values of the Council, i.e. what we are trying to achieve and how we will go about our business. As part of the Corporate Plan, the SPMS was included to ensure that the Council's key priorities are progressed with regard to our strategic policies and strategies, as well as service delivery objectives.
- 2.2 The Corporate Plan refreshed the goals and values of the Council to ensure they meet our continued aspirations, i.e. underpin our vision for our area. Our priorities are aligned with the vision and themes contained within the Strategic Community Plan and thus underpin our contribution to achieving the outcomes within our Single Outcome Agreement. Our revised goals are:

Goals

- Further developing a thriving, sustainable and vibrant economy;
- Continuing to improve the health, safety and well being of our citizens and communities;
- Increasing our effort to tackle disadvantage and discrimination; and
- Enhancing and sustaining an environment in which people want to live work and visit.

Values

2.3 The values of the Council set out the way we will undertake our business. These are:

We are committed to PUBLIC SERVICE, which means:

- fairness;
- listening and responding;
- being accessible and accountable; and
- promoting our services using plain English as far as possible.

We are committed to PERFORMANCE, which means:

- providing quality;
- achieving value for money;
- promoting innovation; and
- seeking continuous improvement.

We are committed to PARTNERSHIP, which means:

- effective communication;
- sharing decision making; and
- encouraging participation.

2.4 The purpose of this report is to consider the progress against our three-year Corporate Plan outcomes.

3. PROGRESS AGAINST THE OUTCOMES IN THE PLAN

3.1 Underpinning each of the goals in the plan, we have four outcomes. These outcomes are incorporated within our Single Outcome Agreement under an appropriate national outcome, along with the relevant indicators that will measure progress.

3.2 Appendix one provides an update on the relevant indicators contained within the Single Outcome Agreement under each goal and relevant local outcomes.

3.3 Members will note that in the majority of objectives, we are making good progress. An overall assessment of improvement can be made by using a ratio which compares the number of indicators where performance has increased, with those where performance has decreased in a reporting year. For 2007/08 the ratio is approximately 5:1 in favour of improving or sustaining existing performance levels. It is anticipated that we will continue to develop the monitoring statement to ensure it covers all priorities adequately.

3.4 The following section provides commentary on some of the Council's achievements in 2007/08 and for the first six months of this 2008/09, against the outcomes set out in our Corporate Plan.

Further Developing a Thriving Sustainable and Vibrant Economy

Our area will be recognised as having a culture and ethos of aspiration and ambition

- (i) The Business Panel continues to be optimistic about the future of the Council area. From the latest survey 92% of businesses think the Falkirk Council area is a good place to be located and that they will continue to consolidate and expand over the coming year.
- (ii) The Council has opened two new schools in Kinnaird and Maddiston thus ensuring our youngest pupils have the highest quality of learning environment;
- (iii) The Council and our partners became an early implementer of the new 16+ learning choices model launched by the Government in February 2008. This will ensure all young people leaving school will be offered arrangements appropriate to their needs e.g. training, employment, further education or indeed continuing at school by December 2010. This is one of the most ambitious schemes of this nature in Scotland. In addition the Council has developed new progression pathways for those young people who need pre apprentice provision. To date this new opportunity has supported 406 young people of which 93% moved into a positive outcome.
- (iv) In 2007/08 schools reported that young people were engaged in 287 entrepreneurial activities, 17 of which were Fair Trade activities. This represents an increase of 16% on the previous year's figures. Schools continue to link with local businesses to promote Enterprise in Education with a total of 427 partnerships established. Carrongrange School was only one of 10 in Scotland to be recognised as Socially Enterprising School at an awards ceremony earlier in summer 2008. It was also short listed as one of the top 3 in the 'most Enterprising Special School' category at the 2008 Scottish Education Awards.
- (v) A new business unit opened in Bo'ness to offer modern accommodation for small businesses and a new unit is under construction at Wholeflats, Grangemouth.

The Wealth and Prosperity of our Area will increase

- (i) Over the last year, the number of modern apprentices taken on by private businesses has increased. We have secured benefit in the community clauses in a number of contracts that have allowed new opportunities for training and apprenticeships to take place. In addition to the new schools contract, a national housing association has adopted our clauses and has appointed 20 modern apprentices who are working within our area.
- (ii) The Council worked to ensure the transfer of responsibilities from Scottish Enterprise took place timeously. Falkirk Council also has taken the lead for the Forth Valley area in the business gateway. The number of Volume Start ups within the Forth Valley area in the first three months of operation performed ahead of target and above the Scottish average.
- (iii) The Council has also sought to stimulate local employment. In 2007/08 the Council supported 278 new business start ups through the Business Gateway. The Council also increased the uptake of work based training to 560 in

2007/08, compared to 432 the previous year. The Council also increased the number of modern apprentices and skill seekers it managed by 13% in the same period. With Council support a total of 729 jobs have been created or secured in 2007/08.

