our vision

Falkirk Council

Corporate Plan Appendix: Context Statement

Our Area in Context

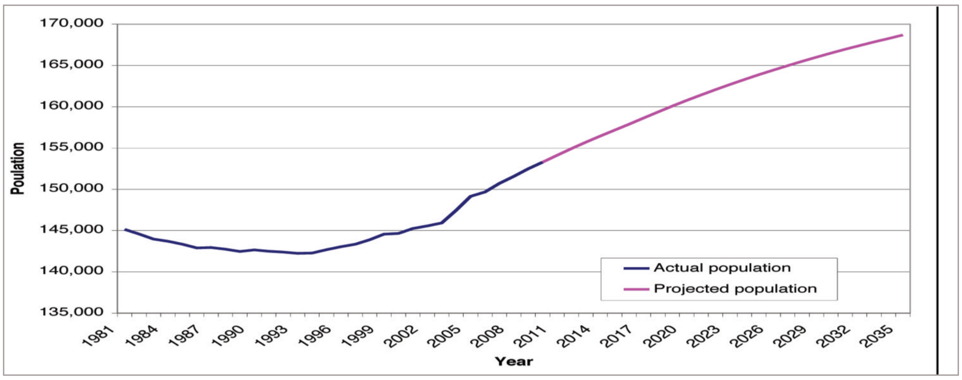
Falkirk Council is situated right at the centre of Scotland. It has a growing population which is now well over 150,000, making it the 11th largest council in Scotland. Our area is one of the best connected in Scotland, equidistant between Glasgow and Edinburgh and at the heart of the motorway network.

This profile seeks to provide a background to our area, looking at past trends and future challenges that will affect and have an impact on our area in the short, medium and longer term. The recent economic uncertainty makes it difficult to forecast future trends and anticipate what may happen to our communities in the short term. However we remain committed to our long term vision. Our area has faced, and overcome, major challenges before. Our ability to adapt and react to changing circumstances puts us in good stead to ensure that there will be a thriving and prosperous future for our area and our communities.

Our People

The population of our area is increasing. After many years of stability, it began to rise in the mid 1990's and there have now been over 17 years of continuous growth. The population currently stands at 153,280 (2010), having grown by almost 6% in the last decade – compared to an overall increase in Scotland of 3.1%. The population is projected to increase further to 157,200 by 2015, 163,900 by 2025 and 168,700 by 2035 (see Figure 1). The growing population presents a key challenge to service provision in the Council and to all its partners.

Figure 1: Population 1981-2035



Source: National Records of Scotland mid year estimates of population 1981-2010
2010 based population projections 2010-2035 (Crown Copyright)

Much of this growth has been driven by net in-migration, with the Falkirk area being attractive to in-migrants due to competitive house prices compared to surrounding areas, the variety of new build properties and good transport links. Average net in-migration since 2001 has been 725 per year.

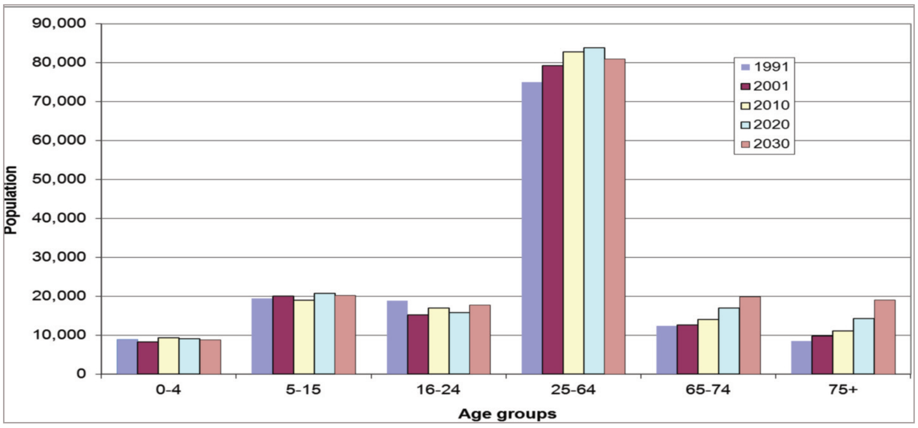
Births: The number of births in recent years has returned to the level of the early 1990's, exceeding 1,900 in 2009/10 compared to around 1,500 in the early 2000's. The increase in births in Falkirk at 32% has been greater than in Scotland as a whole - 17%. Although the figures now show some signs of stabilising, it is impossible to say how long this trend of increased births will continue and the figures will continue to be closely monitored.

The consequent increase in the number of young children will put pressure on our early years' services and on our Education Services, especially in the light of the Scottish Government's continuing commitment to reducing class sizes.

Deaths: Along with the rest of Scotland, the death rate in the Falkirk area is continuing to decrease slowly, with the annual number of deaths falling to under 1,500 for the first time in 2009/10. The decrease in the death rate is expected to continue. The number of births in our area now is higher than the number of deaths, which also contributes to population growth.

