

# PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK



## ANNUAL REPORT April 2013 - March 2014

Director of Development Services  
Rhona Geisler



**Falkirk Council**  
*Development Services*

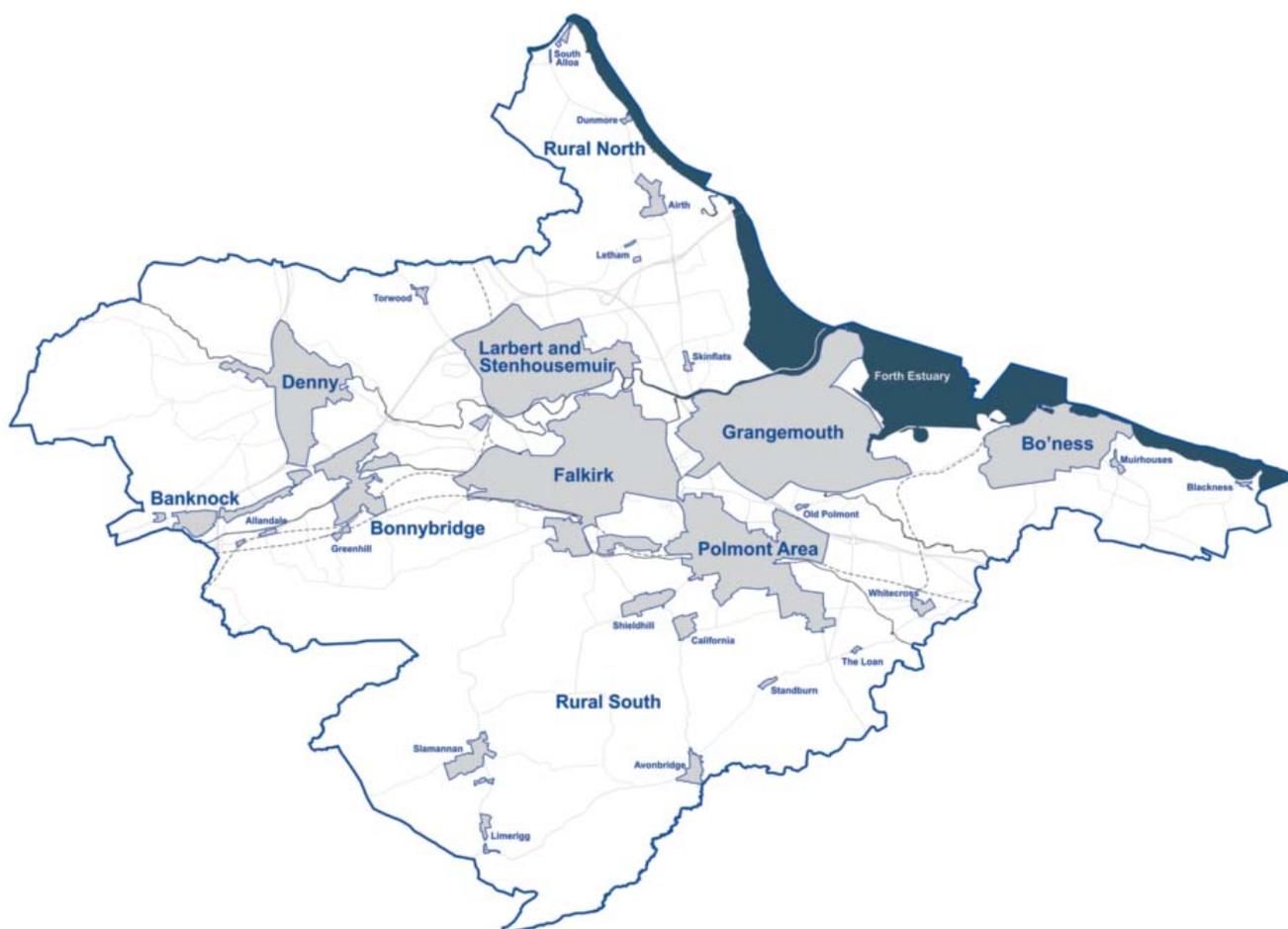


## Introduction

This is the third annual Planning Performance Framework report produced by Falkirk Council. The report looks to review the speed of decision making and set out the successes and achievements of the Council in the period from April 2013 to March 2014.

This document is divided into four distinct sections, each covering a different theme. The first section includes a review of the national headline indicators. This is followed by an assessment of performance across eight areas of activity, and then a consideration of the supporting evidence. The final section refers to proposed service improvements and timescales for delivery for the next reporting period.

Within this report period the Development Management Unit has maintained excellent customer service satisfaction with 89.7% of customers responding to our customer survey who considering the service to be good or excellent. Good progress has also been made with the new Local Development Plan and associated supplementary guidance documents. The Development Management Unit have carried out an Internal Audit while the Planning & Transportation Division as a whole have undergone a Reflect (PSIF) exercise. The implementation of the associated recommendations has resulted in an improved service for staff and customers.



## Feedback from Previous Report

The feedback given by Scottish Government on the 2012-2013 report confirmed that the Local Development Plan was on track and the up-to-date Local Plan was benefitting the service by providing a policy framework which could direct development and investment in the area.

The Service had shown itself to be customer focused and with well established links with other Council services. In addition to this, the Falkirk Greenspace Initiative was noted for its use in sharing good practice with other Authorities.

Scottish Government, in relation to statistics and results noted the proposed service improvement to encourage the use of processing agreements. The need to decrease timescales for assessing major and local (non-householder) developments was also acknowledged.

The provision of customer surveys in Development Management was recognised for its usefulness in highlighting service improvements, with the results demonstrating a high level of customer satisfaction with the service provided.

