

# The Council Plan

End of Year Performance Overview  
2023/24

FALKIRK COUNCIL



# Introduction

This is a round-up of performance for Year 2 of Falkirk Council's, Council Plan.

It shows what we've done to deliver on the Council's vision, priorities and enablers.

## The Council Plan

Our Council Plan shapes the way we deliver and improve our services in Falkirk and how we are transforming and improving the council, aiming to be financially sustainable, using the skills and talents of our valued sustainable workforce.

The Council Plan 2022-2027 is Falkirk Council's main strategic plan and was approved by Council in September 2022 and refreshed after one year with approval from Council in September 2023. To reflect the current social, economic and environmental challenges that our area faces, the Plan sets out what we aim to achieve over a five year period through our vision, our values, our priorities and our enablers, to help us deliver all of this.

## OUR VISION: Strong communities where inequalities are reduced and lives are improved

### Supporting stronger and healthier communities

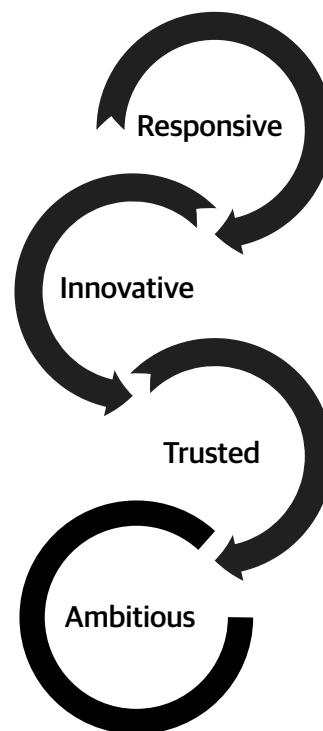
Communities that are empowered,  
inclusive, resilient, and safe

### Promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities

Educational excellence, reduce  
poverty and inequality, and improve  
wellbeing

### Supporting a thriving economy and green transition

An economy that is competitive,  
entrepreneurial, inclusive, and  
sustainable and an environment that  
we value, enjoy, protect and enhance



## OUR ENABLERS:

**Financial Sustainability**

**Transformation &  
Improvement**

**Valued Sustainable  
Workforce**



## **Falkirk Performs – Our Performance Management Framework**

The implementation of the Council Plan and the delivery of its priorities and enablers, is monitored using Falkirk Performs, the Council's performance management framework.

It helps us track the progress of the 'we will' actions, success measures and targets set in the Council Plan. It also helps us to ensure we achieve the Council's priorities and successfully deliver our enablers using robust performance measurement.

### **Success Measures and Targets**

The Council Plan's success measures are a combination of local performance indicators and selected Local Government Benchmark Framework (LGBF) indicators, which have been assigned to the 'we will...' actions in the Council Plan. These measures are reported quarterly to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and to Scrutiny Committee twice per annum.

The success measures are key to providing an assessment of whether targets are being met and there is supplementary qualitative data compiled by each service giving a fuller picture of successes and challenges within each core business area. CMT are then better able to intervene using the tools they have at their disposal (budget, staffin resources, expertise), with the aim of positively impacting performance.

# Year 2 of The Council Plan – Performance Summary

Overall Council Plan Performance: Success measures against targets at End of Year (EOY) 2023/24

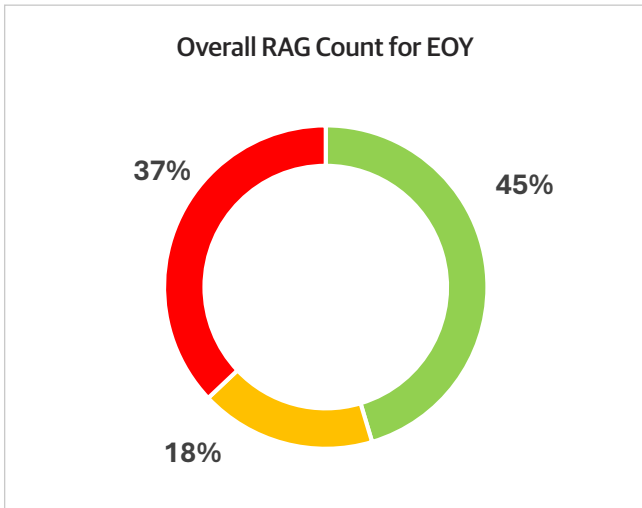
Key -

**Green:** on track or exceeding target

**Amber:** just missed target

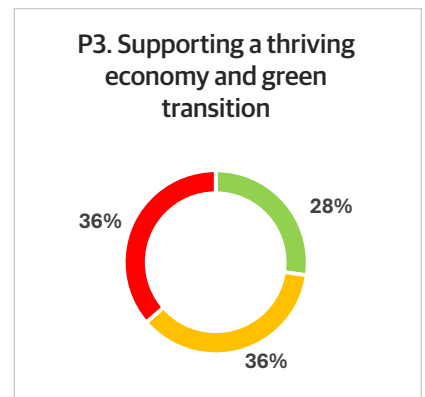
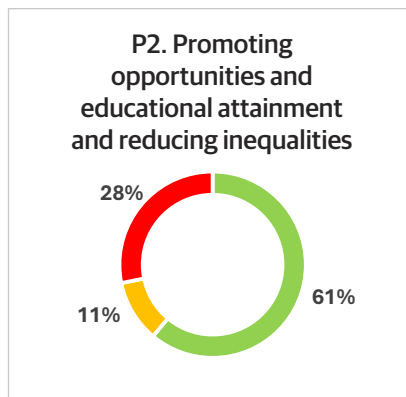
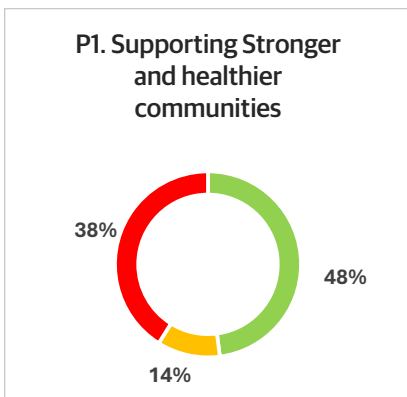
**Red:** target not achieved

The majority of success measures in the Council Plan (63%) are on track or close to being on track (45% on track and 17% just missed target) in this End of Year (EOY) report. 37% of measures were reported as falling short of target overall.



