

Our vision

Falkirk Council

Draft Corporate Plan 2012 – 2017

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Foreword

This Corporate Plan sets out the ambitions Falkirk Council has for our area and our services. Our Elected Members and Officers will work together as one Council to ensure we deliver on the goals, outcomes and priorities contained within this plan.

Our communities have challenged us to deliver on their vision for the area as 'The Place to Be' and this plan sets out how we are going to achieve that.

Our priorities over the time of this plan will be:

- Alleviating the causes and affects of poverty and addressing inequalities;
- Ensuring all people in our communities are valued and their contribution to communities is recognised, value and celebrated;
- Stimulating business, growth, jobs and investment;
- Continuing to raise the ambition and aspiration of our children, our citizens, our businesses and our services; and
- Making sure that our communities and citizens come first and we do not plan services for organisational imperatives.

These are challenging times, but we should not be limited or constrained by things we cannot influence. We must use all the resources available to us as an area not just a Council to develop imaginative, creative, exciting and sustainable solutions to meet our challenges and maximise our opportunities.

Councillor Craig Martin
Leader of Falkirk Council

Mary Pitcaithly OBE
Chief Executive of Falkirk Council

Introduction

This is a challenging time, both nationally and globally, and it is difficult to predict what the impact will be for Falkirk's communities, businesses and services. Public spending will be very restricted for the foreseeable future and that means a greater emphasis on efficiency, making savings and delivering services with fewer resources. We need to do our best to support people through difficult times, particularly those who are vulnerable, at risk or who need extra support and care, while ensuring we are well-placed when the economic upturn arrives.

In our last Corporate Plan we set out a commitment to a 20-year vision for the Falkirk Council area, and clarified our key outcomes. We are committed to working with partners to ensure that vision is achieved and our area will be the 'Place to be in the 21st Century'. We want everyone to share and be part of that vision. Our Strategic Community Plan sets out in more detail how our collective resources will be brought to bear to achieve that vision and this Corporate Plan underpins this, and sets out in more detail the Council's contribution. We committed to an ambitious vision in the full knowledge that the economic climate was extremely difficult but, notwithstanding this recognised that our ambitions must be stretching and challenging - our citizens, communities and partners expect nothing less of us.

Our Corporate Plan will support us to deliver growth, raise aspirations, reduce inequality and provide value for communities. These outcomes are at the core of our organisation's priorities. Delivering the right infrastructure and environment to enable our area to effectively come out of the economic down turn and deliver growth is also critical, as that growth will help to sustain strong and resilient communities.

Purpose

The Corporate Plan helps us make sense of our often complex world. It:

- Outlines the strategic direction of the Council for the next five years
- Provides an assessment of current performance and future challenges
- Shows how we will contribute to achieving the area's shared vision and priorities
- Demonstrates how we will align our resources and contribute to the efficiency drive and transformation of service delivery
- Informs the integrated planning process with partners
- Gives clear direction on how the organisation will operate
- Helps us hold ourselves to account and ensures we deliver for the area and its residents
- Brings key information together in one place - particularly for Members, managers, staff, partners and the public
- Balances the many different roles the Council has - from delivery of essential services to place shaping .

We have a number of major priorities to deliver over the life of this Corporate Plan if we are to address the financial and external challenges and move forward on our long-term vision and priorities. These cover adult social care transformation; health integration; early intervention and prevention; tackling unemployment, poverty and inequalities; delivering some key elements of the growth agenda - particularly around inward investment and connectivity; working with other organisations to reduce costs and improve services; transforming our working practices and improving customer contacts.

We have to address challenging priorities such as improving health and welfare; delivering personalisation and choice to the community; reducing child poverty; improving educational outcomes and public sector reform. We are also working with partners to enhance their operational focus without compromising our place-shaping agenda. This is an opportunity to look at whether we are being imaginative enough in how we deliver services and the degree to which we realise maximum benefit for our residents and customers.

Our challenge is to be more innovative, imaginative and thorough in how services are resourced and provided from conception to implementation. Our staff will be central to achieving these objectives - their engagement and actions to deliver on the priorities we set are key.

Our Vision and Priorities

The Area and Council we want to be

The positive transformation of the Falkirk Council area will continue if we make the most of our natural assets, location and strength of community spirit. This is at the core of the vision for Falkirk. Our vision is shared by our partners and communities and is a key driver in our journey as the 'Place to be in the 21st Century'.

The Council we want to be

A vibrant, innovative area needs an efficient, innovative and enabling Council focused on its customers. To this end we must continue the process of modernisation and improvement. We will seek to build up capacity in local communities and help people achieve their own ambitions, where possible becoming less dependent on services. The aim is not to simply reduce services but to recognise that individual resilience and independence can be hampered by inappropriate service provision. Direct provision, will have more varied delivery options and a stronger focus on outcomes. We understand this might mean significant areas of transformation in service delivery models and in our relationship with citizens and communities. We will however enable our services so that, where appropriate, we can provide customers with the choice of self service at times that suit them.