It was disappointing however that the feedback highlighted two performance markers with red ratings, 'decision-making' and 'processing agreements'. Falkirk Council has endeavoured to improve on these over the new reporting period. The remaining performance markers included seven amber and four green ratings. The green ratings included having an up to date Enforcement Charter, a Local Plan less than five years old, and a Local Development Plan on target for adoption within five years of Local Plan adoption. The Service's commitment to corporate working across the Council was also recognised with a green rating.



# 1 National Headline Indicators

Key Outcomes	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014
<b>Development Planning</b>			
Age of Local Development Plan (LDP)		LDP in preparation.	LDP in preparation. *1
Development Plan Scheme on track		Yes - minor delay.	Yes - possible minor delay. *2
<b>Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs</b>			
Effective housing land : years supply		5	4.5
Effective housing land supply		2670 units	2555 units
Housing approvals		523 units	444 units
Effective employment land supply		258.6 ha	255.4 ha
Employment land take up		0.5 ha	1.5 ha
<b>Development Management - Project Planning</b>			
Applications subject to pre-application advice	0	0	0 *3
Number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan		0	0 *4
Percentage planned timescales met	-	-	-
<b>Decision-Making</b>			
Application approval rate	93%	94.4%	94.2%
Delegation rate	91%	88.9%	93.8%
<b>Decision Making Timescales (Average number of weeks to decision*5)</b>			
Major Developments	122.3	184.4	27.9 *5
Local Developments (non-householder)	14.6	18.4	11.2 *5
Householder Developments	7.6	7.3	6.5 *5
<b>Enforcement</b>			
Time since Enforcement Charter reviewed	0 year	1 year	1.5 year *6
Number of cases taken up		149	159
Number of breaches identified	85	76	83
Number of breaches resolved	67	53	34
Number of formal notices served		0	1
Number of reports passed to Procurator Fiscal	0	0	0
Number of prosecutions	0	0	0
<b>Appeals</b>			
Number of Local Reviews	2	7	3
Number of Appeals to Scottish Government	11	7	6

\*1 Falkirk Local Development Plan to be adopted in March 2015, within the 5 year life of the current Local Plan which was adopted in December 2010.

\*2 Proposed Plan was submitted to Scottish Government in February 2014, in line with target set out in DPS 4 (May 2013). In the DPS 5 (April 2015) the adoption date has been adjusted from February 2015 to March 2015, taking account of DPEA target for conclusion of examination. If Examination is completed earlier than DPEA target, it may be possible still to adopt in February 2015.

\*3 The Council's system does not distinguish between general enquiries and pre-application advice, as such statistics on 'applications subject to pre-application advice' cannot be provided. Work is ongoing to resolve this issue and will form a service improvement target.

\*4 To date, despite pre-application discussions there has been a reluctance from prospective applicants to enter into agreements.

\*5 Falkirk Council's call-in scheme is such that once a recommendation is made, the application is added to a weekly list. This list runs each Friday and results in an additional week being added to the determination date.

# 1 National Headline Indicators

## CONSIDERATION OF NATIONAL HEADLINE INDICATORS

### Development Planning

The Council remains on target to adopt its Local Development Plan well within the 5 year lifespan of the current Local Plan. Progress on the Local Development Plan has been in accord with the targets set out in the Development Plan Scheme, and forward targets will be met subject to the DPEA completing the Examination process in accordance with its own target.

### Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs

The effective housing land supply recorded in the June 2014 HLA (with June 2013 base date) has decreased by 115 units from the previous year. The main reason for this is slippage on several of the larger projected housing sites, where the delivery programme has been delayed due to various factors, including additional time needed to negotiate S.75 obligations and address infrastructure constraints, as well as continuing issues with the housing market. This has meant that the number of years effective supply has fallen to 4.5. The new Local Development Plan, due to be adopted in March 2015, will bring forward a range of new sites, augmenting the land supply. It is expected that this will bring the supply back up to the requisite 5 years.

The effective employment land supply has stayed more or less constant from last year. Although there has been minimal take up of employment land over the course of the reporting period on sites allocated over the Local Plan, the commencement of the Council's TIF programme, the Council's decision to undertake new-build at Abbotsford Business Park, and a range of enquiries in relation to sites such as the Falkirk Gateway, provides good prospects of an upturn in activity in the near future.

### Development Management Decision Making

During the course of the year the Council updated the software associated with plotting application site boundaries and neighbour notification. Unfortunately the software failed. This temporary disruption occurred during the Christmas period and resulted in delays sending out neighbour notification with a corresponding effect on performance at that time. However, overall performance has improved as demonstrated in the above table.

The regular caseload monitoring is an inherent part of our improved procedures in respect of performance management. This has resulted in an across the board improvement in all categories of development as shown in the table above. The changes to the delegation scheme has removed the need for Council applications to be automatically referred to Committee.



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### OPEN FOR BUSINESS

#### Contact

The Council continues to provide a single point of contact for all applicants from pre-application through to determination. However on larger developments where project teams are formed, applicants are able to contact assisting officers if the lead officer is unavailable.

The Unit remains open for business, in person, over the phone, by email and in writing. Customers can contact the Council in a way which suits them best, a part time Customer Liaison Officer assists with this function. Clear guidance is set out on our updated website and a Development Management Charter setting out guidance on our processes and standards will be completed in the next reporting period and will be available to read in conjunction with our existing Enforcement Charter.