Age profile: Compared to the rest of Scotland, the population of Falkirk has a younger profile with a higher proportion of children and a slightly smaller percentage of older people. However, along with the rest of Scotland, the population is aging and the Council and its partners will be challenged to provide services for the additional numbers of older people. The changing age structure from 1991-2030 is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Population by age group 1991-2030



Source: National Records of Scotland (Crown Copyright)

Population by age group 1991-2030

	1991 No	%	2001 No	%	2010 No	%	2020 No	%	2030 No	%
0-4	8,877	6.2%	8,234	5.7%	9,374	6.1%	9,084	5.7%	8,791	5.3%
5-15	19,463	13.6%	20,074	13.8%	18,962	12.4%	20,809	12.9%	20,176	12.1%
16-24	18,862	13.2%	15,252	10.5%	17,014	11.1%	15,814	9.8%	17,704	10.6%
25-64	74,976	52.4%	79,273	54.6%	82,773	54.0%	83,769	52.1%	80,953	48.6%
65-74	12,342	8.6%	12,582	8.7%	14,088	9.2%	16,969	10.6%	19,845	11.9%
75+	8,500	5.9%	9,855	6.8%	11,069	7.2%	14,328	8.9%	19,024	11.4%
Total	143,020	100%	145,270	100%	153,280	100%	160,773	100%	166,493	100%

The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by almost a quarter by 2020, with even larger increases in the over 85's. Table 1 shows the changes in the older population to 2020.

Table 1: Older population 2010-2020

			Change 2010-2015			Change 2010-2020	
Age group	**2010**	**2015**	**No**	**%**	**2020**	**No**	**%**
65-74	14,088	16,082	+ 1,994	+ 14.2%	16,969	+ 2,881	+ 20.5%
75-84	8,245	9,364	+ 1,119	+ 13.6%	10,417	+ 2,172	+ 26.3%
85+	2,824	3,205	+ 381	+ 13.5%	3,911	+ 1,087	+ 38.5%
Total 65+	25,157	28,651	+ 3,494	+ 13.9%	31,297	+ 6,140	+ 24.4%

Source: National Records of Scotland (Crown Copyright)

Challenges:

- a growing population
- increasing numbers of children
- changing numbers of working age
- a large increase in the number of older people

Our Economy

The recent down turn in the global and national economy has undoubtedly had an impact on our area and the effects of the recession are being felt by all our communities. However the long term significance will not be known for some time and it is not possible to say when the local and national economy will start to grow significantly again.

Our area is important to the Scottish economy with almost £2 billion of GVA being generated in the Council area in 2009. Grangemouth is Scotland's premier port and the petrochemical industry there is a major employer and of strategic significance to Scotland contributing much to our total GVA.

The "My Future's in Falkirk" initiative was set up in 2002 as a joint public and private sector initiative, initially to counter job losses in the petro-chemicals sector. It continues to go from strength to strength supporting local businesses, enhancing the supply of land and property for business locations and working to develop skills in the community. This initiative will continue to work in partnership to meet its aim that "… the future is something we create."

Unemployment: The one data source on the state of the local economy which is timely is the claimant count unemployment data which is published monthly by the Office for National Statistics. The latest figures show that the claimant count, which had been generally decreasing over the previous ten years, increased from under 2,000 in the spring of 2008 to almost 4,800 in early 2012. The largest increase came between the summer of 2008 and the spring of 2009 when unemployment more than doubled in the Council area. It nevertheless remains substantially below the figures of over 11,000 in the mid 1980's, while the latest figures are close to those of the mid 1990's. Male unemployment remains higher than female unemployment but female unemployment has risen by over 200% since 2008 compared to an increase of just over 150% for male unemployment. These figures are illustrated in Figure 3.

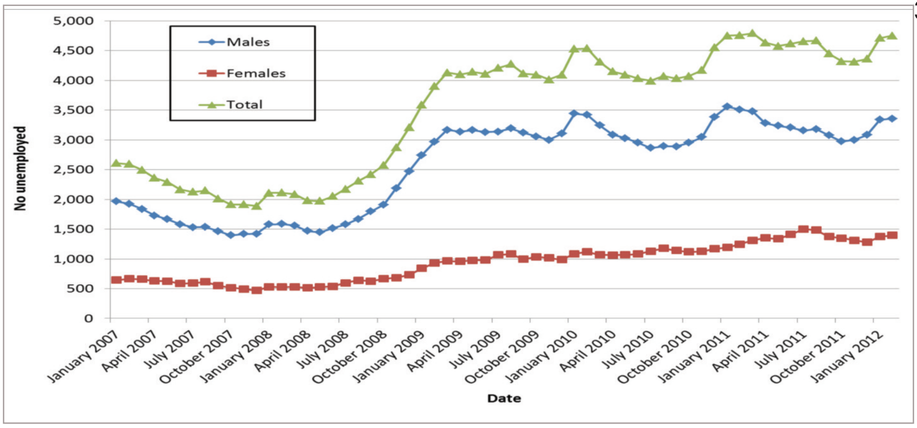


Figure 3: Unemployment 2007-2012

Source: NOMIS

More worrying is the fact that unemployment grew faster in our area than elsewhere in Scotland. From 2001 to 2005 unemployment in the Falkirk Council area was above the Scottish average. However, from 2005 until the autumn of 2008, we had a lower unemployment rate than Scotland as a whole. Since the autumn of 2008, unemployment in Falkirk has once again been above the Scottish average.

In terms of the Council's ranking within Scotland, our position has deteriorated. From the Council with the 16th highest unemployment rate amongst the 32 Scottish local authority areas at the start of 2008 to the 8th worst in December 2010. However the position has improved somewhat since then and in February 2012 we stood at 13th highest in Scotland.