There will be closer working with partners as we seek to provide more seamless services and easy contact points for a range of advice and support. We will consolidate more back office functions, gain benefits of scale and introduce more flexible ways working this reducing office costs. We will also share more accommodation with partners, whether that is offices, depots or other facilities.

Our staff will be engaged and empowered to make decisions and be self-reliant; there will be considerably fewer management overheads with more focus on strong strategic leadership, good communication and managing outcomes. The Council will be a more exciting and challenging place to work in delivering for our communities.

The type of Council we want to be

- We will be focused on our customers and communities.
- We will work with partners to provide excellent services that first and foremost meet people's needs
- We will be ambitious for our area and in particular for the children in our area.
- We will ensure all our services work together to deliver on our priorities and recognise that we are one Council with clear priorities and ambitions
- We will encourage innovation
- We will seek to actively engage people to steer the resources of our employees and citizens to deliver on our priorities
- We will modernise and be flexible in the way we work and the way we deliver services
- We will ensure our resources are targeted and used to meet our priorities

Our values shape the kind of Council we aspire to be.

Our central values are:

Public Service

- Fairness;
- Listening and responding;
- Being open, accessible and accountable; and
- Promoting our services using plain English as far as possible.

Performance

- Providing quality;
- Achieving value for money;
- Promoting innovation; and
- Seeking continuous improvement.

Partnership

- Effective communication;
- Sharing decision making; and
- Encouraging partnership.

The Area We Want to Be

To deliver our vision we need to be clear about our priorities. There are many ways to achieve our vision and strong collegiate leadership is required at all levels of the organisation to direct our efforts.

We know that growing our economy is a challenge. Over the last 15 years the area has seen significant growth, but the recession means we are now faced with similar challenges as the rest of Scotland in relation to growing business, jobs and investment

We want our area to be prosperous, exploiting our key strengths of location manufacturing and logistics industries. We must have a thriving economy that benefits from ambitious businesses and a skilled, innovative and entrepreneurial workforce. We want to build on the transformation being brought about through projects such as the Helix and the Tax Increment Finance initiative. To achieve this we will work closely with business, employers and employees. These relationships are our greatest asset and we must foster ambition and aspiration to make a difference across our communities. Our job it is to support and harness this effort.

All of our collective efforts and leadership are tied to the objective of raising aspirations. We not only want our children and young people to set their sights higher, we also want those in contact with them to have higher expectations; for people to recognise Falkirk as a place where they can prosper.

We want to minimise deprivation and inequality, and empower citizens to contribute to, and share in, all our area can offer by way of opportunities and advantages. We must achieve this notwithstanding the challenge of austerity. This means a drive to be efficient and effective. Innovation, resourcefulness and a customer focused emphasis are key to this.

This Corporate Plan plays a great part in ensuring we achieve our objectives by setting out our ambitions, expectations, priorities and our commitment to working together to achieve these. Whilst some Services within the Council, or partner agencies, may have a greater affinity with certain priorities, we are all responsible for achieving the collective outcomes - they are 'all our business' and interlinked.

Our Ambitions

Together with partners we agreed a set of high-level, long-term outcomes under which sit key priorities for which we share collective responsibility. Medium-term operational imperatives drive the delivery of the high-level outcomes and priorities and involve effective partnership working to achieve the desired results.

As a large and complex organisation; we have a number of outcomes and priorities. Our ambitions for the lifetime of this Corporate Plan are to:

1. Grow our Economy
2. Care for our People
3. Promote Learning and Achievement
4. Keep our Communities Safe and Healthy
5. Ensure Thriving Communities

Over the lifetime of this plan, we will have a specific focus on:

- Alleviating the causes and effects of poverty and tackling inequalities
- Ensuring all people in our communities are valued and their contribution to communities is recognised, value and celebrated
- Stimulating business, growth, jobs and investment
- Continuing to raise the ambition and aspiration of our children, our citizens, our businesses and our services
- Making sure that our communities and citizens come first and we do not plan services for organisational imperatives

We will target our efforts to support specific groups:

- Older people, especially those who are vulnerable
- Children, especially those who are looked after or who are in poverty
- Young people who are unemployed or in danger of becoming disaffected or disengaged

We will want to achieve our priorities in a manner that is sustainable with a positive lasting impact. This requires investment and effort in:

- Early intervention
- Prevention
- Enablement
- Service transformation

To make the difference and achieve our ambitions, we need to establish goals, outcomes and, specific priorities. These priorities will be delivered in a way that takes account of all of the above.

Goals, Outcomes and Priorities

To ensure we make a contribution to achieving the vision for our area and become the Council we need to be, we have established key priorities for the next five year. These priorities under our goals underpin our strategic outcomes.

Goal:	Further developing a thriving sustainable and vibrant economy
Outcomes:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Our area will be recognised as having a culture and ethos of aspiration and ambition.2. The wealth and prosperity of our area will increase.3. Our workforce will be highly skilled.4. The quality of our infrastructure will help promote the growth of the local economy.