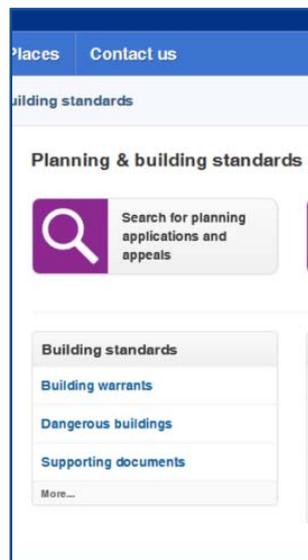
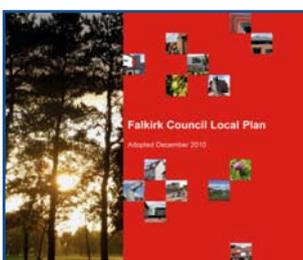
We continue to set early dates for meetings, and phone calls are returned timeously. Officers endeavour to reply by email where available. This ensures issues are addressed quickly and customers do not have to wait for a postal response. This is particularly helpful where applications are invalid as it allows issues to be resolved quickly.

#### Pre-Application

We have maintained our positive approach to pre-application advice and offer a free service for all types of applications, from small scale householder developments to major and national planning submissions. Advice and guidance can be found on the Council website. The Council-wide website is undergoing a major overhaul and following completion will include additional advice for those looking to submit applications. Our pre-application advice provides clear guidance on the likely additional information required with submissions. Our processing agreement form also allows for clarification of what information will be required. This advice is then reiterated at the application stage and any requests for additional information made timeously.

#### Contributions

The existing Structure Plan and Local Plan, and emerging Local Development Plan provide clear guidance on when developer contributions are likely to be required. This information is then clarified in our supplementary guidance documents which provide clear guidance on developer contributions. These levels are regularly checked and updated as appropriate. In relation to education contributions for example, the school rolls and future predicted levels are assessed for each application. This ensures that requests for contributions are proportionate and only made where absolutely necessary. The Denny Eastern Access Road SPG, adopted in June 2013, for example sets out the percentage share of costs between development sites in the local area in an easy to read table.



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### Future Proofing

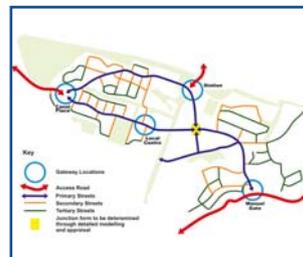
We continue to maintain two area teams in Development Management but officers work across team areas as and when work levels require, we promote staff development and expertise. In addition an officer dedicated to dealing with householder applications across the Council area is being considered to further improve householder performance. This ensures we continue to respond quickly to requests from users of the service.

### Assisting Development Delivery

The Council's £67m Tax Increment Finance Initiative (TIF) was formally approved and agreement signed with the Scottish Government during the reporting period, and the first contract, for upgrading of Junction 6 on the M9 was commenced. An Infrastructure and Development Plan has been prepared, with revisions to the programme and phasing of infrastructure works. TIF is designed to deliver major infrastructure and enabling works in the Falkirk-Grangemouth area, including those associated with the Grangemouth Investment Zone national development in NPF3. A Development Framework for the Falkirk Gateway/Stadium area is to be prepared in the coming year to provide a context for site masterplans, and to help stimulate and steer development in this critical area.

The Council continues to work to progress strategic housing growth areas allocated in the Development Plan, with particular reference to Whitecross and Banknock/Dennyloanhead. For example, on the latter growth area, work has been ongoing in partnership with developers and Transport Scotland to reassess capacity constraints at M80 Junction 7, and allow an initial phase of development to commence prior to upgrading works. An alteration to the relevant Development Framework is being undertaken to give this effect.

The Local Development Plan Proposed Action Programme was revised in the light of comments submitted at the Proposed Plan consultation stage, and submitted with the Proposed Plan to the Scottish Government in February 2014.



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND

#### Policy and Guidance

The current Local Plan requires that the design of new development responds positively and sympathetically to the sites surroundings. The emerging Local Development Plan has policies on Urban Design and Placemaking which are already being considered as material considerations in the determination of planning applications.

The Council is progressing its programme of supplementary guidance which will include advice on a number of design issues. During the reporting year the Council issued Draft SG02 on Development in the Countryside, which contains revised and updated guidance on design of buildings in the countryside. The Council has also been engaging with staff at the Scottish Government in the preparation of SG02 on Neighbourhood Design, with a view to producing exemplar local authority guidance on 'Designing Streets'. Provision of additional Conservation Area Guidance has also ensured that a consistent approach is taken to securing improved design in Conservation Areas.

#### Negotiated Improvements

Many proposals have benefited from negotiated design improvements. These have included improvements to many shopfront and advertisement proposals within Falkirk and other town centres, housing layouts, commercial and householder developments. Improvements are sought where considered to be necessary and proportionate. For example Virgin Media, Ard Accountants and Thomas Cook Travel Agents in Falkirk Town Centre and a small housing development at Comely Place.



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### Design Training and Coaching

A weekly design and conservation surgery continues to allow case officers to discuss schemes with the Urban Design and Conservation Officer. The surgery is at a set time each week and officers provide the relevant details to the Urban Design and Conservation Officer prior to the surgery. Other officers from within the Service and across the Council are also available to discuss matters and where appropriate attend meetings before, during and after submissions.

A number of staff members from both Development Management and Planning and Environment attended this year's Design Symposium run by Architecture and Design Scotland. The learning from this was then disseminated within the Service. Staff regularly attend courses to keep their design skills up to date. In house training events on a range of planning matters have also been held during the reporting period and will continue to take place.

### Greenspace and Placemaking

The Council's revised green network strategy 'Falkirk Greenspace: A Strategy for Our Green Network' (CSGN) was approved in October 2013. It updates the highly successful 20-year Falkirk Greenspace Initiative, while addressing the new themes and issues arising through the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN).