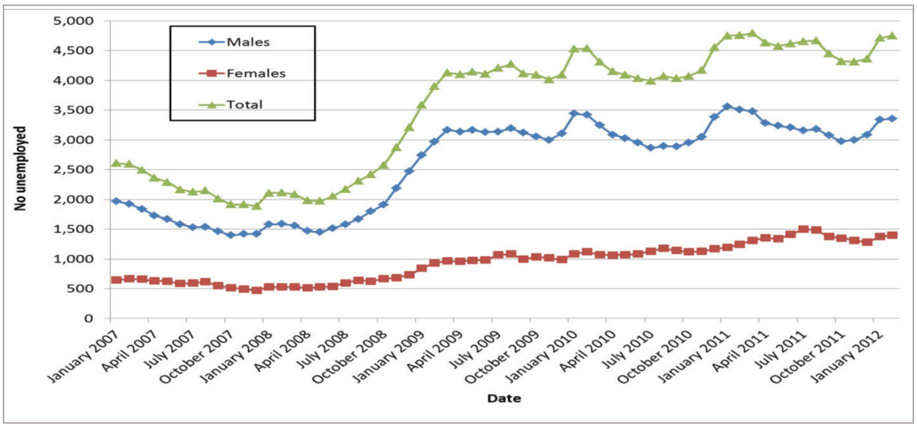
The other measure of unemployment comes from the Annual Population Survey (APS) and reports unemployment on the ILO definition , which is the UK government's preferred measure. This includes people who are seeking work but are not entitled to (or choose not to) claim unemployment related benefits. Because this is based on a sample survey it is less reliable at the Falkirk level, however, it shows that the average unemployment rate from July 2010 to June 2011 was 7.4% compared to the average claimant count rate over the same period of 4.4%.

Youth unemployment: One of the concerns during the recent economic downturn has been over the rise in youth unemployment. However, while unemployment among young people is an issue, the figures need to be treated with some caution. For example, the percentage of all claimants who are aged 16-24 has in fact decreased from 35.7% in 2008 to 28.7% in 2012, suggesting that the increase in youth unemployment has been below the increase in other age groups. On the other hand, in February 2012, 8.0% of those aged 16-24 were claiming Job Seekers Allowance compared to an overall rate of 4.8%. More positively, the number of young people unemployed in our area has decreased in the past year, while the numbers across Scotland have continued to increase.

The youth unemployment rates from the APS show youth unemployment at 20.1% in 2010/11, slightly above the Scottish figure of 19.6% - but the Falkirk figures are subject to a high margin of error and so are indicative rather than an absolute figure. However, Scottish Government research has shown that around 35% of those young people saying that they were unemployed in the APS were in fact in full time education.

Employment: Figure 4 shows that in the period 1999 to 2008 there was a general growth in employment in the area. However, since the start of the economic downturn in 2008, the number of people employed in the Falkirk Council area has decreased from 60,700 to 54,400 - a loss of over 6,000 jobs. In the current economic climate, forecasting future numbers of jobs is very difficult, but there is no evidence of any immediate increase in numbers and future growth will be very much dependent on the state of the economy nationally.

Figure 4: Total employment 1999 - 2010



Source: NOMIS, Annual Business Inquiry (ABI), and Business Register and Employment
Survey (BRES) Crown Copyright
Note that the new BRES survey in 2008 showed a higher number of people employed in the area than the ABI. There is therefore a discontinuity in the data at 2008.

Employment by sector: Our area was less exposed to the initial crisis in the financial sector which in 2007 only employed 0.8% of the total in the Council area, compared to 3.9% in Scotland as a whole. However, the 2001 Census showed that over 2,500 people commuted to jobs in the financial sector - mainly in Edinburgh and Stirling, and these people may have been affected by the downturn in these areas.

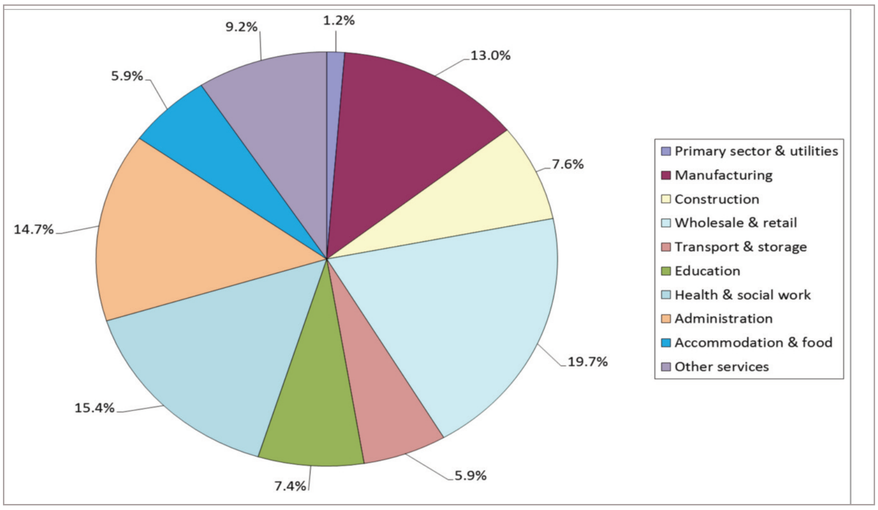
On the other hand, the construction industry which also suffered in the recession is over-represented in the area with almost 6.9% employed in that sector in 2007 (6.0% in Scotland as a whole). The effects on the construction industry were seen in the number of new housing sites where construction rates slowed. The number of new house completions in the area fell from around 1,000 per year in the early 2000's to only just over 400 in 2010/11. The effect on construction could also be seen in the quadrupling of the number of the unemployed who were seeking construction jobs between 2008 and 2010, although the number has since fallen by about 30%.