Priority: Raising Aspiration and Ambition

To achieve this we will

- Refresh our economic strategy to address issues of employment, growth, support to business and tourism
- Increase the expectations of young people with a focus on attainment and wider achievement.
- Further develop our employment and training strategy to focus on young people (16-24) while recognising wider employment issues

Priority: Increasing Wealth and Prosperity

To achieve this we will

- Provide integrated support to businesses
- Deliver the challenging Tax Incremental Finance Initiative for our area, focussing on the area's economic potential in chemicals, manufacturing and logistics.
- Recognise the advantages our area has and ensure we market these appropriately and promote inward investment
- Ensure our services are more aligned to meet the needs of businesses and promote better regulation

Priority: Up skilling our Communities and Workforce

To achieve this we will

- Promote skills for life including literacy, numeracy and digital inclusion
- Ensure our workforce development is robust
- Further engage with employers to make sure we are supporting young people and children to become the workforce of the future
- Develop and support social enterprises where they make sense within a local community

Priority: Improving our Infrastructure

To achieve this we will

- Ensure our infrastructure contributes to the attraction of inward investment and job creation
- Make sure our assets i.e. buildings, networks etc, are fit for purpose
- Make sure our road and path network is fit for purpose
- Continue to address the significant issues of flooding within our area

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

Outcomes:

1. Our citizens will be supported to make positive health choices and lifestyles in order that they can live longer.
2. People will have equitable access to local health, support and care.
3. Our citizens and communities will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.
4. Our citizens will be protected.

Priority: Improve mental health and wellbeing

To achieve this we will

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing while supporting those who have mental ill health
- Address issues of alcohol and drug misuse and its affect on families and communities as well as individuals
- Look to address health inequalities
- Promote physical activity

Priority: Promoting/maximising independence of older people and people with a disability

To achieve this we will

- Work with communities to co-produce a comprehensive range of preventative and anticipatory supports to help older people and people with a disability stay well and independent
- Following a crisis, focus on providing support that re ables people to live as independent and full lives as possible
- Ensure universal services such as housing, transport, leisure and commercial developments are "age friendly" to help sustain ordinary living as well as independence and individual resilience
- Support the development of community networks that ensure no person is left isolated
- Offer older people and people with a disability and their carers choice and control over the decisions that impact on their lives, including the co-creation of personal care plans and the option of personal budgets and Self Directed Support

- Priority:** Promote Community, Family and Individual Resilience
- To achieve this we will**
- Support communities to help and support each other through focussed work in localities
 - Support parents to be the best parent they can be to the children and young people in their care
 - Support looked after children throughout their time in our care so they can successfully leave care

- Priority:** Contribute to and plan for the integration of public protection agencies and activities
- To achieve this we will**
- Ensure local communities are protected from environmental harm
 - Ensure communities are protected from other harms, threats and anti social behaviour
 - Work with the Police and Fire Services to develop a robust community safety strategy for this area
 - Ensure that our criminal justice services continue meet the changing needs of our communities and sentencing authorities

Goal: Increasing our efforts to tackle disadvantage and discrimination

Outcomes:

1. Our citizens continue to access critical services that meet their needs.
2. Our housing continues to meet the needs of people who live and may wish to live in our area.
3. Vulnerable children will be protected.
4. Disadvantaged communities will benefit from better services.

- Priority:** Fully embrace GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) in all we do
- To achieve this we will**
- Make sure children are healthy, safe and nurtured
 - Provide the right support for vulnerable children and families through early intervention
 - Increase attainment and achievement
 - Prepare children to be fully-rounded, included, responsible adults ready to take their place in the world

- Priority:** Improving the availability of housing options
- To achieve this we will**
- Commit to deliver 500 new houses for rent over the next five years
 - Ensure we meet the SHQ standard by 2015
 - Make sure people who are homeless get the right support and housing while working with others to encourage downsizing for those who may have space to spare
 - Improve our housing estates and make sure they are well managed and attractive

- Priority:** **Ensure early intervention at all stages**
To achieve this we will
- Be the best corporate parent we can be
 - Raise the aspirations and expectations we have for all our children at the earliest age possible
 - Look to ensure vulnerable children and adults are protected.
 - Improve the outcomes for all our children

- Priority:** **Address issues of poverty and inequality in line with our poverty strategy**
To achieve this we will
- Seek to address issues raised by welfare reform and support our communities, citizens and staff through these significant changes
 - Ensure advice and information services are fit for purpose
 - Provide support to communities and individuals to be financially secure
 - Address issues of financial inclusion

Goal: **Enhancing and sustaining an environment in which people want to live and visit**

Outcomes:

1. We will be greener.
2. We will improve the built environment.
3. Our open spaces will be attractive, accessible and safe.
4. Our profile will reflect our area as a destination of choice.