Implementation on the strategy has continued, including the following:

- ❖ The £43m Helix project came to fruition during the course of the reporting year, with the park being opened in September 2013, and the Kelpies being opened in April 2014. This project, to which planning has made a major contribution, has received national publicity and has already established itself as a Scottish icon to complement the Falkirk Wheel.
- ❖ Support of the Bespoke Community Development Company has continued to develop a visitor café/cycle hub centre to enhance the South Falkirk access network. Due for completion autumn 2014.
- ❖ The River Carron loop route is nearing completion to connect the communities of Larbert and Camelon including a new £350k Dorrator Bridge replacement, funded mostly from developer contributions.
- ❖ The John Muir Way, an NPF3 and CSGN priority, has been a major focus during the reporting year with major partnership investment in key sections delivered by Falkirk Council.
- ❖ Further canal towpath upgrade works (Lock 16 to the Falkirk Wheel) have completed the provision of a fully upgraded towpath surface link between the Helix and the Falkirk Wheel.
- ❖ Steering group of partners, including Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT), the Forestry Commission and Falkirk Council have commissioned consultants to produce a Falkirk Forest and Woodland Strategy, due Autumn 2014.
- ❖ Exemplar outdoor learning greenspaces are now completed in two locations in the Larbert High School cluster: Forth Valley Royal Hospital wider estate and Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve (LNR).
- ❖ Various capital investments, including S.75 contributions, have been implemented to address areas of open space deficit in quality or accessibility of open spaces as identified in Falkirk Council's Open Space Strategy.

The Council's joint £2m bid with RSPB to the Heritage Lottery Fund for an Inner Forth Landscape Initiative (IFLI) received Stage 2 approval in March 2014. This is a joint project with Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils, Sustrans, Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Falkirk Community Trust, Buglife, Central Scotland, Green Network and the RSPB. A total of nearly £4 million is to be spent on around 50 projects through the three Council areas. Fifteen of these projects are in the Falkirk Council area, and a further 13 are across the whole project area and include Falkirk. Work will start on site in the financial year 2014/15.

## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### Town Centres

The Stage 2 bid for Falkirk Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) was approved in August 2013. Staff are now in place and preliminary work ongoing on a number of priority projects, shopfront/building repair grant scheme, and public realm project.

Work is underway on various aspects of the Denny Town Centre regeneration project with a programme determined for the demolition of remaining blocks, temporary accommodation for retailers, and the construction of Phase 1.

Following on from the National Review of Town Centres, and associated reports and action plans, the Council has committed to undertake a review of its Town Centres Strategy in the coming year.

### Historic Environment

The Council undertook public realm enhancement schemes in Bo'ness and Muirhouses Conservation Areas. The Falkirk Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) was published, so that CAMPs are now in place for all Conservation Areas.



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### Certainty

Given the improved performance there should be greater certainty in relation to the outcome of all applications. However we are looking at our processes to enable us to record percentage of applications decided contrary to Development Plan.

During the reporting period 0.95% of applications were determined contrary to Officer advice. Of these applications six were appealed to the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals and four of these were allowed.

### Processing Agreements

The Council has produced a processing agreement form and guidance in relation to completing an agreement. When our website is updated in April 2014, this information will be provided on the site. Staff actively encourage the use of agreements on major applications and also more complex local applications. Negotiations have been ongoing with prospective applicants to enter into processing agreements but to date applicants have shown reluctance with none as yet being signed.

### Submission of Applications

The number of applications invalid at first attempt has remained similar to the previous reporting period at 54.8% compared with 55% previously, the reasons also being similar, mostly relating to the lack of fees.

### Contributions

The information on contributions, set out in the section on 'Open for Business' ensures that any requests for contributions are clear and proportionate.



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### Development Plan

The Council continues to maintain up-to-date development plan coverage through the Falkirk Council Structure Plan and the Falkirk Council Local Plan. The Proposed Falkirk Local Development Plan was approved in March 2013, becoming a material consideration in the determination of applications.

Consultation on the Proposed Plan was completed in May 2013, and over 1100 representations were received, logged, assessed and assigned to issues. The LDP's established project management approach, involving project plan, stage work programmes, and regular meetings with the Council Administration, senior management and project team continued through the year. This enabled the Schedule 4s and associated Examination documentation to be prepared, piloted through Council, and submitted to Scottish Ministers in February 2014, as programmed. Notifiable modifications, which would have entailed substantial delay, were avoided. Regular contact was maintained with the DPEA through meetings and e-mail to ensure that documentation was in the correct form. This allowed the Examination to commence in March 2014.

The Council's annual Development Plan Monitoring Report was published in August 2013.

### Supplementary Guidance

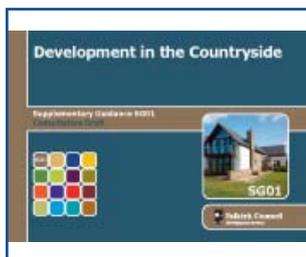
The Council has a comprehensive suite of non-statutory supplementary planning guidance. The following SPGs were finalised in the reporting period:

- ❖ Affordable Housing (review of existing SPG).
- ❖ Spatial Framework and Guidance for Wind Energy Development.
- ❖ Delivery of Denny Eastern Access Road.

A suite of statutory supplementary guidance is being prepared, in conjunction with the Falkirk Local Development Plan. The first batch of these was published for consultation in March 2014 comprising:

- ❖ SG02 Development in the Countryside
- ❖ SG05 Biodiversity and Development
- ❖ SG06 Trees and Development
- ❖ SG13 Open Space and New Development

Subsequent batches will be prepared and consulted on during 2014-2015, which should enable the majority of the 16 supplementary guidance notes to be adopted along with the Local Development Plan in March 2015.