However, the number of jobs in the construction industry remained fairly steady between 2007 and 2010 and in fact by 2010 represented 7.6% of total employment in the Council area. This may have been partly due to the major construction project at the new Forth Valley Royal Hospital, one of the biggest construction sites in the country at that time.

Manufacturing has always been strongly represented in our area with 13% of employment still in manufacturing compared to only 7.5% in Scotland as a whole. However, in line with the rest of the country, manufacturing employment is declining. There were 2,000 fewer jobs in manufacturing in 2010 compared to 2007. The main industries are related to the refinery and petro-chemical complex at Grangemouth together with vehicle manufacture, and food and timber processing.

Figure 5 shows the latest information on employment by sector in the Council area.

Figure 5: Employment by sector 2010



Source: NOMIS - BRES 2010

As manufacturing has reduced over the last decade so the service industries have grown. Our area's excellent transport links have encouraged the expansion of warehousing and distribution, with employment in this sector above the Scottish average. Asda have their Scottish distribution depot in Falkirk which is currently being redeveloped, showing the company's confidence in the area.

In 2011, the opening of the new Forth Valley Royal Hospital at Larbert provided a boost to employment in the health sector and in the longer term should provide additional jobs for local people.

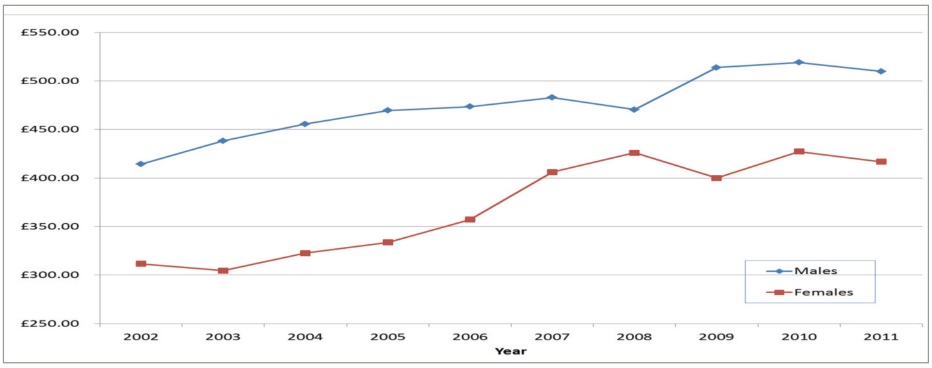
The public sector are the biggest employers in the area, with the Council itself as the largest single employer (in common with most local authorities in Scotland) with over 8,200 employees, with NHS Forth Valley the second largest employer at just under 6,000 employees. Other large public sector employers in the area are the Prison Service (Polmont Young Offenders Institution) and the Child Support Agency. 29% of total employment in the area is in the public sector compared to 22.3% in Scotland as a whole. This percentage has increased with the opening of the new Forth Valley Royal Hospital.

In the current economic climate, public sector jobs, which were previously seen as more secure, have been decreasing. Budget pressures will continue on all public sector employers.

Source: NOMIS Annual Population Survey

Earnings: While pay for women remains below that of men, Figure 6 shows that the gap appears to have narrowed in the Falkirk area in the last few years for full time employees. Earnings in Falkirk are generally close to, although slightly below, the Scottish average. In spite of the economic downturn, earnings for those in fulltime employment do not show any sign of a significant decrease.

Figure 6: Median weekly pay – fulltime workers Falkirk residents 2002-2011



Source: NOMIS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (Crown Copyright)

The current economic situation has highlighted the problems of debt and lack of financial resources. According to the Scottish Household Survey almost 60% of Falkirk households have savings, very slightly below the Scottish average. On the other hand, a marginally smaller number of households said that they had loans or that they owed money than the Scottish figures.

The EU is currently reviewing the eligibility of areas for Regional Aid. Much of Falkirk is currently eligible. Regional Selective Assistance is a discretionary grant scheme to encourage businesses to undertake investment that will directly result in the creation or safeguarding of jobs. Rates of grant in the Falkirk area can be up to 15% for large businesses and up to 35% for small businesses, depending on location and other criteria. We are working with the Scottish Government to ensure that the area continues to benefit from this funding for our businesses in the period 2014-2020.

The current economic conditions make it very difficult to predict what might happen in the immediate future and it may be that circumstances will be different from the recent past. The situation will need to continue to be closely monitored.

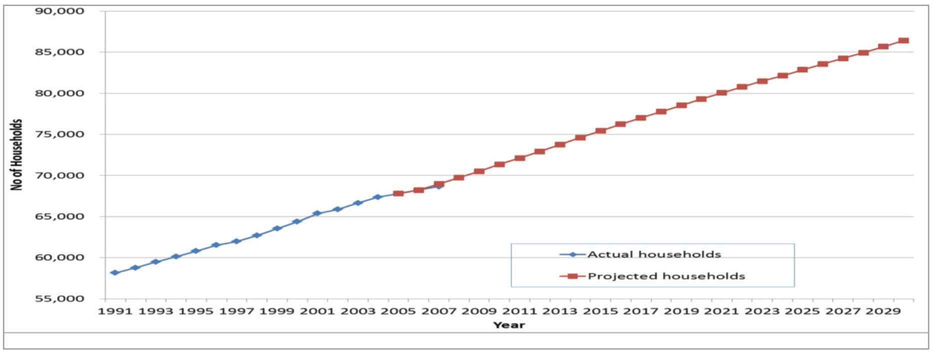
Challenges:

- dealing with the economic downturn
- unemployment especially among women and young people
- declining numbers of job opportunities
- maintaining earnings and reducing debt levels

Households and Housing

The growth in population has been mirrored by the growth in the housing stock and the number of households in the Council area. In fact, due to falling average household size, the number of households has been increasing at a faster rate than the population. The number of households grew by 21% between 1991 and 2010 to 68,655 and is predicted to increase to 72,900 by 2015, 80,800 by 2025 and to 86,400 by 2033 - see Figure 7. The increase in population coupled with a decrease in household size has put increased pressure for housing in our area. The economic downturn and the decrease in the number of new houses being built in recent years means we must be innovative in the way in which we meet these demands. The Council's recently published Housing Strategy 2011-2016 and the new Local Development Plan, currently in preparation, will seek to achieve this.