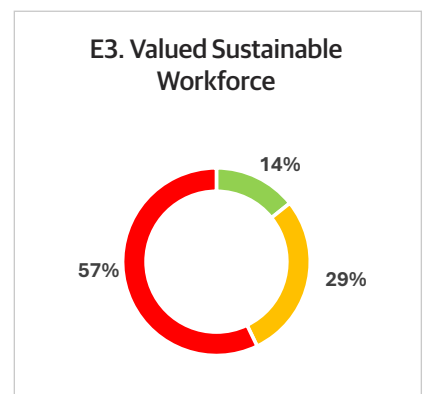
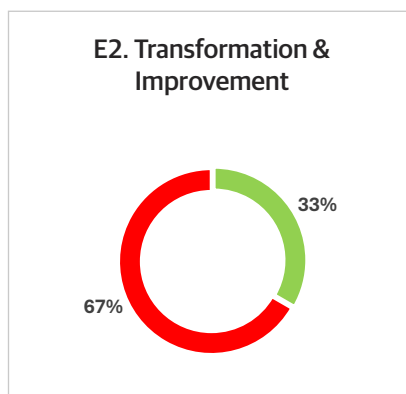
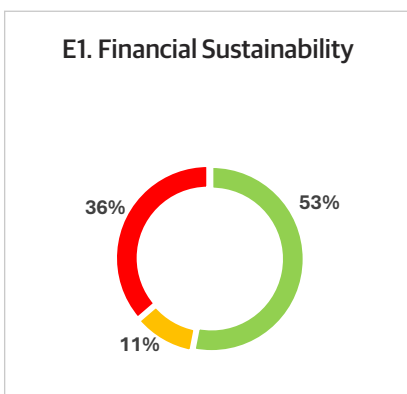
Broken down by Council Plan Priority, overall performance looks like this:

\*Percentages have been rounded



Broken down by Council Plan Enabler, overall performance looks like this:

\*Percentages have been rounded



# Priority One: Supporting stronger and healthier communities

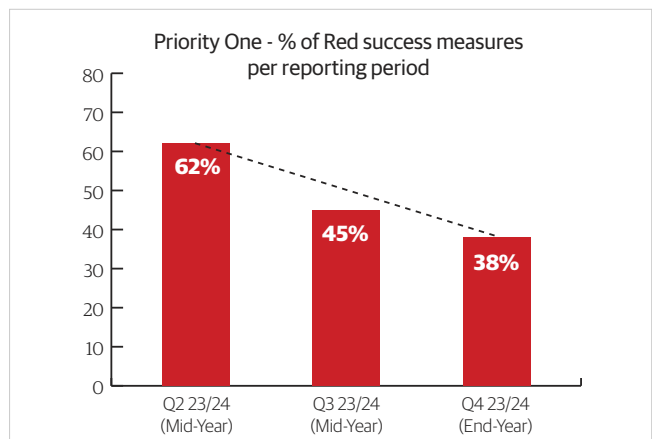
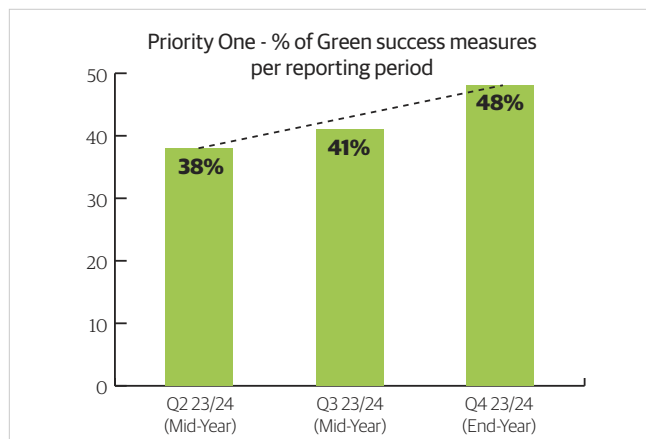
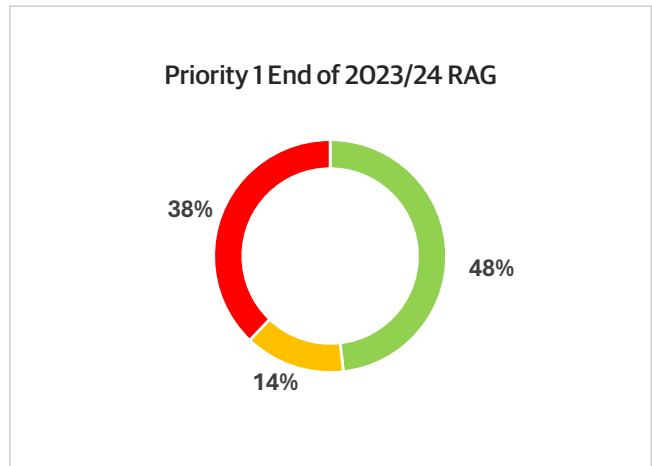
## Success measures against target at End of Year 2023/24.

Our priority is to support communities that are empowered, inclusive, resilient and safe.

After the review of the Council Plan in September 2023, the number of success measures to track our performance in supporting communities grew from 9 to 29, to more robustly scrutinise the work being done in this area.

Since the monitoring of these success measures began at the end of 2022/23, progress of performance being on track over the past year has improved, with over half of all measures for the 'Supporting stronger and healthier communities' priority reporting as on track or exceeding target.

The trend results for Priority One success measures overall are as follows:



\* The graphs are not comparative, they are illustrative of the direction of travel for each performance rating.

## How are we doing?

With a focus on a range of service areas such as housing, communities and sport and leisure, Priority One is performing well, with a steady increase in the proportion of measures reporting as green - on track - over time.