Our workforce will be highly skilled

- (i) The Council opened a new library in Stenhousmuir and recently opened a further library in Polmont. These new facilities give people within our communities the opportunity to access not only books, but on line facilities. The number of times the public accessed computer terminals in libraries was up slightly last year.
- (ii) We also employ 255 modern apprentices within the Council at any one time. This means we are well on course to meet our commitment of 5% i.e. 300 of our workforce being modern apprentices by autumn 2009.
- (iii) In 2007/08 our adult literacy and numeracy team worked with 262 learners to improve their reading, writing, number and English language skills. A number of learners gained accreditation in Communication and Numeracy, and several achieved ESOL SQA units necessary to qualify for British Citizenship.
- (iv) Overall, our schools have performed steadily during 2007/08. Against most of the categories assessed and reported on by HMIE, our schools have been assessed at 90% or above as being good or very good. The S4 cohort has performed consistently in terms of attainment between 2006/07 and 2007/08. As a result of the percentage of young people leaving school without progressing into employment, further or higher education or training has fallen from 16% in 2006/07 to 10% in 2007/08.

The quality of our infrastructure will help promote the growth of the local economy.

- (i) Falkirk Town centre was awarded Business Improvement District status in May 2008. This will ensure the town can continue to develop and grow.
- (ii) The plans for regenerating our other town centres continue to develop. The new shopping centre in Stenhousmuir nears completion with the opening of the ASDA store.
- (iii) While the economic situation has impacted our ambitious plans for development, where the Council has an influence, we have continued to progress plans for regeneration. This includes the opening of the Hippodrome in Bo'ness.
- (iv) The Council took the decision to reduce car parking charges in Falkirk Town centre. This has ensured our town centre will be a more attractive destination for shoppers and commuters alike.
- (v) During 2007/08 the number of business advice requests for consumer protection completed within 14 days reached 88.7% compared to 65.9% the previous year.

Continuing to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of our citizens and communities

Our citizens will be supported to make positive health choices and lifestyles in order that they can live longer.

- (i) The Council approved a new Health Improvement Plan in August 2008. This plan sets out clear targets and actions for improving the health of individuals and our communities over the life of the plan.
- (ii) All our primary, secondary and special needs schools and nursery centres have now become health promoting, with 64 establishments achieving level 2 accreditation and 7 level one. 98% of our educational establishments are now health promoting. This helps encourage young people to pursue a healthier lifestyle. During 2007/08, the number of young people participating in Council health promoting activities more than doubled to 5,072 compared to 2,315 in 2006/07. The number of young people attending our leisure centres also increased by over 8,000 during the same period.
- (iii) The Council approved a Core Paths Plan in spring 2008. This plan develops the work contained within the Outdoor Access Strategy, that aims to promote the countryside to both residents and visitors. This last year has seen the implementation of the Braes and Bo'ness / Blackness paths network.
- (iv) The Council launched an Active Campaign in the summer of 2008. This promoted a range of activities from tea dances to organised sporting activities. This included opening the school swimming pools in Larbert and Braes High School to the public.
- (v) 24 active peer educators were recruited and trained in Grangemouth, Denny, Falkirk and Maddiston. These peer educators then delivered 47 training sessions since last year and have made contact with 823 young people.
- (vi) Over 200 young people were involved in the Commonwealth Games, incorporating physical activities and alcohol awareness, with a number of events from cycle trips to football matches. These activities were linked to the Straighttalk Peer Education Project.

People will have equitable access to local health, support and care.

- (i) Earlier this year, the Council and our partners established two locality based children's teams that ensure we have a more holistic approach to meeting the needs of children and young people.
- (ii) Services and advice for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder were launched. These provided practical support and advice for young people and their families including ensuring staff have the essential skills required.
- (iii) During 2007/08 the number of carer assessments undertaken experienced a 3-fold increase by 970 assessments compared to 2006/07. We also increased the percentage of home care clients aged over 65 who received personal care by 5.5% in the same period.