Figure 7: Households 1991-2033



Source: National Records of Scotland (Crown Copyright)

Household types: Much of the growth in the number of households has been, and will continue to be, among single person households - from 15,900 single person households in 1996 to almost 25,000 in 2011 and as many as 38,000 by 2033 or 44% of all households, if present trends continue. 40% of these are likely to be someone aged over 65 living alone. On the other hand, the number of households with children is predicted to remain about the same, although single parent families will increase while households with two adults with children will decrease.

House building: The increase in the number of households has largely mirrored the amount of new house building each year within the Council area. From an average of some 500 new houses per year in the 1980's, the level of house building increased to 600 per year in the 1990's but in 2002-2004 it reach 1,000 houses per year. The rate of new building has since fallen to just over 400 in 2010/11and it is expected to remain at a much lower level as long as the economic situation remains difficult. The current Structure Plan requires almost 700 new houses to be completed each year over the period of the Plan (from 2001-2020) and sufficient land has been allocated to allow this growth to take place.

One issue identified in the Council's Housing Strategy was that of providing affordable housing. Over the period 2009-12, the Council itself has built around 100 new homes for rent - the first new Council houses for around 30 years, whilst our RSL partners have built or plan to build over 500 new properties for a combination of renting and low cost home ownership. As noted earlier, we must now look at more innovative ways to provide housing for all our communities. This must include working with house builders, RSLs and others, as well as making best use of the Council's own housing stock.

Note that new household projections compatible with the latest population projections are due to be published in June 2012 by National Records of Scotland. The household projections quoted here are the 2008 based projections. The new projections are expected to be somewhat lower than the ones quoted here.

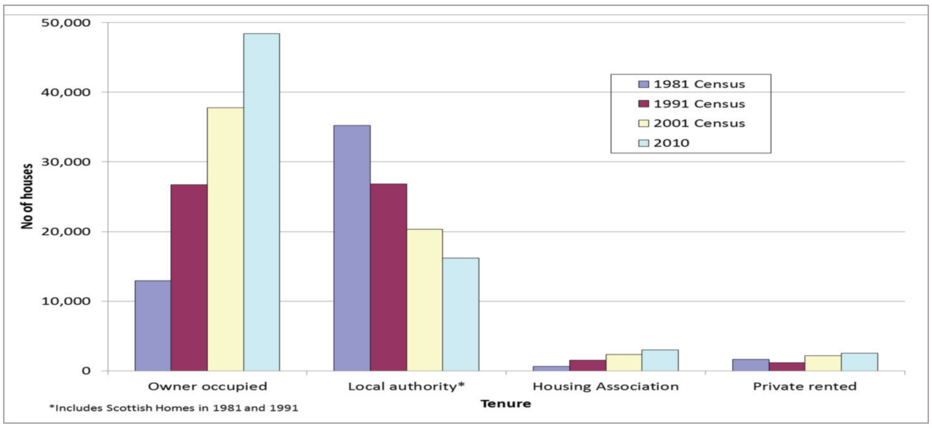
http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/corporate_neighbourhood/housing/policies_and_strategies/PDFs/housing_strategy/11_16/update/local_housing_strategy.pdf
http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/development/planning_and_environment/structure_plan/PDFs/structure%20plan.pdf

Housing Quality: The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2004 and sets a national standard for the physical quality of rented properties that all local authorities and registered social landlords must achieve by 2015. We have recently carried out surveys of all our own housing stock to determine the current condition and this information is being used to help us plan where we need to carry out investment work to ensure that all of Falkirk Council's properties meet the SHQS by 2015. We are committed to continuously upgrading our stock and to supporting private owners to do the same.

In 2009 the Council commissioned a sample house condition survey covering all housing tenures. The results indicated that sixty percent of properties overall are not SHQS compliant with the highest proportions in the Council's own stock, the private rented sector and ex-Council houses bought under the Right to Buy scheme. It is estimated that some 2,610 houses failed to meet the revised tolerable standard with over 9,000 requiring extensive repairs and over half requiring at least some repairs to critical building elements. However, less than 1% of properties suffer from problems of dampness and 7% from condensation. This information will allow the Council and our partners to plan what services can be made available to owners and landlords of properties that are in need of repair or adaptation.

Housing tenure: Figure 8 shows the substantial change in housing tenure which has taken place since 1981 when the Right to Buy legislation allowed local authority houses to be sold to sitting tenants. While the total number of houses in the area has increased from just under 54,000 to over 71,000 in 2010, the number of houses rented by the Council has declined from over 35,000 to just over 15,800, almost entirely due to Right to Buy sales.

Figure 8: Housing tenure 1981-2010



Source: National Records of Scotland Censuses (Crown Copyright), Falkirk Council

In the same period, the vast majority of new houses built have been for owner occupation, which taken together with the Right to Buy sales has resulted in an increase in owner occupation from around 13,000 houses (25%) to over 48,400 (69%). There has also been a small increase in the number of Housing Association properties, although some of this increase is due to the transfer of the remaining Scottish Homes houses to RSLs. Private renting has also increased since 1991 following many years of decline.