## Summary of what's gone well:

| <b>GREEN - On Track Success Measures for Priority One</b>                      |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Number of homeless presentations per annum should not exceed Scottish Average  | Number of additional affordable homes - new build   | Percentage of stock meeting Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (LGBF)  |
| Average number of days taken to complete non-emergency repairs (LGBF)*         | Undertake Organisational Health checks to identify and source training for groups and committee members, to develop skills and assist with funding applications to increase capacity and resilience | Number of people attending training/development courses   |
| Number of community asset transfers per year via ownership or lease            | Delivery of Sleep Routines and Environment Project focused on improving children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and supporting families   | Deliver Sleep Limiting Behaviours (Vaping, energy drinks, screen time) Project focused on improving children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and supporting families |
| Percentage of children on the child protection register with a protection plan | Monitor the number of Duty to Inquire for adults  | Participation with our Sport & Leisure provision  |
| Increase Income from our Sport & Leisure provision                             | 'GoCard Plus' uptake and usage within the Sport and Leisure service   | Satisfaction rating for customers using the Sport & Leisure provision   |

\*LGBF is the Local Government Benchmarking Framework, a suite of key performance indicators / success measures benchmarked against all 32 Councils in Scotland.

## Achievements

- Although the Council cannot directly control the level of homeless presentations, it is a useful benchmark against other council areas. Latest figures show the Council tracked below the national figure in 2023/24.
- Housebuilding progressed well with the target for 2023/24 being exceeded by 9 additional new build houses. The Council continues to progress new build programmes, both by the Council and other registered social landlords through our Strategic Housing Investment Programme, and the buy-back of ex-Council homes.
- The Council's target for the proportion of houses meeting energy efficiency targets was 96.8% which is above the target of 93% and the local authority average of 87.6%. This measure is part of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) where Falkirk has scored in the top 8 performing councils consistently since 2015 when the LGBF began collating the data.
- Non-emergency repairs were handled well above indicative timescales laid out in the plan at 10.1 days against the target of 12 days demonstrating considerable performance improvement year on year (the 2021/22 figure was 17 days) and just below the Scotland figure of 9.7 days.
- A Policy Development Panel was formed in December 2023 to develop a new Engagement and Consultation Strategy for the Council. The Communities team has led this, with significant consultation underway with communities, groups and stakeholders to deliver a new strategy for 2025.
- The Communities Team successfully launched the new digital engagement platform, Participate Plus, in September 2023. There are now over 7000 newly registered users with 28 consultations published on the platform. Organisational health checks are delivered by Community Learning & Development and introduced across groups also applying for funding and

Community Asset Transfer. Targets for both of these measures have been reviewed for 2024/25 to reflect the level of engagement now achieved and to stretch the target accordingly. Health checks can identify and source training for groups and committee members, to develop skills and assist with funding applications to increase capacity and resilience. Training and development opportunities continue to be offered through the Community Development Team (capacity building), through the Joint Working Agreement with CVS Falkirk (Governance), and through the UKSPF grant programme (Community Asset Transfer).

- The Empowering Communities Fund (part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) distributed over £170,000 to community groups including start up grants for new community projects, revenue grants of up to £8,000 for established community groups and grants of up to £12,500 for groups considering Community Asset Transfer of Council properties.
- Two projects focussing on improving children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and supporting families. Both projects are progressing well and will close in Q1 2024/25. The Sleep Routines and Environment project is running in pilot Primary Schools over P5-7 classes and is intended to have a positive impact in reducing screentime, increasing physical activity levels and reducing the use of energy drinks. The Sleep Limiting Behaviours (vaping, energy drinks, screen time) project outcomes will include developing a series of improvement projects focused on various areas of health and wellbeing to be progressed in the next school year.
- The percentage of children on the Child Protection Register with a plan continued to report at 100% across the whole of 2023/24.
- Adult social care is provided by the Health & Social Care Partnership. A basket of adult protection success measures has been included in the Council

Plan including 'Monitor the number of Duty to Inquire for adults'. The measure looks to record the number of referrals to look at reports of concern. Some of these reports will be categorised as having a 'Duty to Inquire' and some will be taken even further with an investigation. In Q4 2023/24 there was a change in the referral recording practices which has impacted the score. Had the previous referral methodology been in place the number of 'Duty to Inquire' cases recorded would have been above the 85% target but as it stands the result for Q4 2023/24 was 64.79%. This success measure will be reviewed for 2024/25 due to these changes that are impacting nationally.

- The Sport and Leisure Council of the Future Project delivered £250k savings in 2023/24, with more to come. The work of the past year has, in part, culminated in the Executive's decision to approve a [strategy of major upgrades to sports facilities](#). Proposals include the creation of a centrally located leisure and wellbeing centre which aim to address the deteriorating condition of existing venues and ensure continued service delivery to the community. The measures in the Council Plan pertaining to the Sport and Leisure service are performing well and achieving targets. The GoCard concessionary card can be used throughout our leisure and culture facilities for free or discounted access to a range of our services and activities helping to break down the barriers to accessing healthy activities in the local area. Supporting students, those over 65 and people in receipt of specific benefit (who may be experiencing poverty) the number of GoCards issued exceeded target with 5,965 against a target of 3,750. This was largely due to free swimming being offered plus the widening of eligibility criteria for the GoCard programme. Income targets for the Sport & Leisure service were exceeding across three of the four quarters in 2023/24 with the result overall coming in at £5.96m against a target of £5.56m. The number of people satisfied with the service was also on target with a Net Promotor Score (NPS) of 76 against the target of 67 in Q4 2023/24 (and consistent performance across the year at quarterly intervals).