- Priority:** **Being Greener**
To achieve this we will
- Reduce our carbon footprint by reducing carbon emissions by 42% by 2020
 - Promote waste reduction and recycling and meet our target of 60% by 2020
 - Be greener in the way we travel
 - Be more efficient in our use of energy

- Priority:** **Improving our Built Environment**
To achieve this we will
- Continue with our town centre regeneration strategy to ensure that Falkirk town centre and our district centres continue to thrive
 - Improve our housing stock
 - Promote and develop training programmes in traditional heritage-based skills

Priority: Improving our Open Spaces

To achieve this we will

- Deliver the Helix project to create a new parkland and visitor attraction of national status
- Encourage participation and ownership of our open spaces through more 'friends' groups
- Reduce littering and dog fouling
- Provide new ways of using our parks
- Continue to develop and improve local playing parks
- Improve use and access to community facilities and create community hubs

Priority: Recognising our advantages as a destination

To achieve this we will

- Build on our expanding tourism sector and enhance our visitor offering
- Continue to improve our locational advantage by improving our infrastructure network and creating opportunities for investment
- Develop and deliver on the visitor potential of the ambitious Helix project and its themes of people, enterprise and place
- Market this area to visitors - from Scotland, the UK and internationally
- Promote the Antonine Wall, a World Heritage Site.

Our Medium-Term Operational Focus

We have a number of major items to deliver over the life of this Corporate Plan if we are to address the financial and external challenges and move forward on the long-term vision and priorities. These are the areas where we have to ensure robust delivery plans and milestones are in place and give added attention to achieving our required outcomes. They are the areas where change will be significant and cover:

- Welfare reform
- Adult social care transformation around personalisation and choice
- Health integration with social care in addition to significant changes to Criminal Justice Services
- The early intervention and prevention agenda around children and families, including troubled families, to reduce dependency and provide better outcomes
- Tackling youth unemployment
- Delivering on some key immediate challenges to stimulate growth - e.g. improving connectivity, attracting inward investment, supporting business and promoting Falkirk as a place to invest in and to attract visitors
- Working with other organisations to reduce costs and improve services
- Transforming our working practices to further improve productivity and service delivery
- Improving customer contact through phone contact, e-transactions, customer contact, social media and through traditional methods of communication.

Working as One Council

We are a large complex organisation, offering many distinct services to customers, involving thousands of products and activities. The issues to address are complex and cut across service areas and partner activity. Whilst it is important to have clear lines of linear accountability, it is equally important that we work in an integrated way across the organisation and partnership - not in silos. The latter will result in wasted opportunities, duplication and poor deployment of resources. Working across complex organisations is challenging, but there are a number of things that can help to bind us together:

- We have a common set of priorities. Although some may have greater affinity for some services, they are interlinked priorities and we must all own them.
- We stand or fall by our reputation and this can be influenced by how customers perceive a particular service or how well we do in an inspection - all our reputations are at stake
- We have to ensure we speak with one voice, both as a Council and an area, in order to promote Falkirk District effectively and get the resources and support we need to achieve our vision for the area
- We all have to support each other to improve performance and efficiency - as poor performance in one area can quickly impact on another in terms of increased demand and extra cost
- We need to be seen as one Council in terms of our employees' experience of working for us; the way we deal with customers in a seamless manner and through our arrangements with suppliers and external providers - the alternative is confusion and alienation

- We must make the most of our collective resources and assets if we are to be innovative and efficient – whether through the accommodation strategy, Council property estate or our collective skills and competencies
- We must make sure we do the basics well.

Whilst we want to give staff the freedom to make decisions at the earliest point of contact and encourage new ideas and taking risks, we want to do this within the simple framework of one Council operating in a seamless and efficient manner.

Working in Partnership

By working in partnership we can achieve far more for Falkirk than if we worked alone. We have a clear set of priorities for driving the vision for our area forward and a significant track record of delivery. Our world is, however, changing. The pressure on public expenditure and the difficult economic climate mean it is even more important to work together to make economies of scale, achieve efficiencies, effectively address complex multi-agency issues and support our ambitious growth agenda.

Over the timeframe of this Corporate Plan, the shape and delivery of public services will change significantly. We will see the introduction of a single Police and single Fire Service. We will be expending energies in integrating health and social care services. There will be significant changes made to Criminal Justice Services. In addition, as a nation we will be considering the issue of independence, with the referendum taking place in 2014.

We need to make sure the public sector, third sector and private sector are all working towards making Falkirk a better place, and that our services are working together to utilise our collective resources to meet citizens needs. To make sure this happens, we have a Community Planning Partnership, a Strategic Community Plan and measure progress against outcomes through our Single Outcome Agreement. We must ensure our Partnership is fit for purpose, deals with issues and services of significance and provides the challenge every organisation needs to deliver its best.