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

#### Communication

Work on producing a Development Management Charter has commenced and will be finalised within the next reporting period. Our Enforcement Charter recognises the different needs of users and provides clear information on our processes and standards, and is due for review in the next reporting period. The Development Management Charter once finalised will be reviewed and updated as and when appropriate but within a minimum of every two years.

All publications are checked for the use of plain English to ensure that information published is suitable for all readers. Information is published on our website in a number of different formats to meet the needs of users of the site. Staff in the Planning and Environment Unit benefited from Plain English training, with a particular emphasis on writing for the web.

The Development Plan team is now moving towards e-communication for mailings, with the latest mailing being issued by e-mail.

The Council's website is scheduled to be redesigned and relaunched in May 2014. As part of this, all planning material has been fully rewritten and updated.

## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### Engagement

The Council has implemented a new complaints process, the details of which are available on our website.

[http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/about\\_council/complaints\\_comments\\_suggestions/complaints\\_comments\\_suggestions.aspx](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/about_council/complaints_comments_suggestions/complaints_comments_suggestions.aspx)

This has simplified the previous complaints process to a two stage, rather than three stage process. Following the adoption of the new complaints system a detailed breakdown of figures relating to the planning service is not readily available at this time. This issue will be considered during the next reporting period.

Electronic submissions continue to increase with 347 (43%) applications made online. This shows an increase from last years figure of 39%. This continues to reflect a small but increasing trend towards online submissions.

Consultation on the Proposed Local Development Plan was undertaken in the period April to June 2014, including undertaking the neighbour notification of around 2000 neighbours of proposed sites. This went smoothly, and the resultant high level of enquiries was handled efficiently. A training event for community councils and other community groups, focusing on the Proposed Plan and Examination processes, was held just prior to the consultation. The Council produced its Statement of Conformity with the Participation Statement, demonstrating that it had fulfilled its commitments with regard to consultation on the LDP, and this was passed by the Reporter in March 2014.

Two Development Plan newsletters were issued during the course of the year, one to accompany the Proposed Plan consultation (April 2013), the second to highlight submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers (March 2014).



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### Customer Service

The Development Management Unit continues to run and review a customer survey. All users are able to access the survey online or respond by mail using a freepost card. There are direct links on all officer email signatures. During this reporting period 89.7% have found the customer service to be excellent or good with 96.5% finding the Development Management representatives to be helpful, courteous and polite.

We continue to provide a duty service during office hours and a part time Customer Liaison Officer assists in this role. It is also intended in the next reporting period that the Customer Liaison Officer will embark on a 'cold-calling' random survey of customers.

*'Current service provides a straightforward and helpful process.'* 13 Jan 2014.

*'Very happy that someone got back in touch with me and kept me up to date.'* May 2013.

*'Easier to navigate website.'* June 2013.

*'Fully embrace email correspondence rather than traditional post.'* June 2013.

*'We received first class service, could not ask for better.'* July 2013

*'Excellent Service - No problems.'* May 2013.

The Council are in the process of overhauling the website and this will hopefully address the concerns raised by one user. Staff also regularly use email to respond to enquiries as explained earlier in this document.

We continue to hold yearly developer workshops and will actively seek the views of attendees on topics to be discussed. These events have been held for a number of years. They have proved to be popular, are well attended by a range of developers and designers who are involved in small and larger scale developments in the Council area and beyond.

## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

During the course of the reporting period the Council has been involved with the consideration of a controversial planning application for the extraction of coal bed methane. The Service has sought to keep all interested parties informed of the progress of the application and subsequent appeal via regular correspondence, press releases, Member briefing notes and updates on the Council website.

The Development Plan Team undertook a customer survey in March/April 2014. Although the response rate from customers was disappointing, most of those who did respond rated the various aspects of the Development Plan service as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’, with the remainder as ‘satisfactory’. A comprehensive Communications and Engagement Review was also carried out, as an action from the Planning & Transportation Division’s ‘Reflect’ (Public Service Improvement Framework) exercise in 2013. The review assesses all aspects of the Service’s interface with the public and external stakeholders, particularly focusing on the various consultation techniques used through the LDP process. It contains recommendations which will be incorporated into the project plan for the next LDP, and the participation statement within the 2015 Development Plan Scheme. To further supplement this information, a forthcoming Citizens’ Panel questionnaire will contain a range of questions assessing awareness of, and interest in, the development plan.

We have a major projects team which meets quarterly to discuss existing and potential developments to share knowledge and identify issues which will require to be addressed across the various parts of the Service.

We also have planning representation on the Flood Liaison Group which is also attended by SEPA, the Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) Group and regular participation at the development planning and development management sub-groups of Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS).



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

#### Workforce Management

The planning process is coordinated by a senior management team led by the Head of Service. A breakdown of the structure is provided in Appendix 2, workforce and financial information.

The ability to have flexible team working continues to be recognised, to ensure work load pressures when identified are resolved by targeting appropriate staff resources. In Development Management “key development” proposals are identified at either pre-application or submission stage, project groups are set up with junior colleagues shadowing more senior colleagues on applications.

The Development Management Unit have implemented Profess Time Recording which will, in time, show how officer time is divided between such things as enquiries, pre-application discussions, appeals and applications. The intention of this is that in time the service will be able to quantify the cost of processing a planning application. The Authority is committed to participating in the second round of ‘costing the planning service’ exercise that is being promoted by Heads of Planning Scotland.