## What we are focussing on:

| <b>RED – Missed Target Success Measures for Priority One</b>                      |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Average number of days to secure permanent housing from date of homeless decision | Total Housing Advice Interviews  | The average void property turnaround time  | Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids (LGBF) |
| Percentage of Stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (LGBF)          | Establishment of Community Anchor Organisations increases across the life of this plan | Number of community participation requests   |  |
| Percentage of Child Protection Planning Meetings held within 28 days              | Monitor the number of Investigations for adults (Health & Social Care Partnership)     | Monitor the number of Interagency Referral Discussions (IRD's) for adults (Health & Social Care Partnership) |  |

## Challenges

- At the end of the 2023/24 reporting period, eight individual councils had declared a housing emergency (across 2023 & 2024) with the Scottish Parliament also declaring a housing emergency on 15th May 2024. Falkirk Council has not taken this action but is impacted by the same pressures as those declaring a housing emergency. The Council is covered by the overarching Scottish Parliaments declaration. To declare a local emergency brings no additional funding or resources to the Council to address the issues associated with it. The declaration reflects the fact that people are unable to access affordable accommodation, with rising levels of homelessness, more people in temporary accommodation, rising rents in the private sector, and rising property prices in general. As per Elected Member update in August 2024, comprehensive consultation commenced 8th July to review the Housing Allocations Policy. This review will ensure that those in greatest housing need are housed as quickly as possible, including discharging our legal duties to those who have been assessed as homeless. A revised policy is anticipated to be in place by April 2025.
- The 'Total Housing Advice Interviews' figure is indicative for now, pending Scottish Government validation. The annual indicative figure is 691, against our annual target of 1430 and the measure therefore reports as 'red' or 'missed target'.

However there has been a significant shift in the focus / purpose of the interview with this change in approach occurring during the reporting period of 2023/24. Interviews are now very much focussed towards the prevention of homelessness and therefore a reduction was to be expected. This reduction is reflected in the target set for this measure going forward into 2024/25.

- A revised Void Standard was introduced in June 2024 on a 'test of concept' basis. The aim of the new standard is to reduce the time any property is void, and to have the property let at an earlier stage than the Council is working to at present. This includes actions to reduce the non-essential work undertaken while properties are void. Any work which would fall within the normal list of non-essential repairs, can still be reported by the incoming tenant and will be undertaken as part of the normal repairs schedule. This lets new tenants get into properties at an earlier date. The revised standard does not detract from the Council's ambition that 98.6% of housing stock should meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (LGBF) and efforts continue to improve the current performance level of 70.10% which is very slightly below the Scotland figure of 70.9% and below our Council Plan target of 98.6%.





- A reallocation of staff within the Building Maintenance Division (BMD) who normally work on repairs, will now work on void repairs. This should also support a reduction in the time properties are vacant. It will also help to reduce the current spend on external contractors. Emergency repair response times are expected to drop from 3 hours to 4-5 hours however service levels will continue to meet the targets published to tenants.
- The ongoing work in the Service will make a positive contribution towards the performance of the measure that focusses on 'Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids (LGBF)' where Falkirk's performance of 2% against the target of 1.6% was below expected levels but an improvement both on prior year and in the Scotland ranking position of one place moving us from 21st in Scotland to 20th.
- In consultation with the Scottish Community Development Centre a definition for Community Anchor Organisations was developed. This definition has been agreed and work is under way to recruit Community Anchor Organisations based on this definition with the intended outcome of creating meaningful opportunities to shape and influence council decision making through effective consultation. The Communities team are reporting real progress and expect to confirm the action against this target in quarter 1 of 2024/25.
- The Council Plan target is to hold 75% of Child Protection Planning meetings within 28 days. As soon as the decision is taken to progress to a Child Protection Planning meeting an interim safety plan is put in place for the protection of the child. There are a number of challenges that can impact the ability to hit the 28-day target including coordinating a number of key participants that are external to the Council to attend, such as parents and agencies, despite best endeavours of Officers. This is further impacted by ongoing staff level pressures internally.
- Two measures relating to the Health and Social Care Partnership have been reported as 'red' or not hitting target. It is difficult to accurately report on these due to the changes in the referral recording practices that are impacting nationally. 'Interagency Referral Discussions (IRDs)' reported a performance of 9.8%, falling short of the 15% target. Similarly, investigations for adults did not meet the 40% target, achieving 17.9%. These measures are under review for 2024/25.

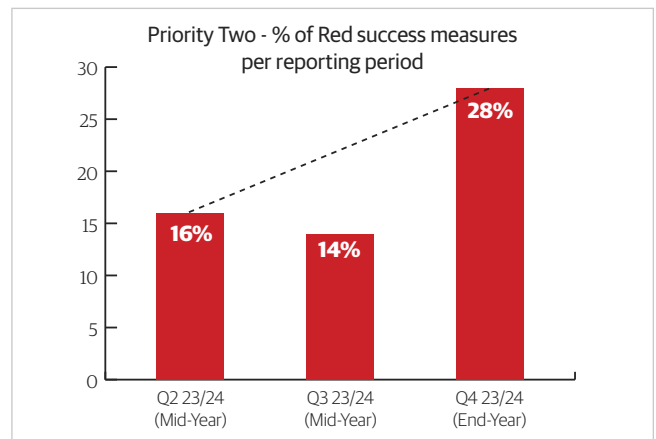
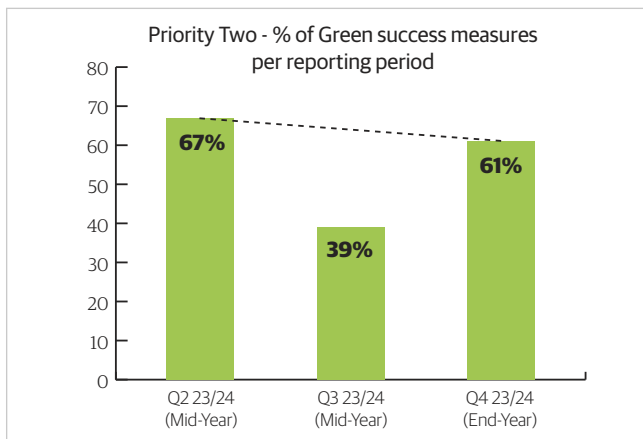
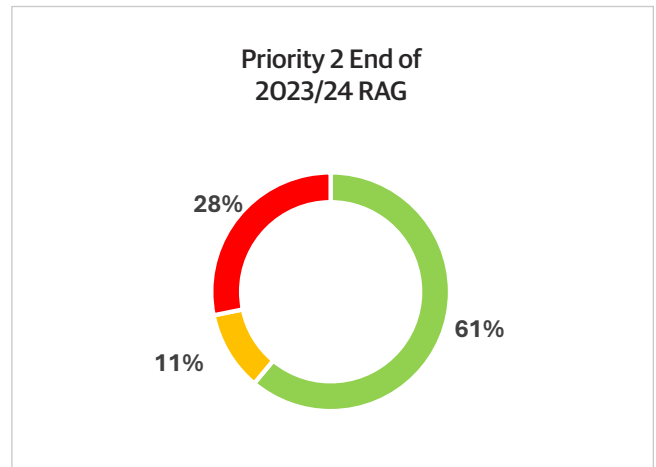
# Priority Two: Promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities

Success measures against target at End of Year 2023/24.