We must change how we operate in some important respects:

- We must focus on delivery rather than simply strategy. This means the partnership must adapt its structure, with a greater emphasis on core business, establishing clear priorities and delivering on key outcomes and priorities
- The tightening of resources in the public sector in particular means we need to utilise our collective capacity more effectively to achieve our priorities
- We have to be more challenging of our partnerships to ensure we are all collectively and individually achieving what we need to
- A stronger local focus for all organisations will be needed to meet the challenges ahead
- More emphasis on building capacity and engagement in the community is required

A vibrant, innovative area needs a vibrant innovative partnership if it is to be successful.

Finance, Efficiencies and Transformation

We remain committed to sound financial management as a basis for achieving our priorities, providing good quality services and protecting those who are most vulnerable. We aim to put resources behind our priorities and move them away from those areas that are less important or where we can 'stop doing things'. We also want to increase our income where possible and be more resourceful, so achieving a priority is not always dependent upon additional resource. We resource our priorities over time, so some priorities may feature more strongly as circumstances change.

Financial context

The Chancellor's Autumn Statement released in November 2011 indicated a further 2 years (2015/16 and 2016/17) of austerity with public spending being cut once again in real terms. This will feed its way through the Barnett Consequentials resulting in further real terms cuts to the Scottish Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) budgets for those years.

Interpretation of the figures in the Autumn Statement by several commentators most notably by the Scottish Government's Chief Economist indicate that it will take until 2027/28 for the Scottish DEL to return to its 2009/10 peak in real terms. The cumulative loss in the Scottish budget over the period 2009/10 to 2027/28 is estimated to be £51 billion. These estimates are based on the Government achieving its fiscal target. If further cuts are required then the impact would be greater.

Since the Autumn Statement was released, the Chancellor delivered his budget on 21 March 2012 and took the opportunity (via the office of Budget Responsibility) to update his economic forecast for growth and public borrowing. Whilst his projections for growth were identical to the Autumn Statement they were still optimistic compared to those provided by independent forecasts. Since then, we have now entered into a period of double dip recession and the Bank of England has recently revised its UK Growth estimate to 0% for 2012. The outlook for future years is also unpredictable given the ongoing problems in the Eurozone which is our biggest trading partner

Why does this matter? Because if the Government's growth figures are not realised then this would result in lower tax receipts which would mean that in order to balance their budget they would either have to increase borrowing or reduce public expenditure - or both

In addition if the Chancellor wishes to stick by his aim of eliminating the structural deficit by 2016/17 then it is estimated there would have to be real reductions of 3.8% in public spending in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 which would result in cash cuts of between £300m to £400m for local government in Scotland.

Medium Term Financial Plan

Falkirk Council received its grant funding details for the 3 years to 2014/15 from the Scottish Government in December 2011. This included the requirement to freeze the Council Tax for the period of the settlement. We therefore have definitive Revenue and Capital Grant figures for the above years however funding for subsequent years will not be confirmed until after the next Scottish Government Spending Review has been agreed.

As noted above it is likely that there will be real terms grant cuts for 2015/16 and 2016/17 and there is no reason to believe, given the doubt in the Government's estimates for future growth, that this will not continue further.

Although times are challenging, the Council has a sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in place, which models the anticipated Government grant along with predicted increases in expenditure. These increases come from a variety of sources such as inflation and demographics. The plan will be subject to continual revision as assumptions change and new information comes to light. For example the financial consequences of the Government's Welfare Reform agenda are still uncertain at this time.

The net revenue budget by Service for the next 5 years is summarised below along with a note of the estimated funding gap which requires to be bridged.

General Fund Services	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Total Net Expenditure	344.8	332.4	340.0	348.7	357.6
Resources	344.8	321.9	322.0	322.1	322.3
Funding Gap*	-	10.5	18.0	26.6	35.3
*This is prior to the application of Reserves, consistent with the Council's Reserves Strategy.					

As the figures for the Funding Gap are shown cumulatively, the gap in later years will decrease as the earlier years' budgets are balanced.

Given the significance of the funding gap, it is essential that Council spend is directed to the priorities identified in this Corporate Plan and we are introducing a system of Priority Based Budgeting to assist in that regard.

In addition to the Services mentioned above, the Council is also responsible for the provision of Housing services to over 16,000 tenancies in the district. Approximately £53m is budgeted to be spent in 2012/13, rising to £62m in 2016/17. Property repairs account for just under half of these costs on an annual basis. Any funding gaps identified in future years will be met by a combination of identifying efficiencies, prudent use of Reserves in accordance with the Council's Reserves Strategy and rent adjustments.

The following Section deals with the Council's Capital Programmes and it should be noted that the interest element of the borrowing costs which part fund these programmes is reflected in the Service costs detailed above for both General Fund Services and Housing.

Capital Investment

The Council has two capital investment blocks, one dealing with Council housing and the other with all Services including education and social work. Over the three financial years from 2012/13 to 2014/15 £89m is programmed to be spent on the former and £63m on the latter. This represents a substantial contribution to the Council's service delivery capacity and, moreover, a significant injection into the local economy.