Our citizens and communities will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and well being

- (i) Further support has been given to develop youth initiatives such as football and rugby. This has meant there has been an increase in the number of young people participating in physical activity over the last year.
- (ii) The Council was the first to introduce 'cool to the touch' containers as part of the meals on wheels service. These containers are 98% biodegradable and ensure that the 42,000 meals delivered every year to the 328 users stay warm when delivered, while being cool when removed from ovens.

- (iii) The Council delivered a 10 week 'Virtual Baby' programme to 40 young people as well as taster sessions to 300 pupils in schools and community based settings. This comprehensive programme gave young people an insight into the knowledge and skills required to make informed decisions about parenting.
- (iv) 'Community Concerns Us' campaign was launched in spring this year. This campaign highlighted how people could report on anti-social behaviour within their communities.

Our citizens will be protected.

- (i) In summer this year the Council started a £5.2m programme of flood prevention, including approximately £4 m programme for Bo'ness.
- (ii) The Council established a project to develop closer relationships between parents and schools. This complements a project launched in schools 'Restorative Approaches' piloted in the Braes and Larbert High Schools which recognises the school as a community and that individuals within the school have a responsibility to each other.
- (iii) Further investment in Camelon Children's Centre worth £1.3m was approved. This will ensure the centre can cater for the youngest and most vulnerable children in our communities.
- (iv) A highly popular taxi marshalling service that was introduced over the Christmas and New Year periods was continued following a successful evaluation.
- (v) Citizens' confidence in their personal safety in their communities has increased. In 2007/08 90% of citizens were confident of their personal safety during the day and 51% during the night. This compares with 84% and 47% respectively in 2006/07.
- (vi) We are seeing the benefits of our investment in tackling anti-social behaviour in recent years. The number of domestic noise complaints fell from 157 in 2006/07 to 19 in 2007/08. The reported levels of anti-social behaviour also fell in the same period from 3474 to 3320.

Increasing our efforts to tackle disadvantage and discrimination

Our citizens continue to access critical services that meet their needs

- (i) The Council approved a number of projects through the Fairer Scotland Fund to be targeted at our individuals and communities of greatest need. These projects included measures to ensure access to debt and money advice services, further support to move people into employment and training and also measures to improve the environment of our areas of greatest need.
- (ii) Our Social Work Services were subject to a number of major inspections this year. This included an inspection of all social work services. To ensure it is understanding and meeting the needs of its customers more fully, the Service has introduced a range of customer feedback mechanisms. These include more consistent arrangements for dealing with complaints, further training and supervision of reception staff and also a revised set of service information leaflets.
- (iii) The MEC service was further developed and modernised. This now provides up to date hardware and software for people living at home, including people with complex needs and head injuries.
- (iv) The Stenhousmuir Children and families Social Work team received a top Social Work Care award which recognised their best practice in tackling alcohol and

vandalism related crime, as well as offering reactive services to our most vulnerable families.

- (v) During the course of 2007/08, the Council has improved the number of buildings which are suitable and accessible to disabled people from 56% in 2006/07 to 63.4% in 2007/08.

Our housing continues to meet the needs of people who live and may wish to live in our area

- (i) Our housing repairs service continued to improve with an increase in repairs completed on targets in both emergency repairs and other repairs. In addition, customer satisfaction levels were also high with 91% satisfaction over the last 18 months.
- (ii) 7 specifically designed homes for people with a disability were completed by the Council this year, with a further new 114 Council houses and 210 RSL homes planned over the coming years.
- (iii) We have developed a Home Energy Strategy that will help support our efforts to reduce fuel poverty and raise awareness of energy efficiency in our housing.
- (iv) The Council has implemented a strategy to assist homeless people. This is with a view to supporting and reducing the number of homeless people in our area. We have also introduced a new Housing Allocations Policy. This is set against an increase in demand for social housing. For instance, 1771 sought relocation from their current council house due to changed circumstances.

Vulnerable children will be protected

- (i) The Council continues to review and develop our child protection arrangements. We have, in addition to training our own staff in this critical area, expanded our training to other community and voluntary organisations. These arrangements and other measures to strengthen our child protection measures are being taken forward through the approved Child Protection Committee business plan.
- (ii) Following a successful funding bid, the Council has entered into an agreement with Arberlour Child Care Trust to develop a service for young female care leavers. This service will provide enhanced and intensive support for young women leaving care moving into independent living.
- (iii) We have also plans to expand our provision of residential care with the opening of two additional residential places in Tremanna child care unit. This will ensure our provision for our most vulnerable children is of the highest standards.
- (iv) We have developed over the last year, training and development opportunities for our valued foster carers. This has resulted in over 50% of our Foster Carers achieving SVQ awards.
- (v) The Council, in partnership with key agencies, has further progressed the integration of Children's Services. This has been assisted with the appointment of two locality managers for each of the respective pilots in Denny and St. Mungo's. A number of staff from different partner agencies are now co-located in Denny. Nineteen multi-agency training sessions have also been provided at which a total of 313 members of staff attended.