Our priority is to deliver educational excellence, reduce poverty and inequality, and improve wellbeing

After the review of the Council Plan in September 2023, the number of success measures to track our performance in promoting opportunities and reducing inequalities grew from 20 to 28, to more robustly scrutinise the work being done in this area.

The trend results for Priority One success measures overall are as follows:



\* The graphs are not comparative, they are illustrative of the direction of travel for each performance rating.

## How are we doing?

With the addition of new success measures in September 2023, over half of the success measures for this priority are green (on track or exceeding target). Priority Two performance has seen an improvement during 2023/24, with an 22% positive shift shown between Quarter 3 and of End of Year results. Although the proportion of red results is increasing, Priority Two has 28% not achieving target at the end of quarter 4.

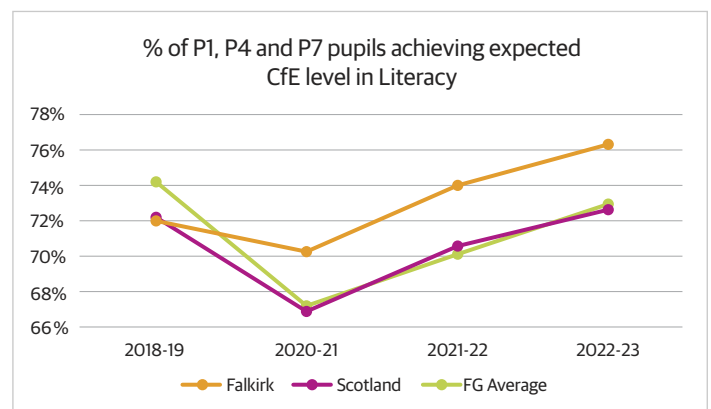


## Summary of what's gone well:

| GREEN - On Track Success Measures for Priority Two  |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy (LGBF)   | Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy (LGBF)                | HMIe Inspection Report Score of good or better  |
| Increase the educational attendance of all school aged looked after and accommodated children   | Proportion of Pupils Entering Positive Destinations (LGBF)   | Increase the number of young people completing & receiving national awards or wider achievement awards through CLD activity |
| Number of individuals attending IT support sessions in libraries (support)  | Increase the number of unique clients accessing pc, internet and WiFi sessions in libraries (connectivity) | Increase the number of public space Wifi location   |
| All decision-making reports to the Council, Executive and Education Children and Young People Executive are supported by an Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) | All Elected Members and Senior Officers to complete Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) Training   | Increase the percentage of staff (Tier 4) who have completed Basic Equalities Training                                      |
| Financial gain for households with children   | Percentage of Kinship Carers offered benefit maximisation assessment                                       | Proportion of people earning less than the living wage (LGBF)   |
| Claimant Count as a percentage of Working Age Population (LGBF)   | Increase the number of new foster care placements  |   |

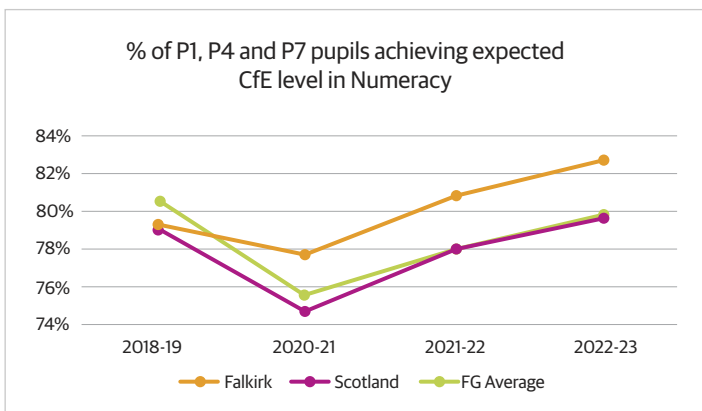
## Achievements

- Over 40% of the success measures in Priority Two are focused on education. It is important to recognise the time lag that exists with the LGBF results - these results are for 2022/23 and published in 2024 (actual results for the 2023/24 period will not be published until Quarter 1, 2025). Nevertheless, the results are a very important tool for the Council when benchmarking nationally overall and against councils with similar socio-economic profiles (the Family Group) and worthy of inclusion in the Council Plan. Falkirk Council performs particularly well in attainment success measures against the 'Scotland' benchmark and consistently ahead of our assigned Family Group. It should also be noted that the targets in the plan are under review by the Director of Education and Heads of Service and any changes to targets will be published in the autumn.
- The recent [School Leaver Destinations and Attainment \(SLDA\) 2022/23 report](#) to Scrutiny, details the attainment of young people leaving Falkirk Council's secondary schools within the 2022/23 academic year.
- Raising attainment in Literacy is a priority for Falkirk Council schools. Improved literacy, in turn, allows young people to access the full curriculum and move on to positive destinations.
  - Falkirk primary schools have sustained positive performance in Literacy. The latest figures were 3% above our Family Group average and the Scottish average.