The planning function is located within Development Services, which also embraces transport, economic development, environmental protection, architecture, roads and building standards. This helps to provide an integrated ‘one-stop shop’ for developers, and fosters an integrated service to deliver sustainable economic development.

The Planning & Environment Unit continues to provide in-house expertise on landscape, biodiversity, urban design, conservation and outdoor access, which is utilised by other services, as well as providing easily accessible advice to development management.

#### Team Meetings

Development Management team meetings occur on a monthly basis and are attended by all staff. There is a clear structure to the meetings which allows for work updates and the cascade of information and performance are also discussed. The minutes are recorded and circulated to management and staff. Weekly team briefings also occur to allow for circulation of urgent information and discussion of issues.



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### Financial Management and Local Governance

Annual use of budget review templates has ensured revenue budget bids are scored against the Council's stated priorities. Priorities and objectives are aligned through the Single Outcome Agreement, Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Plan. The annual Service Performance Plan ensures staff are clear as to their day to day role in meeting Council priorities. Spend is guided by the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation and monitored by Internal Audit and the Best Value Forum.

To best utilise the enforcement resources available to the Council, the Enforcement Charter sets priorities for investigation and this is followed to ensure cases are prioritised appropriately. The Enforcement Charter was last updated in August 2012 and will be updated again prior to August 2014.

Council procurement rules and procedures are followed. Regular monitoring of budgets is undertaken between unit managers and the service accountant.

The established corporate working group continues to improve the monitoring of planning obligations, refining historical data on planning and other agreements and improving the quality of corporate dialogue and the flow of information on obligation preparation, compliance and implementation. Following a series of process meetings an enhanced spreadsheet system is now well established and the development of an integrated IT monitoring system linked to the Development Management Uniform module is underway. These improvements have been greatly assisted by a benchmarking visit and follow-up video conferences with Aberdeenshire on their progressive IT based system.



## 2 Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

#### Staff

Annual staff appraisals are mandatory and backed by Training Plans and budgets. Development Management Officers have attended external training courses and reported back to colleagues at team meetings. These courses have covered a wide variety of topics such as the ‘Design Skills Symposium Scotland’ and Young Planners Annual Conference. Development Plan officers attend a range of forums and training events to keep abreast of policy changes and best practice.

Lunch-time cross-service topic awareness training sessions are held. This has improved corporate working across services. For example case officers are now more aware of the different processes used by other authorities, for example the Glasgow Urban Model.

The Development Management Unit was the subject of an internal audit review during the reporting period. This established a number of points for improvement and funding has been provided for an officer to implement the audit recommendations and make other associated process/procedure related improvements to the service. The whole Planning & Transportation Division underwent a Reflect (Public Service Improvement Framework) review.

Staff are also copied in to round robin emails from the Improvement Service and Scottish Planning Enforcement Forum (SPEF) which encourage the sharing of good practice and answering queries.

#### Councillors

Post election planning training for Members has been undertaken. Community Council training is held annually and through Planning Aid Scotland. This has continued as newly elected Councillors become members of the Planning Committee.



### 3 Supporting Evidence and Links to Related Reports and Studies

Part 2 of this report was compiled, drawing on evidence from the following sources;

National Headline Indicators  
Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service  
Corporate Plan  
Strategic Community Plan  
Single Outcome Agreement  
Development Services Performance Plan 2013-16  
Falkirk Council Structure Plan  
Falkirk Council Local Plan  
Development Plan Monitoring Report  
Development Plan Scheme 2013  
Development Plan Scheme 2014  
Proposed Local Development Plan 2013  
Local Development Plan Action Programme  
Local Development Plan Project Plan  
Local Development Plan Stage Programmes  
Local Development Plan Progress Meeting Minutes  
Local Development Plan: Statement of Conformity with Participation Statement  
Housing Land Audit 2013-2014  
Supplementary Planning Guidance  
Draft Supplementary Guidance  
Development Plan Newsletter Spring 2013  
Development Plan Newsletter Spring 2014  
Tax Incremental Finance Initiative  
Falkirk Greenspace: A Strategy for our Green Network  
Draft Falkirk Greenspace Strategy  
Royal Scottish National Hospital Site Development Framework  
Banknock Special Initiative for Residential Led Regeneration Development Framework  
Inner Forth Landscape Partnership  
The Helix  
Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans  
Development Management Customer Survey  
Development Management Guidance Suite  
Contract Standing Orders  
Scheme of Delegation  
Development Management Internal Audit  
Falkirk Council website  
Enforcement Charter  
High Hedges guidance  
Coal authority risk assessments website

## 4 Service Improvements and Timescales 2014-2015

In the coming year we will...

Service Improvement	Timescale
Adopt Falkirk Local Plan	March 2015
Supplementary Guidance - adopt majority of SGs along with LDP	March 2015
Prepare project plan for LDP2 and incorporate programme into DPS5	April 2015
Incorporate recommendations of Communications & Engagement Review into participation statement in DPS5	April 2015
Prepare and consult on draft Open Space Strategy	June 2015
Prepare Falkirk Gateway & Stadium Development Framework	March 2015
Amend Banknock SIRR Development Framework	January 2015
Citizens Panel Development Plan Questionnaire	July 2014
Complete Town Centre Health Checks	January 2015
Update the Council Website in relation to planning matters	June 2014
Completion of Development Management Procedures Manual	April 2015
Update letters associated with validation and registration to accord with plain English	December 2014
Completion of Development Management Charter	April 2015
Set up a process for recording applications decided contrary to the Development Plan	December 2014
Produce High Hedges guidance on website	May 2014
Update letters associated with enforcement to accord with plain English	March 2015
Amend the system to allow more detailed breakdown of complaints received by and dealt with by respective units of the service.	March 2015
Allow greater access to information relating to live planning applications and extant decisions.	March 2015
Update the Planning Enforcement Charter	August 2014
Consider amending the Enforcement/Pre-application system to allow more detailed breakdown of types of notice and enquiries	December 2014

## 4 Service Improvements and Timescales 2014-2015

Delivery of our service improvement actions from the 2012-2013 Planning Performance Framework are set out below.