The range of projects covered in the two programmes are diverse, and by way of illustration include:

Council Housing

- New build housing
- Energy efficiency works
- Kitchen/Bathroom replacement
- External fabric improvements

Other Services

- New schools and upgrade of existing schools
- Road improvement and repairs
- Economic regeneration
- Older Peoples' accommodation

The approval by the Scottish Government of the Council's Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) Scheme would greatly expand the scale of the Council's investment over the next ten or so years.

Capital investment is funded in the main by Council borrowing, capital receipts and government grant.

The intention is to both stretch the two programmes out to 5 years and to align investment with the new Priority Based approach to budgeting and resource allocation.

Our Challenges, Our Choices: Transformational Change

We are striving to reduce the number of applications used within the Council and consolidate around enterprise-wide ones. We want a wider, higher skill base with staff using common tools across the Council and with partners to improve the way we work with information. This requires the co-operation of all services and it is intended that the new corporate ICT architecture is designed and delivered with the help of key partners, bringing in both expertise and capacity at a critical time.

In delivering our priorities within the context of the current financial situation, as one Council, we must move forward with our transformational change programme; Our Challenges, Our Choices. We are aware of the challenges which lie ahead of us and are clear that 'standing still' is not an option. We are also clear that 'change for change sake' does not demonstrate good leadership for our local area, nor does it link to our approach of ensuring that our communities and citizens come first. Change is essential to address our challenges, but in making changes, we have clear choices.

At the heart of our transformational change programme lie our priorities, which all services must aim to deliver whilst tackling the challenges we face. We will work as one Council to achieve this; looking for better ways of working, ways to improve service delivery, ways to ensure the services we deliver are the services our communities and citizens want and need. We will be ambitious in our solutions, seeking ways to move forward which encompass all Services of the Council, delivering seamless new ways of working which our communities and citizens will be proud of.

We are a large and diverse organisation but with our priorities at the heart of driving forward change, the leadership of our workforce will be aimed at ensuring we speak with one voice, are clear on our objectives and are proud of what we achieve. We will take steps to ensure our workforce is fully engaged and have the skills to deliver the transformational changes required in our area. Our managers and employees will be encouraged to promote new and ambitious ideas and ways of working which improve performance and efficiency whilst achieving our priorities. They will be encouraged to question all that we do and ask whether there are different and better ways to deliver our services. They will be encouraged to work as a single team to ensure we do the basics well, in an efficient and seamless manner.

Our Workforce, Asset and ICT Strategic plans will support our transformational change, looking at ways to promote innovation, efficiency and high performance within the context of the challenges we face. In transforming our area, we will make the best use we can of our collective skills, competencies, resources and assets to achieve the best that we can for our communities and citizens.

For the duration of this Corporate Plan we will focus on ensuring value for communities and ensuring we are as efficient as possible. Investment in ICT is fundamental to successful transformation. It will enable us to have one consistent, joined up and reliable source of information on the needs of customer; support flexible working across all our buildings and better links with partners; increase the use of e-learning facilities and provide greater functionality to support e-transactions and other customer contact. Additionally we understand Government's 'digital by default' agenda will impact on our communities and thus we must seek to address issues of digital inclusion.

Workforce Strategy

Falkirk Council's greatest asset is its employees and employee costs currently account for around 60% of the Falkirk Council budget. We must therefore ensure that we have the right people in the right jobs, who are committed, skilled and empowered to deliver the vision of the Council and the priorities which will help achieve this. To do this, we must be an employer of choice but must achieve this within the context of unprecedented financial constraint and a requirement to be highly efficient.

Delivery of Council priorities is paramount and, as an employer, the Council must enable employees to deliver these priorities to communities in the most effective way possible. We need to ensure that all employees understand their contribution to achieving the Council's priorities, have clear performance objectives, are properly resourced for the present and the future and have flexible skills and working practices.

We also need to ensure that a process of transformational change delivers structures and ways of working which are fit for purpose, consistent with the Council priorities, represent best practice, and are fair to all; whilst meeting the requirements the financial constraints place on the Council as an employer.

The Council's workforce strategy will help us to plan for the future in terms of employees, utilising people management approaches, which benefit service delivery and ultimately local communities. The strategy will also help us add value to our Services, recognising the vital contribution that employees make in the delivery and achievement of the Council's priorities.

Asset Management

In order to ensure continuing provision of quality, affordable services particularly during a period of significant financial constraint, it is essential that the Council has in place a sustainable strategy for management of assets. Efficient stewardship of these valuable resources can make a significant difference to enhancing frontline service delivery on best value terms. Asset Management is an important element of the Council's policies and assists delivery of its service objectives. 'Better Assets, Better Services' the Council's asset management strategy plays a vital role in helping the Council to address the pressures it will experience in the coming years to reduce expenditure and direct resources towards the maintenance of frontline services.