This shift in the tenure pattern marks a significant social change and mirrors a similar change throughout the country. While the number of sales of council houses has fallen (largely because there are fewer left to sell and those who remain Council tenants are less likely to be able to buy), it is predicted that the number of council owned properties will continue to fall, while the numbers of owner occupied houses will increase as the majority of new build continues to be for owner occupation and the numbers will be augmented by further Right to Buy sales. Falkirk Council took the decision to retain its own housing stock and not to transfer it to a Housing Association. This means that Falkirk Council is one of the country's biggest landlords with the sixth largest number of council houses across all councils.

It seems unlikely that the recent economic problems will cause much change in this pattern, although there is evidence of an increase in the private rental market where people who have been unable to sell their homes rent them out instead. Some developers have indicated an interest in building for social landlords and in providing affordable housing as part of larger developments, but the scale of this will be dependent on the amount of funding which is available. The Scottish Government continues to invest in affordable housing and it is important that the Council makes the most of the support funding which is available.

The housing market: Falkirk is largely a self contained housing market area. The housing market has been affected by the recent credit crunch. While much of the media attention has focussed on house prices, in fact the greatest impact has been on the volume of house sales. The number of house sales fell from over 5,000 in 2007 to 3,700 in 2008 and 2,300 in 2009, and although numbers have since recovered somewhat, they remain at around half what they were before the economic downturn.

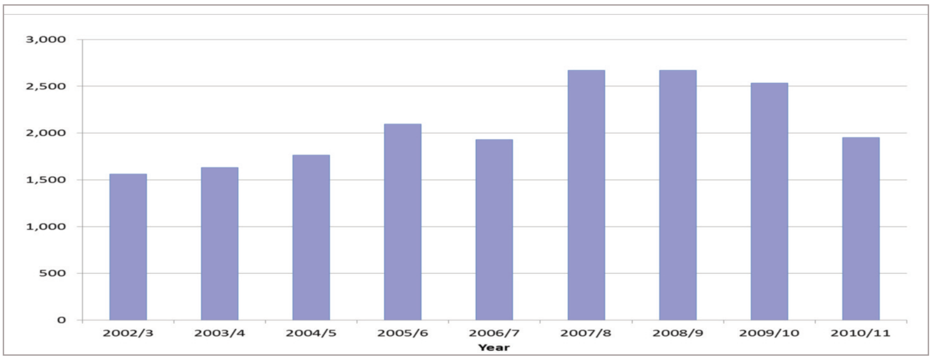
With the smaller number of house sales, house prices have been more volatile. There are frequent reports of house prices in the media, but these are based on a number of different sources, all of which have their own limitations. According to figures from the Scottish Government, average house prices in our area have been below the Scottish average for the last few years and in December 2011 the average price in was around £129,000 compared to a Scottish figure of £155,000. A Bank of Scotland report in December 2011 suggested that Falkirk had seen the biggest increase in house prices in Scotland during 2011 of 12%. This report gave a very similar average house price to the one quoted by the Scottish Government.

The housing market remains volatile and uncertain. Although there have been recent signs that the availability of mortgages has eased, higher deposits are required now that in previous years. The Council's Housing Strategy requires the local housing market to be monitored and this will continue to ensure that everyone who needs a home in our area can be housed satisfactorily and affordably.

Homelessness: The Scottish Government has placed a requirement on local authorities that by 2012 all unintentionally homeless households will be entitled to settled permanent accommodation. This is a significant challenge for the Council is in our Homelessness Strategy, "By 2012, no one need be homeless in the Falkirk Council area". This has however been helped by the recent fall in the number of households presenting themselves as homeless, as can be seen in Figure 9.

http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/corporate_neighbourhood/housing/policies_and_strategies/PDFs/housing_strategy/11_16/update/appendix_15.pdf

Figure 9: Households applying as homeless 2002-2011



Source: Scottish Government

Following an increase in the early 2000's, the number of homeless applications has fallen by 27% from the peak in 2008/09. Part of this reduction has been due to developing services in which staff assist households to consider the range of options available to address their housing needs. As a consequence some households who might previously have made a homelessness application may now have their housing needs met without first becoming homeless.

Specialist housing: In addition to affordable housing mentioned above, we are committed to ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of housing to meet special needs. This will include housing for the increasing number of elderly people and housing adapted to meet the needs of those with disabilities. This type of housing will need to be available in the private sector as well as provided by social landlords. There is already a stock of specialist housing for the disabled and housing which is allocated specifically to older tenants and the Council is able to assist in providing adaptations to allow people to continue in their present accommodation when they become disabled.

Challenges:

- providing sufficient new houses to meet need and demand from the growing population
- Potential mismatch between households and house types
- providing housing which is affordable and meets the needs of the elderly and disabled
- 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 Infrastructure

Transport: Our area is fortunate to be well connected with excellent transport links to the rest of Scotland and worldwide. The area lies at the centre of the Scottish motorway and railway networks.

The recently completed (2011) upgrading of the A80 to motorway standard has reduced journey times towards Glasgow and the south. Further motorway improvements at junctions 5 and 6 of the M9 and Junction 2 on the M876 are planned.

Preparatory works for the improvements to the A801 Avon Gorge route have been carried out by the Council and planning permission has been agreed. Funding has yet to be finalised however for this project which has been a long term requirement by the Council.