- Senior Phase (S4-S6) Performance in 2022/23 dropped slightly compared with last years, however Falkirk outperformed or equalled the Virtual Comparator (VC), the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC), and the national scores across all Literacy metrics. The percentage of young people leaving school in Falkirk with at least level 4 Literacy (96%) is above the VC (93%), the RIC (95%) and national average (94%). The 2022/23 figure for Level 5 Literacy has increased compared with last year's figure (84%), it is in line with the Forth Valley and West Lothian RIC and ahead of both the VC and the national average. When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk is in 4th place for attainment of Level 4 Literacy. This places Falkirk in the top quartile of all local authorities in Scotland for this measure. For level 5 Literacy, Falkirk ranks 7th in Scotland, placing us in the top quartile of all Local Authorities in Scotland. Schools have achieved this improvement in literacy through a focus on developing literacy across the Curriculum led by school appointed Literacy Leads and through the work of Secondary Principal and classroom Teachers of English. There is a continued focus on literacy through the 'Service Support and Challenge Visits'. Improvements in tracking and monitoring of pupil progress and cluster approaches to developing literacy has also contributed to this area of improvement. Falkirk Council officers continue drive forward Literacy through professional learning both locally and nationally.

- Numeracy remains a key skill for young people in learning, life and work and in combination with literacy, is linked to positive outcomes for young people.
  - Falkirk primary schools have sustained positive performance in numeracy. The latest figures wer 3% above our Family Group average and the Scottish average.



- In 2022/23, 96% of all school leavers had achieved at least a level 4 award in Numeracy. This was 1% lower than last year's highest ever figure and is above the VC (90%), the RIC (93%) and national average (90%). In 2022/23, 78% of all school leavers had achieved at least a level 5 award in Numeracy. This is a decrease of 2% from last year's figure, but once again the Falkirk figure is above the VC (70%), the RIC (74%) and national average (71%). When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk is once again in 3rd place for both attainment of Level 4 Numeracy and in 3rd place for Level 5 Numeracy. This places Falkirk in the top quartile of all local authorities in Scotland in both of these measures. The Service continues to work with schools to increase staff understanding of progression in mathematics and numeracy across the early years, primary and secondary sectors. There is a continued focus on numeracy through the Service 'Support and Challenge Visits'. This will continue to support pupil progress in numeracy, from the early years through to the point of exit from school. Schools are encouraged and signposted towards the professional learning offer both locally and nationally.

- The number of HMle inspections with results rated as good or better was 100% in 2023/24. Altogether there were eight schools inspection reports published in 2023 -2024. All achieved inspection evaluations of good or better.
- Collaboration between schools and social work has enabled interventions to be explored for pupils who have concerns around their attendance. The appointment of a dedicated Care Experienced Attainment Lead is ensuring that we closely monitor attendance concerns and make good use of the additional Family Support Worker that is also dedicated to care experienced families across all sectors. Secondary schools have strong Pastoral Teams who have been working very hard to engage care experienced pupils in their learning.
- Positive Destinations: Falkirk schools have demonstrated an improving trend over the past 14 years. When ranked against other Local Authorities in Scotland, for the 2022/23 leavers cohort Falkirk ranks 16th in Scotland for positive leaver destinations (up from 26th last year). This places Falkirk in the second quartile in Scotland. In 2022/23, 1766 young people left Falkirk Council secondary schools – 270 at the end of S4, 548 in S5 and 948 in S6. The percentage of Falkirk leavers in a positive destination measured at this time was 95.4%. This is a 1.2% increase from the previous year's figure of 94.2%. In response to last year's Scottish Leaver Destination & Attainment Report (SLDR) of 94.2%, Education and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) convened a Working Group, with representatives from all partners who contribute to our Leavers' Destinations

(schools, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Forth Valley College (FVC), Employment and Training Unit (ETU), Education Team Manager and the Performance Data Team). A range of actions were secured, and processes tightened, resulting in this improvement in our Scottish Leaver Destination Return as published in February 2024.

- The Community Learning & Development (CLD) Team aim to increase the number of young people completing & receiving national awards or wider achievement awards through CLD activity. Targets for 2023/34 were exceeded despite challenges in staffing levels in the team.
- Delivery of our new 5 year strategic plan for libraries progressed well with three out of four targets for 2023/24 being exceeded. Additionally, 'Words for Wellbeing' won the COSLA Chairperson's award, recognising the impact this project has on the wellbeing of people within our library communities. Every day the service is visited by 2,665 people and 742 of those use the internet/computer. 1,318 books are borrowed, 105 people attend an event, 38 people take part in a Bookbug session and 20 people who are housebound receive a visit with some books. 1,794 e-newspapers and e-magazines are accessed and 25 practice driving theory tests are taken.
- The Council intention to improve connectivity in the area was supported by a number of measures in the Council Plan to drive this forward. Last year saw a 30% increase in library visits and a 103% increase in the number of individuals accessing computers, internet and Wifi. This shows the vital role libraries play in providing a safe welcoming space for everyone and addressing digital exclusion within our communities. The roll out of the public Wifi project to three sites across the Falkirk area also completed in 2023/24 with all targets achieved.
- The 2023 refresh of the Council Plan brought three new success measures designed to drive compliance with Equalities legislation. Although completed in 2023/24 these measures will continue to track in the Council Plan to ensure requirements continue to be met. Between January and March 2024, nine Equalities and Human Rights interactive workshops were delivered. Attended by 79 people the sessions covered basic Equalities training and how to approach Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA). During the sessions feedback on the current impact assessment process was gathered. This has been used to inform a review of the process and system. The recommended improvements resulting from this review are now being considered for implementation. The Equalities and Human Rights working group was re-established in January 2024 to oversee our approach to equalities and human rights. Since January 2024 the group has considered Equalities Monitoring, implementing children's rights and refreshed impact assessment guidance.