Effective management of assets will also contribute towards the development of the area's economy, assisting in the regeneration of the area and attracting investment. It will assist the Council to manage its assets more sustainably and help it to make its contribution to the national target of reducing carbon emissions by 34% by 2020. It is important that the assets managed by the Council help to foster cohesion in local communities, enabling services to be accessible, good quality and delivering the highest standards of service.

As a Council we are committed to improving overall performance by means of a variety of measures including maintaining and enhancing our asset base by implementing the Corporate Asset Management Strategy. This strategy seeks to build on previous strategies and to take forward a series of further activities through asset plans for each of the six main asset types covered by the strategy.

These are:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| 1. Property | 4. Housing |
| 2. Open Space | 5. Fleet |
| 3. Roads Infrastructure | 6. ICT |

The strategy supports the aims of this Corporate Plan and the Strategic Community Plan and summarises our aims and objectives for our assets with a view to ensuring that they are used in an efficient and effective manner. The Council also works closely with the Falkirk Community Trust in the management of its assets and is developing an asset management plan for the Trust.

It also provides details of our future investment strategy as it relates to assets. In turn supporting this overarching Asset Strategy is a detailed asset management plan for each of the key asset types noted above. These plans encompass the vital common theme of providing a critical review and appraisal of current asset performance (in terms of condition, suitability, and utilisation) to inform decision making in relation to stewardship of assets. Key initiatives being progressed through the Asset Management Strategy include the implementation of:

- The Strategic Housing Investment Plan
- The School Estate Management Plan
- The Roads Asset Management Plan
- The Office Utilisation Review
- The Open Space Strategy
- The ICT Strategy

Risks, Challenges and Opportunities

The Council, our partners and communities face a range of challenges, risks and opportunities over the coming years. Some of these we will seek to prioritise our response to. Others while acknowledging their impact we understand our ability to influence is marginal. It is important though that we acknowledge and understand these influences and have taken into account of them in our future planning. The following section notes some of these risks, challenges and opportunities.

Demography

- Implications of a growing population
- The implications of the future slowing of growth
- Increasing numbers of children
- Changing numbers of working age
- A large increase in the number of older people and people living a lot longer

Economy and Employment

- The recession
- Unemployment especially among women and young people
- Declining numbers of job opportunities
- Boosting business growth
- Maintaining earnings and reducing debt levels
- Realising the advantages of the TIF
- Better regulation

Housing and Homelessness

- Providing sufficient new houses to meet need and demand from the growing population
- Potential mismatch between household size and house types
- Providing housing which is affordable and meets the needs of the elderly and disabled including adaptations
- Ensuring that the Council's housing stock meets the SHQS by 2015
- Improving the standard of the whole housing stock
- Meeting the Scottish Government homelessness target

Transport and Connectivity

- The need to continue to press for transport improvements, especially the A801 Avon Gorge
- Maximise the area's connectivity advantages
- Limit the effects of climate change on areas liable to flooding
- Further channel shifting for people, services and business

Young people and Education

- Implications of GIRFEC
- Focus on looked after young people and children
- Ensure that our school estate meets the requirements of the growing population including nursery schools
- Continue to improve school attainment and qualifications among adults
- Need to refocus on early years/prevention and early intervention
- Continue to encourage young people into positive destinations including further and higher education.

Poverty, Deprivation and Equalities

- Deal with the causes of poverty rather as well as reducing its impact
- Monitor the impact of Welfare Reform on benefits claimants and Council services
- Implement the Council's Poverty Strategy
- Reduce inequalities across our area.

Environment

- Protect our environment while still allowing development
- Flood protection
- Ensuring that development is sustainable
- Continuing to meet the challenges of recycling
- Dealing with the impact of climate change

Health and safety

- Integration of health and social care
- Protecting vulnerable people
- Reducing health inequalities
- Need to increase physical activity
- Reducing the harmful impact of substance use
- Emphasis on self directed support
- Implications of fire and police reform
- Different types of crimes e.g. human trafficking, organised crime etc

Heritage and tourism

- Promote our heritage to local people and the wider community
- Implications of world heritage sites and other visitor attractions including the Helix, Callendar House, Kinneil House etc

Regeneration

- Maintain Falkirk town centre's status in the retail hierarchy
- Complete the regeneration of our other town centres to bring them up to modern standards
- Estates management and open spaces regeneration

Public sector reform

- Meet the challenge of the single Scottish Police and Fire and Rescue services
- Ensure the review of the Criminal Justice services is implemented appropriately within our area
- The independence referendum
- Meet the challenges of reconfiguring services in the light of the Christie commission
- Pensions reform
- Issues of an aging workforce, a skills gap and also flexible working
- Meet the challenge of integrated health and social care
- Meet the challenges of service delivery in difficult financial circumstances

Making It Happen

We have set our priorities within this plan and now we have to “make it happen.” To enable us to plan effectively, we have implemented a Strategic Planning and Management System (SPMS). The Strategic Planning and Management System relates our key priorities to what we are able to achieve with the resources we have. This planning system notes the different levels of policy development at the overall corporate / strategic level. Alongside this planning, development and review framework, our approach to best value sets out a clear distinction between operational management and strategic management.