The Clackmannanshire Bridge, opened in 2009, has provided a second local crossing of the Forth linking the Council area with Fife, Clackmannanshire and beyond. The Forth Replacement Crossing, due for completion in 2016, although further away, will provide additional connectivity to Fife and beyond.

There are fast and very frequent rail connections to both Glasgow and Edinburgh. Network Rail plans an electrification programme (EGIP) which will increase frequency and reduce journey times still further. The current planned completion date is 2016. Rail services are also available to Stirling – also part of Network Rail's electrification plans - with connections further north and twice a day direct to London and Inverness.

Rail freight traffic to Grangemouth remains important and electrification will take place as part of the EGIP project. The Grangemouth Freight Hub is designated by the Scottish Government as a National Development in its National Planning Framework 2. This will increase our area's connectivity further and make it an even more attractive place for employers to locate in.

Grangemouth is Scotland's premier port and largest deep sea container port. Container traffic has continued to grow and the port handles around 9 million tonnes of cargo per year. While the port is well placed to continue to prosper, the downturn in the economy may affect trade flowing through the terminal.

Our area is only 20 minutes from Edinburgh airport which has now overtaken Glasgow (only 45 minutes away) as the busiest in Scotland.

Because of our good transport links, commuting rates in our area are high. The 2001 Census showed over 22,000 out-commuters and 14,000 in-commuters. The main commuting links are with the two cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow and also with the Council's five neighbouring local authority areas. The 2011 Census results are expected to show that these figures have increased.

The Council was one of seven local authorities which were successful in the summer of 2008 in bidding for funding for its "Take the Right Route" project in the Larbert-Stenhousemuir area which aims to achieve an increase in active travel - walking and cycling - and public transport use.

Water and sewerage infrastructure: Most of the Council area is well served by the water supply and sewerage systems provided through Scottish Water and there should be sufficient capacity to meet most planned future developments. There are some issues in some of the more rural areas, but Scottish Water expect to be able to upgrade capacity to meet all developments currently planned.

Flooding: Substantial land areas within the Falkirk area are potentially liable to flooding, particularly along the Forth estuary and the Rivers Avon and Carron. Climate change may lead to more frequent and severe flooding than the more localised incidents which have been experienced in recent years. The Falkirk Council area has one of the highest proportions of its population which is at risk of flooding of any council in Scotland. The Grangemouth petrochemical complex is also at high risk of flooding. Much of the area was considered potentially vulnerable by SEPA in their analysis published in December 2011.

The Council has new duties under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009. We will work with our partners in Scottish Water, SEPA and British Waterways who all have responsibilities in this area, and with neighbouring councils, to produce the local flood risk management plan covering our area.

We currently produce a biennial flooding report which details flooding events during the preceding two years, measures taken to prevent or mitigate flooding in the preceding two years and further proposed measures. The Bo'ness Flood Prevention Scheme was completed in 2010 and studies are underway for a flood defence scheme for Grangemouth.

Electricity: In January 2010 the Scottish Government approved the upgrade to the 137 mile long Beauly to Denny 400kv electricity transmission line. This will allow the transmission of renewable energy generated in the north of Scotland to the Central Belt. The end of this line will involve the upgrading of the substation at Denny. Part of the length of the transmission line will be underground in the Glenbervie area.

In March 2012, a US company announced proposals to develop a coal fired power station at Grangemouth. The plant would use carbon capture and storage technology in a bid to reduce emissions by more than 90%. This project is at a very early stage. Funding has still to be sought from the UK government for the technology, and planning consent will be required.

Broadband: Our area is one of the most connected to broadband in Scotland. Further announcements on the further upgrading of exchanges will improve this to ensure the majority of households and businesses have access to superfast broadband. However some smaller villages etc far for exchanges with challenging geography have the potential to be further disadvantaged as they will miss out on these facilities. This has a potential impact on businesses in those areas, households in those areas becoming digitally disadvantaged but importantly also our services e.g. schools being unable to benefit from some of the new technologies.

Challenges:

- 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

Education

Schools: Falkirk Council is the main provider of education in the area through its primary and secondary schools. There is one small private school in the area. The growing population, together with reductions in class size required by the Scottish Government, has put pressure on our schools.

In 2009 the Council completed a rebuilding programme of all eight secondary schools. Two new primary schools - a larger replacement school at Maddiston and an additional school, Kinnaird Primary, to meet the needs of new housing developments - have been completed in the last few years and an additional Roman Catholic Primary School - St Bernadette's - at Stenhousemuir will open for the autumn term in 2012. In addition, improvements and extensions to the existing schools estate have been undertaken to meet demand, more are planned and more may be required.

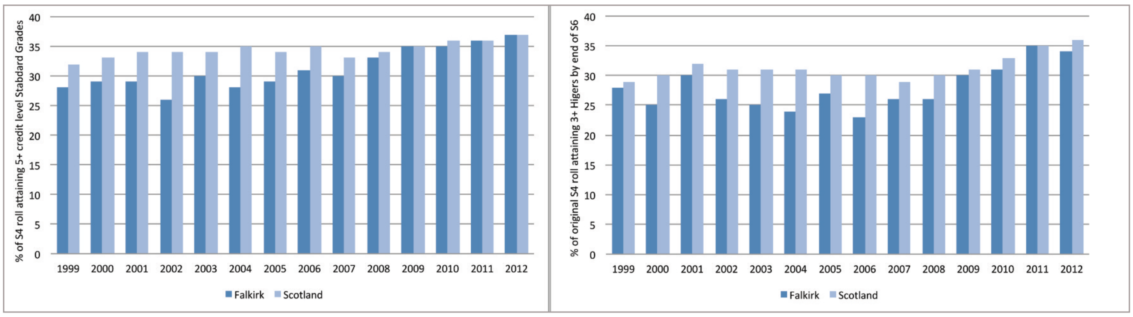
Educational attainment: Overall, attainment in Falkirk secondary schools has shown improvement across a range of SQA examination measures over the past 5 years. In some measures, Falkirk schools are now achieving examination results at or above the Scottish average and the average for comparator local authorities.