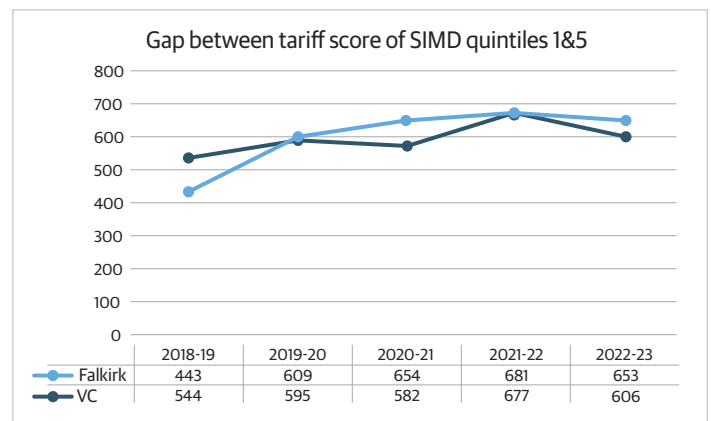
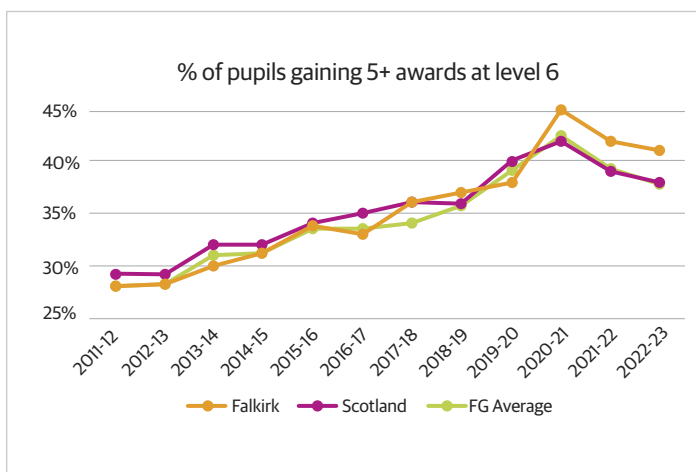
- The Council is committed to maximising income of the people who live in the area and teams across the Council work hard to point people towards the services we provide in this area. During 2023/24 we achieved the following outcomes from combined efforts across the Council and partners to tackle poverty:
  - Increased take up of Council Tax Reduction – Falkirk had the highest increase in Council Tax Reduction claims in Scotland (November 2022 to November 2023) at 5.03% compared to a national increase of 1.03%.
  - Client gains of more than £7.2m through our Community Advice Service in 2023/24.
  - Year on year growth of free period product provision, with 6,276 online orders in 2023/24 (154% higher than baseline 2021/22).
  - Improved staff awareness of poverty and how to help - Think Poverty awareness sessions (attended by 276 people in 2023/24).
  - Total amount of debt reported 2023/24 £6.6m supporting 1,263 clients with debt support and advice compared to previous years £5.2m 2022/23 support 891 clients.
  - Scottish Child Payment for 0-15 year old children in Falkirk was 89% as compared to the national average of 83% November 2023.
  - The Council Plan measure 'Financial gain for households with children' final figures became available in August 2024 and show that the target of £1.73m for the year was exceeded with the final figure reported as £1,845,323.20 of additional income found for families with Children's Allowance to the work done by the Benefits Team working with families in the community to maximise household incomes and reduce Poverty.
- A system has been introduced to ensure that every Kinship Carer is offered a referral for income maximisation assistance. This is working well with 100% success rate in 2023/24.
- The Council includes socio-economic measures in the Council Plan in order to benchmark the Council's performance in these areas in comparison to the 'Scotland' figure and our Family Group of similar Councils. The Council does not explicitly have the ability to directly influence these measures, yet it is useful to track them and benchmark where the Council sits against other councils. Measures such as the 'proportion of people earning less than the living wage' and 'Claimant Count as a percentage of Working Age Population' are both performing within expected levels and slightly better than the assigned Family Group within the LGBF.
- The Council continues to experience the nation-wide issue of aiming to recruit new foster carers. Once new potential carers are identified, the process of assessment and approval can take upwards of six months. The team continue their sustained efforts to recruit new foster carers through advertisement and running preparation groups to maintain motivation of prospective carers and to prepare them for the assessment process.

## What we are focussing on:

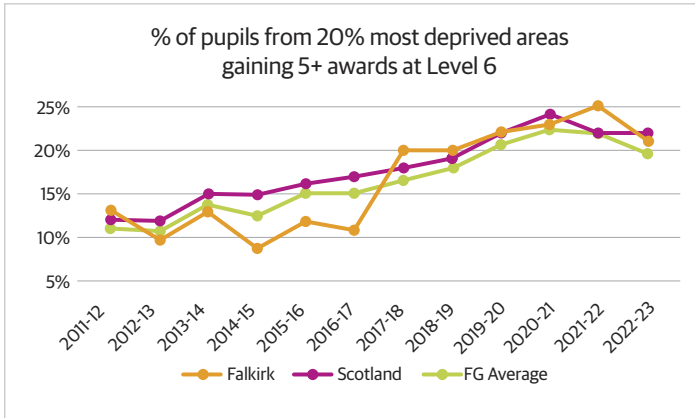
| <b>RED - Missed Target Success Measures for Priority Two</b>                                   |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| Percentage of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 6 (LGBF) | Percentage of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5 (LGBF) | Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6 (LGBF)   | Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5 (LGBF)  |
| School Attendance Rates (per 100 pupils) (LGBF)  | Percentage of Looked After Children entering positive destinations                             | Increase the number of children/young people/adults with improved health & wellbeing outcomes through CLD activity | Percentage of unemployed people assisted into work from Council operated/funded Employability Programmes (LGBF) |

## Challenges

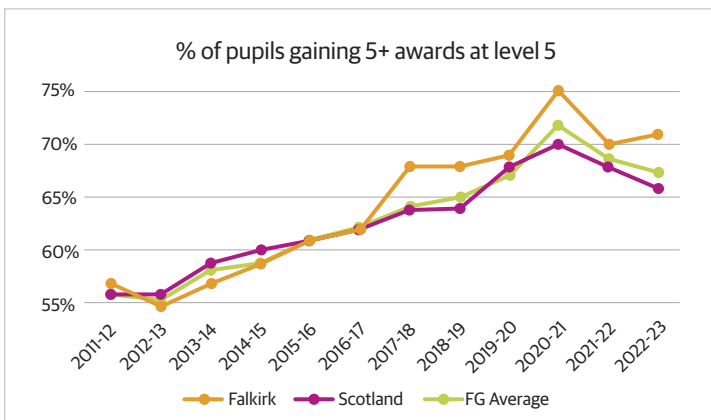
- Tackling disadvantage and closing the attainment gap are key priorities both nationally and for Falkirk Council schools. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) allows local authorities to analyse attainment in relation to deprivation. By doing so, schools can more clearly identify where intervention is required.
- Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6 – this LGBF measure includes all senior phase pupils S4-S6. Our LGBF Family Group and the Scottish Average showed the same pattern of a sharp rise in 2020/21 and then a fall in 2021/22 and again in 2022/23. Both the LGBF Family group and the Scottish average fell to below pre-Covid levels in 2022/23, whereas Falkirk's 2022/23 performance was 3% higher than pre-Covid performance.
- Percentage of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards. The chart below shows the poverty related attainment gap between pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland (quintile 1) and pupils living in the 20% least deprived areas of Scotland (quintile 5). The data shows that the gap between the most and least deprived leavers narrowed in 2018/19 but has increased since, almost certainly due to impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the economic context. However, it has narrowed again this session by 28 tariff points compared with the previous session.