Disadvantaged communities will benefit from better services

- (i) In order to support some of our most vulnerable people within our communities, the Council developed two very innovative home support schemes earlier this year. The first, in conjunction with Grangemouth Enterprises and the Falkirk Homeless Project (Quickstart), the Council entered into a Public Social Partnership that provides furniture to homeless people and families that maximises the benefits to the wider community in terms of waste management and employment / training opportunities. Secondly, the Council recently appointed a Handyman to provide a small repairs service to all tenures. This service will benefit people aged 60 or over, or any person registered disabled who do not have an able bodied person living with them.
- (ii) The Council published an updated Equalities Scheme this year. This set out the priorities for the coming years and included focusing on looked after children, young males, physical assessments of buildings, as well as building relationships and community engagement. In conjunction with this, the Council, along with our community planning partners, published guides for migrant workers in our local area, highlighting issues such as housing, health, safety and employment. This complemented the Council's recently approved guidance on communicating with minority ethnic communities and people with a sensory impairment.
- (iii) In September this year the Council provided evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee on Poverty. We were one of only two Councils asked to give verbal evidence on our approach to tackling poverty, following our written submission.
- (iv) The Council working in partnership with the area's three Citizen's Advice Bureaux, have helped 1,266 people who have gone into debt in 2007/08 by assisting them in renegotiating £32.3m of debt. Although the number of benefit enquiries have dropped during the period, benefit gains have increased by £1.7m between 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Enhancing and sustaining an environment in which people want to live work and visit

We will be greener

- (i) Earlier this year it was announced that Falkirk was one of only six Councils that had been successful in bidding for Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding. The Government's grant of £926,000 will be met with Council and partners funding of £453,000 to develop sustainable transport options for the Larbert / Stenhousemuir area.
- (ii) In line with our Biodiversity Strategy, progress has been made in a number of areas. These include the production of an Integrated Network Study Programme for the Falkirk Council area, the publication of Biodiversity and Development Supplementary Planning guidance, the development of a bird feeding project in the Council's care homes and the completion of a conservation project which saw the enhancement of three pond clusters.
- (iii) The Council launched a Carbon Busters campaign in autumn this year. This is aimed at reducing the Council's own carbon footprint by 20% in five years. This is in addition to nearly 97% of the Council's vehicles now running on low emissions fuel – an increase of 9% in the last year.

- (iv) The Council continues to roll out the 3-bin system across the area to assist in our efforts to increase recycling and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. Thanks to our communities, steady improvement has been maintained on our recycling rates during the year. In 2007/08 the tonnage of waste collected per 1,000 population fell by 82.4 tonnes compared to the previous year. We also reduced the total tonnage of bio degradable waste being sent to landfill by over 6,500 tonnes in the same period.

We will improve the built environment

- (i) Earlier this year the Council allocated £600,000 that will ensure our major sporting and cultural centres are maintained the standards our communities require. This resulted in investment being made to Callander House, Grangemouth Sports Complex, upgrading our Leisure facilities, as well as improving local football facilities.
- (ii) The Council has improved performance on a number of key indicators to improve our built environment and open spaces. This includes increasing the percentage of planning applications processed within target time. The percentage of special uplifts completed within 5 days has also risen from 78% in 2006/07 to 92.8% in 2007/08. We have also improved on the removal of abandoned cars within 14 days from 85.2% in 2006/07 to 89.4% in 2007/08.

Our open spaces will be attractive, accessible and safe

- (i) The Council supported the development of a project called 'Communities along the Carron' which was successful in being awarded European Funding. This project seeks to connect local communities to the River Carron and develop a vision for using the river as a community resource. The aim is to reconnect communities along the river by gathering information on water quality, ecology and habitats, heritage, access and resources including shops, businesses and local attractions.
- (ii) In September this year the Council launched a new litter strategy. This strategy built on the successes of the last plan. Members will be aware that the cleanliness of the area has improved to its highest level in years. In addition earlier this year, we launched a community support pack for communities and groups who want to take action on local environmental projects such as neighbourhood clean up projects. This was complemented by a small grants scheme that would be made available to groups and organisations to plant trees, shrubs etc in their local communities.
- (iii) The Council approved a Parks Development Plan. This Plan set out ambitious targets for improving parks across the District. Alongside this, £200,000 has been allocated this year to improve our local parks and play areas.