Committed Improvements and Actions	Complete?
Implement processing agreements: Produced internal and external guidance for staff Produced processing agreement form Encourage applicants/agent to sign up to agreements	Yes, although no agreement signed yet with applicants/developers
Determine legacy cases	Several have been determined or withdrawn. Fewer "New" legacy cases are appearing. A full review has commenced and will be completed in 2014/15.
Bring down timescales for determination of major applications	Complete and reflected in the statistics
Amend the system to distinguish between pre-application enquiries and general enquiries to allow this to be reported in the next framework	Ongoing
Implement outcome of internal audit in Development Management	Complete
Carry out Reflect exercise in Planning and Transportation division to create Divisional Improvement Plan	Complete
Implement findings of Divisional Improvement Plan above	Ongoing
Implement procedures and monitoring for developer contributions	Ongoing
Publication and Consultation on Proposed Falkirk Local Development Plan	Yes - Published April 2013, consultation complete June 2013
Undertake LDP training for Community Councils	Yes – April 2013
Submission of Proposed Falkirk Local Development Plan to Scottish Government	Yes – Feb 2014
Final approval of latest round of SPGs (Affordable Housing, Wind Energy, Denny Eastern Access Road).	Yes – June 2013
Supplementary Guidance – Publish first batch of supplementary guidance for consultation as outlined in Proposed Plan.	Yes – March 2013
Falkirk LDP Consultation Review – Review of the effectiveness of all engagement through the LDP process to learn lessons for next review.	Yes – incorporated into wider Communications & Engagement Review
Development Plan Customer Survey – survey of customers/stakeholders to assess satisfaction with our communication, processes, documents and service generally	Yes – March 2014
Final approval of Falkirk Greenspace Strategy	Yes – October 2013
Completion of Falkirk Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan	Yes – August 2013
Submission of Stage 2 bid for Falkirk THI	Yes - May 2013. Bid now approved
Submission of Stage 2 bid for Inner Forth Landscape Initiative	Yes – October 2013. Bid now approved.
Approve Antonine Wall World Heritage Site Management Plan Review 2013-2018	Yes – October 2013
Approve Antonine Wall World Heritage Site Local Action Plan	Draft prepared for October 2014 approval

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Official Statistics

Decision Making Timescale (supplied by Scottish Government)  
Further Analysis of Decision Making Timescale  
Local Reviews and Appeals (supplied by Scottish Government)  
Enforcement Activity

### Appendix 2: Workforce and Financial Information

Workforce  
Financial Information

### Appendix 3: Performance Markers

Summary of Performance Markers

## Appendix 1: Official Statistics

### Decision Making Timescales

Category	Total Number of Decisions (2013-2014)	Average Timescale (Weeks)		
		2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Major Developments</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>122.3</b>	<b>184.4</b>	<b>27.9</b>
<b>Local Developments (non-householder)</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>11.2</b>
Less than 2 months	65.9%	6.67	6.6	6.7
More than 2 months	34.1%	24.8	27.4	19.7
<b>Householder Developments</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>6.5</b>
Less than 2 months	93.4%	6.2	6.3	6.3
More than 2 months	6.6 %	18.0	14.6	9.4
<b>Housing Developments</b>				
<b>Major</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>195.5</b>	<b>185.4</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Local Housing Developments</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>15.7</b>
Less than 2 months	57.1%	6.7	7.0	7.0
More than 2 months	42.9%	27.4	31.6	26.1
<b>Business and Industry</b>				<b>-</b>
<b>Major</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Local Business and Industry</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>7.7</b>
Less than 2 months	70.0%	6.6	7.6	6.6
More than 2 months	30.0%	43.4	17.9	10.1
<b>EIA Developments</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>15.1</b>
<b>Other Consents *1</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>7.03</b>
<b>Planning/Legal Agreements *2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>127.3</b>	<b>74.9</b>	<b>38.2</b>
<b>Local Reviews</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>71.4</b>	<b>17.6</b>

\*1 Consents and certificates; Listed Buildings and Conservation area consents, Control of Advertisement consents, Hazardous Substances consents, Established Use Certificates, Certificates of Lawfulness of Existing Use or Development, Notification of overhead electricity lines, notifications and directions under GPDO Parts 6 and relating to agricultural and forestry development and applications for prior approval by Coal Authority or licensed operator under classes 60 and 62 of GPDO.

\*2 Local obligations associated with a planning permission, concluded under section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 or section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

### Decision Making : Local Reviews and Appeals

Type	Total Number of Decisions (2013-2014)	Original Decision Upheld					
		2011-2012		2012-2013		2013-2014	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Local Reviews</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>71.4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>33.3</b>
<b>Appeals to Scottish Ministers</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>33.3</b>

### Enforcement Activity

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2012-2013
<b>Cases Taken Up</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Breaches Identified</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Cases Resolved</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Notices Served***</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1*</b>
<b>Reports to Procurator Fiscal</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Prosecutions</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

\*\*\* Enforcement notices; breach of condition notices; planning contravention notices; stop notices; temporary stop notices; fixed penalty notices, and Section 33 notices.