The Corporate Plan, policies, strategies and Service Plans will set a clear agenda for the Council. We will regularly review our achievements to ensure we are doing what we said we were going to do. This review will be undertaken at three levels. The overall purpose of review is to learn from previous successes and failures, to perform better and to feedback into the Strategic Planning and Management System next year. The three different levels of review are:

- Review of achievement of the Corporate Plan;
- Review of the development and implementation of our policies and strategies; and
- Review of implementation of Service Plans and capital and revenue budgets.

Strategic Community Plan

Our Strategic Community Plan sets the 20 year vision and key priorities for all agencies within the Council area. We are in the third quarter of this vision and with partners are working in the longer term to achieve this vision.

Influencing the Council's Corporate Plan

This contains what we want to achieve - our goals - and how we want to achieve these - our values. It sets out our key priorities for the coming year and beyond. This is informed by the strategic community plan and the vision and priorities contained therein. It also takes account of the Administration's manifesto and their aspirations for this area.

Leading to policies

The goals and more detailed key priorities are developed through our specific policies. Some policies may either be very specific to one issue or service of the Council or may have an effect across all our services and our area.

Leading to strategies

Strategies underpin our policies and identify a programme of action across the Council to ensure their implementation. These are not wish lists but are based on our resources and our capacity to deliver. We need to be very clear and honest about what we can achieve.

We cannot make everything a priority if we want to achieve real and lasting change.

Strategies are often developed by a number of agencies in support of a joint policy or aspiration.

Leading to service plans

Service plans are action programmes for each of our seven Services. Each plan identifies clear service objectives, which contribute to the achievement of our goals and values.

Service plans also identify the key tasks that each service requires to undertake to achieve its objectives and the way it will manage the service in line with our values. Service plans will be produced each year. Services must be clear and realistic about what can and cannot be achieved.

Leading to budgets

Our capital and revenue budgets are the financial plans we use to deliver services and achieve our goals and values. The allocation of money in budgets will be determined by what we plan to achieve. In effect, the way we spend the money in our budgets will be determined by our policies and priorities. This Corporate Plan will guide decisions about the allocation of money and resources.

Then we review

Our Corporate Plan, policies, strategies and service plans make specific proposals about what we want to achieve. We must review progress to determine if we have achieved our stated priorities. It is important that we learn from our successes and failures so that we can improve our performance in the future. The results of the review will also influence the key priorities in the next plan.

Our Single Outcome Agreement is the main way we monitor progress against our outcomes.

Importantly we have a robust performance management framework underpinning all our plans to ensure we achieve what we set out to do. In addition we have an annual score card which sets out a few critical indicators that help the public determine how well we as a Council are working. These indicators are shown opposite.

We will publish these indicators along with a review an annual review of our Corporate Plan annually. In addition to these indicators we will publish an annual review of our partnership's single outcome agreement (SOA). This SOA sets out indicators for all our outcomes and measure progress over a number of years. It is through this SOA that we will determine if we are achieving our outcomes.

Indicator	Lead Service
1. Staff sickness absence - corporate percentage	Corporate and Neighbourhood Services
2. Corporate staff turnover	Corporate and Neighbourhood Services
3. The number of apprentices / skillseekers recruited across the Council	Development Services
4. Overall customer satisfaction with Falkirk Council	This is reported every two years from Council Tax survey results - Corporate and Neighbourhood Services
5. The % of Council buildings that are suitable and accessible to disabled people	Development Services
6. Gross property costs of the operational estate as a % of the gross revenue budget	Development Services
7. The % of municipal waste recycled or composted	Development Services
8. CO2 emissions from Falkirk Council operations	Development Services
9 (a) School Leaver Destinations - the proportion entering employment, training or further / higher education	Education Services
9. (b) as (a) but for children / young people who have been looked after and accommodated	Education Services
10. The % of Council Tax collected during the year	Chief Executive Office
11. The % utilisation of assets	Development Services
12. The % of invoices paid within 30 days	Chief Executive Office
13. School meals uptake - all schools	Education Services
14. Corporate ombudsman complaints upheld	Chief Executive Office
15. Freedom of Information Requests - corporate response rates	Chief Executive Office
16. The number and proportion of looked after children in community placements at the end of the reporting period	Social Work Services
17. The number of individuals (new cases) obtaining welfare benefits or debt advice	Social Work Services
18. The proportion of all Council reported indicators where performance is improving or being maintained as per our SOA return.	To be collated from the SOA by Corporate and Neighbourhood Services
19. The % of homeless households provided with permanent accommodation in Council stock who maintained their tenancy for at least 12 months	Corporate & Neighbourhood Services
20. Cumulative Attainment of National Qualifications by all pupils in publicly funded schools for S4: % of S4 roll gaining 5 or more awards as SCQF level 3 or better	Education Services



Falkirk Council

DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2012 - 2017