Attainment of 5 or more awards at Standard Grade Credit Level or better by the end of S4 was 1% higher in 2012 than in the previous year and at its highest level yet, being 7% higher than in 2007.

Attainment of 3 or more Higher Grades or better by the end of S6 was 1% lower in 2012 than the previous year, but 3% higher than in 2010 and 8% higher than in 2007

These figures are illustrated in Figure 10.

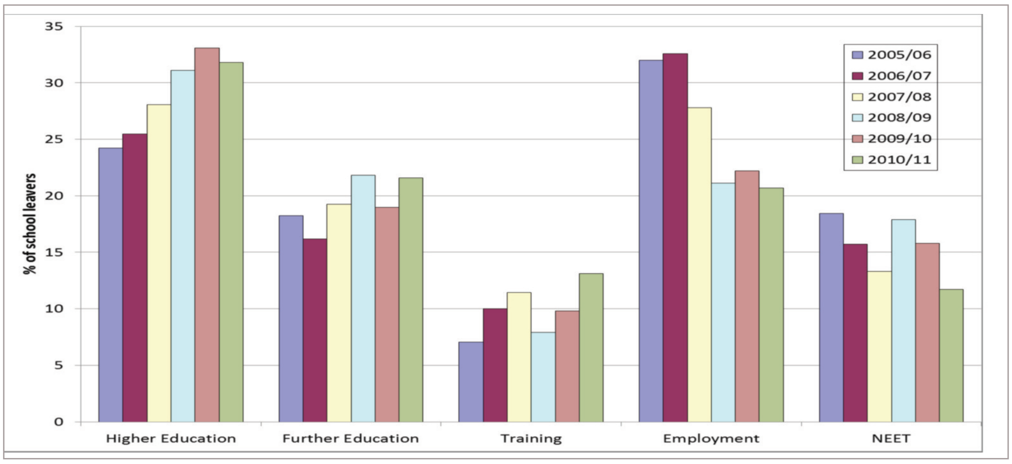
Figure 10: Educational attainment 1999-2010



Source: Scottish Government

School Leaver Destinations: Securing positive destinations for our young people leaving school remains a priority for our Community Planning Partnership. We aim to increase the number of school leavers moving into positive and sustainable destinations and to reduce the numbers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). NEET levels had been reducing steadily until the economic downturn when they showed an increase. However, in the last two years they have fallen once again (see Figure 11). Some years ago the Council had one of the highest NEET levels in the country but this has fallen from 25% of school leavers in 2004 to just 13% in 2008, when it was better than the Scottish average of 14%. The figures have since remained around the Scottish average.

Figure 11: School leaver destinations 2005-2011



Source: Scottish Government

Fewer school leavers go on to Further and Higher Education in Falkirk than the Scottish average, although numbers have improved, especially for Higher Education. In 2011, 53.4% school leavers went on to Further and Higher Education compared to 62.9% in Scotland as a whole. However, 13% of school leavers went into training compared to 6% nationally. The economic downturn has meant that there are fewer jobs available for our young people as can be seen in Figure 10, which shows that there has been a significant reduction in the percentage of school leavers going into employment in the last three years. We must also ensure that positive school leaver destinations are sustained over the long term.

Further & Higher Education: Figures from the Scottish Funding Council show that in 2010/11 there were 950 young people in Falkirk enrolling for the first time at a Further or Higher Education establishment. This gives a figure for the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) of 48.7% which is the fourth lowest in Scotland.

Figures from the Scottish Funding Council also show that enrolments in Further Education had fallen by over 20% by 2010/11 from a peak in 2007/08 in both Falkirk and Scotland. These figures are reflected in a similar fall in enrolments at Forth Valley College. This local college provided places for 13,700 students in 2010/11, 6,100 of whom came from the Falkirk area.

There are no Higher Education establishments in our area. The HEIPR for Falkirk in Higher Education in 2010/11 was 25.2% which was the fifth lowest in Scotland.

Adult qualifications: According to the APS, only 30.8% of our population had qualifications at NVQ level 4 (degree level) and above in 2010 while the figure for Scotland was 35%. This does represent an improvement from 28.3% in 2007 which at 2.5 percentage points higher is better than the improvement of 1.9 percentage points in Scotland as a whole.

On the other hand, the same APS showed that the percentage of people aged 16-64 with no qualifications was 11.9% in 2010, below the Scottish figure of 12.3%.

Educational deprivation: Looking at the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2009, while only 17 (8.6%) of the 197 datazones in the Council area were in the worst 15% in Scotland for overall deprivation, 28 (14.2%) were in the worst 15% in Scotland on the education domain. The education deprivation domain includes the proportion of the working age population with no qualifications, 17-19 year olds not enrolling in higher education, 16-18 year olds who are NEET, pupil performance at SQA stage 4 and pupil absences.

Challenges:

- ensure that our school estate meets the requirements of the growing population
- continue to improve school attainment and qualifications among adults
- continue to encourage young people into positive destinations including Further and Higher education.