\* The Council's system does not separate out notices other than enforcement notices. Work is ongoing to resolve this issue and will form a service improvement target.

## Appendix 2: Workforce and Financial Management as at 31st March 2013

### Workforce

Head of Planning Service	Tier			
	1	2	3	4
	-	-	1	-

	Managers		Main Grade Posts		Technician Posts		Office Support/Clerical		Total
	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	
Development Management	1	0	11	0	2	0	1.5	0	15.5
Development Planning	0.5	0	5.5	0	1	0	0.5	0	7.5
Enforcement Staff	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Cross Service/Other Planning	0.5	0	8.5	0	1	0	9.5	0	19.5

### Financial Management

Staffing Profile	Number
Under 30	0
30-39	11
40-49	13
50 and Over	19

Committees and Site Visits	No. Per Year
Full Council Committees	11
Planning Committees	14 (11 for Development Management and 3 for Planning and Environment)
Area Committees	Not relevant
Committee Site Visits	22 (7 Meetings of the Planning Committee on site)
Local Review Body	11
Local Review Body Site Visits	10

Budgets - Planning Service	Budget £	Costs £		Income £
		Direct	Indirect	
Development Management and Enforcement	£1,011,310	£728,307	£908,396	£461,174
Development Planning	£469,860	£333,834	£136,026	

### Driving Improved Performance

Performance Marker	Council Response/Evidence
Decision Making: Authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types.	The National Headline Indicators show a clear reduction in timescales for determining major, local and householder developments.
Project Management: Offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and availability publicised on planning authority website.	We take a proactive stance regarding the offer of processing agreements for all major planning applications and some complex local applications.
Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:  - Availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications. - Clear and proportionate requests for supporting information.	We continue to encourage early dialogue with applicants.
Legal agreements: Conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant'.	We now monitor progress on legal agreements to ensure they are concluded timeously. Committee recommendations include the 6 month intention.
Enforcement Charter updated/re-published.	The charter remains up to date and will be reviewed in August 2014.
Continuous Improvement:  - Show progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators. - Progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report.	Customer Survey and Communications & Engagement Review was carried out for development plan function to look at how engagement practices and techniques can be improved. Recommendations will be incorporated in the project plan and participation statement for LDP2. The Development Management Team will be implementing a cold calling process in addition to the existing customer survey.
Local Development Plan less than 5 years since adoption.	The Local Plan is less than 5 years old having been adopted in December 2010.
Development Plan Scheme demonstrates next LDP  - On course for adoption within 5 year cycle. - Project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale.	The Proposed LDP was submitted to Scottish Ministers in February 2014, in accordance with the timescale set out in DPS4 (April 2013). Forward timescales are dependent on the Examination process. In the DPS 5 (April 2015) the adoption date has been adjusted from February 2015 to March 2015, taking account of DPEA target for conclusion of examination. If Examination is completed earlier than DPEA target, it may be possible still to adopt in February 2015. The Local Plan will be replaced well within its 5 year lifespan.
Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation.	Member seminars held and briefing notes issued at key stages of the plan process. LDP Member Working Group meets as required.
Cross-sector stakeholders, including industry, agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation.	Key agencies engaged at pre-MIR stage through individual meetings and themed stakeholder workshops.
Regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through SPGs produced on:  - Information required to support applications; and - Expected developer contributions.	The Council has an extensive suite of SPGs which provide detailed guidance on information required to support applications. For example, 'Biodiversity and Development' sets out requirements for ecological surveys, appropriate assessment etc, whilst 'Trees and Development' sets out requirements for tree surveys, tree protection etc.  Several SPGs provided clear advice on required developers contributions in the key areas such as education, open space and affordable housing. These explain the basis for contribution rates. They are based on the principles in Circular 3/2012, have been subject to consultation, and are regularly updated. All have been updated since the onset of the recession and include caveats related to development viability. As part of the transition to statutory SG, all are being further updated over the course of 2014, and a further SG on contributions to healthcare is being added.
Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit.	Regular liaison meetings between planning and other services are held on housing, education and cemeteries. A regular open space liaison group is also being set up. Allied to this corporate working takes place through the Planning Obligations Monitoring group to ensure that developer contributions are taken forward and applied timeously to relevant projects.

## Appendix 3: Performance Markers

### Driving Improved Performance

Performance Marker	Council Response/Evidence
<p>Sharing Good Practice, skills and knowledge between authorities.</p>	<p>Continued attendance of staff at forums, conferences, training events, and RTPI chapter events. In particular, staff have become actively involved in the Local Authority Urban Design Forum, and have worked with other authorities and Scottish Government on the evolution of local 'Designing Streets' guidance. Use has been made of the Knowledge Hub, particularly with regard to resolution of problems and issues associated with OLDP and Uniform LDP module. On the development plan, the Council contributed to the benchmarking survey carried out in early 2014 and Development Management are committed to participating in a forthcoming benchmarking exercise between planning authorities.</p>
<p>Stalled sites/legacy cases: Conclusion/withdrawal of planning applications more than one year old.</p>	<p>Several have been determined or withdrawn. Fewer "New" legacy cases are being created. A full review has commenced and will be completed in 2014/15.</p>
<p>Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set out in development plan and</li> <li>- In pre-application discussions</li> </ul>	<p>Several SPGs provided clear advice on required developers contributions in the key areas such as education, open space and affordable housing. These explain the basis for contribution rates. They are based on the principles in Circular 3/2012, have been subject to consultation, and are regularly updated. All have been updated since the onset of the recession and include caveats related to development viability. As part of the transition to statutory SG, all are being further updated over the course of 2014, and a further SG on contributions to healthcare is being added.</p>



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