Our profile will reflect our area as a destination of choice

- (i) The Council launched the delivery phase of the 'Forth Dimension' a major heritage tourism project in conjunction with Clackmannanshire Council and the Stirling Smith Museum and Art Gallery. This project seeks to enhance the Forth Valley Museums status in the tourism economy by exploiting the potential of the areas advantageous geographical position and the strength of its heritage and existing museum collections.

- (ii) The Antonine Wall was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in July this year, following being chosen as the UK's nomination in February 2008. Following the announcement, the area received a great deal of press attention, given we have the largest and best preserved stretch of wall within our area. Work is now ongoing to ensure the area takes advantage of the World Heritage Site status. This is in addition to the Falkirk Wheel now being Scotland's 8th most popular visitor attraction.
- (iii) The Helix was awarded £25 million from the Big Lottery's Living Landmarks programme. In addition, the Council has also committed significant amount of funding to this project, which has recently seen the appointment of key members of staff who will be responsible for taking this exciting initiative forward.

Our Values

- 3.5 In addition to ensuring our services are focused on achieving local outcomes, we understand that we must seek to continually improve the way we do business. This commitment underpins the core values of the Council. To achieve this, the Council has recently reviewed our Best Value Improvement Plan. This follows the progress made in taking forward the areas for improvement outlined in the Audit Scotland Report on our Audit of Best Value and Community Planning.
- 3.6 An updated Best Value Improvement Plan was recently presented to Best Value and Audit Forum, following the report to Council in June this year that noted progress against our previous plan. Members will recall this noted progress on the following areas:
- (i) Implementing new performance management software that will ensure consistent reporting of information to Members and the public;
 - (ii) Approving a Corporate Asset Management Plan for 2007-2010;
 - (iii) Developing further our approach to procurement including preparing an updated procurement plan;
 - (iv) Developing clear criteria for undertaking Strategic Best Value Reviews and completing the Diagnostic Project;
 - (v) Approving an HR and Workforce Planning Strategy;
 - (vi) Further taking forward our accreditation on IIP with Finance Service being awarded IIP status in summer this year;
 - (vii) Achieving the Healthy Working Lives Award earlier this year; and
 - (viii) Implementing customer service standards.
- 3.7 Future actions that underpin our values have been set out within the revised Improvement Plan.

4. FUTURE PLANS AND FURTHER SCRUTINY OF CORPORATE AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE PLANS

- 4.1 Each Service revises its service plan to ensure they are maximising their contribution to achieving the outcomes contained with the Corporate Plan. The Single Outcome Agreement as noted before sets out the performance management framework that underpins the Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Plan. This does not however replace the existing service performance reports that are presented to Members.

- 4.2 In line with practice this year, it is anticipated that all Services will present their Service Plans to the Best Value and Audit Forum, along with its first performance report of the new financial year and prior to the summer recess. This will allow Members to ensure that tasks contained within each Service Plan are taking forward the outcomes contained within the Corporate Plan appropriately.
- 4.3 Appendix one, as noted above, sets out the performance information the Council has included within the Single Outcome Agreement. This notes the progress the Council and our services have made against 2006/07 baseline figures. A number of services have further improved performance since March 2008. Some of these examples have been highlighted for Members' further interest. The process of refreshing the Single Outcome Agreement is currently underway with partners. This follows recently received guidance. The refreshed Single Outcome Agreement will contain information from all partners and will include progress against all performance information contained therein.
- 4.4 The refreshed Single Outcome Agreement has to be ready in draft by the end of February for submission to the Scottish Government. The refreshed Agreement will be presented to Members for approval in the New Year.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Progress in the first year of the Corporate Plan has been good. It is also heartening to note that while we understand the global economic situation we are in presents us with challenges, recent surveys of young people and our business community continue to show optimism and aspiration for the future of our area. We do not underestimate the challenges we face; we have a firm foundation to build on to ensure the outcomes set out in our Corporate Plan are achieved.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 6.1 **Note the progress against outcomes contained within the Council's Corporate Plan;**
- 6.2 **Note the progress the Council and its services are making against the performance indicators contained within the Single Outcomes Agreement and set out in appendix one of this report; and**
- 6.3 **Agree that the refreshed and updated Single Outcome Agreement is presented to Members in the New Year.**

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Date: 25 November 2008

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone Falkirk 01324 506004 and ask for Fiona Campbell