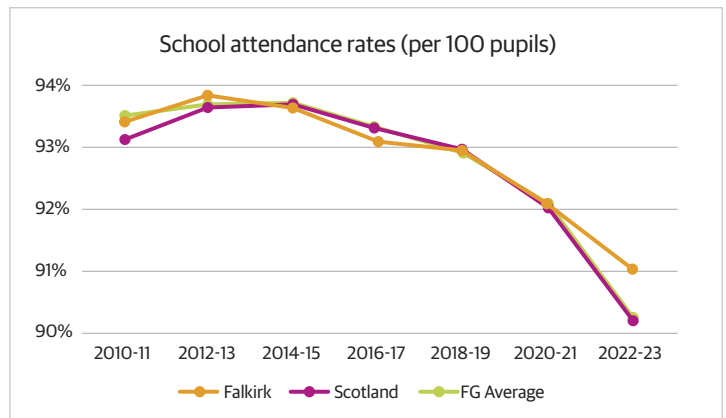
- Percentage of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 6 – this LGBF measure includes all senior phase pupils S4-S6. Although there has been a drop from 2021/22, which our best performance so far, performance in this indicator is higher than pre-Covid levels.



- Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5 - this LGBF measure includes all senior phase pupils S4-S6. Apart from one year - 2020/21, which used the alternative certification model devised for COVID-19, Falkirk's performance in this measure is at its highest level yet - 4% above the LGBF Family Group average, and 5% above the Scottish average.



- School Attendance Rates (per 100 pupils) - Nationally, school attendance rates have fallen in recent years. Figures for 2022/23 (latest national data available) are approximately 3% lower than pre-Covid levels. Schools are more focussed on attendance this academic session due to the national drop in attendance post covid. A Power BI attendance 'dashboard' has been developed to allow Headteachers to monitor attendance more closely. This resource further enhances the attendance research and strategy developed by the Forth Valley & West Lothian Collaborative. Schools are supporting pupils to attend school and working with families to ensure any barriers are addressed where possible.



- The latest data available for monitoring the proportion of school leavers with care experience entering positive destination after leaving school is 71.43% for 2022/23. Like the LGBF data, the data for this success measure is always a year behind (2023/24 data available in February 2025). Considerable work is underway with a variety of partners and local data for 2023/24 appears to show improvements having positive impact on this figure.
- Our Community Learning & Development (CLD) department is currently in a transition period as a result of restructure and subsequent reductions in staffing including the Strategic Lead for CLD. Similar pressures are felt across the wider partnership which meant that the target for the success measure focussed on improved mental health & wellbeing outcomes for children / young people and adults (as a result of CLD activity) was not met due to data collection challenges across the CLD Partnership. Given the challenges outlined above, Falkirk's CLD Collaborative will review targets in the future.



- Even with current efforts, poverty in Falkirk and across the UK remains stubbornly high, with one in four children in Falkirk living in relative poverty after housing costs. This is largely due to income from benefits not keeping up with rising costs of living, as well as stagnant wages growth (in real terms), high energy costs and high housing costs. Whilst the Council can work with partners locally to have some impact (for example, by supporting people to maximise benefit take up), we cannot mitigate against global issues and do not have the legislative powers or budget needed to lift people out of poverty at scale (for example, increasing the level of benefit payments).
- There have been more clients using the Debt Advice Service for support due to cost of living crisis. Following engagement with more than 100 people with lived experience of poverty or supporting people experiencing poverty, a new Anti-Poverty Strategy was approved by Council and the Community Planning Partnership in Quarter one of 2024/25.
- The measure which monitors the 'Percentage of unemployed people assisted into work from Council operated/funded Employability Programmes' did not meet the target set in the Council Plan of 22% (LGBF latest data 2022/23). However, the measure has consistently performed better than our assigned Family Group for the past few years and only slightly behind the Scotland figure in 2022/23. Mitigating employability and wider covid recovery actions resulted in a significant improvement in employment outcomes in 2021/22 as the labour market recovered from the pandemic and the vacancy rates increased, prior to a tapering off to more sustainable levels in line with normal averages in 2022/23. This is also due to the fluctuating levels of unemployment and rise in levels of economic inactivity, locally. Falkirk also exceeded the Scottish level in respect of employment conversion rates in 2022/23 with the ETU in-year start to employment conversion rate achieving 41.21%.



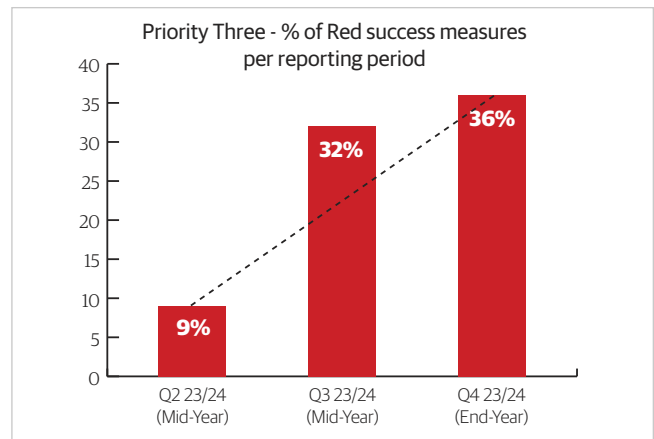
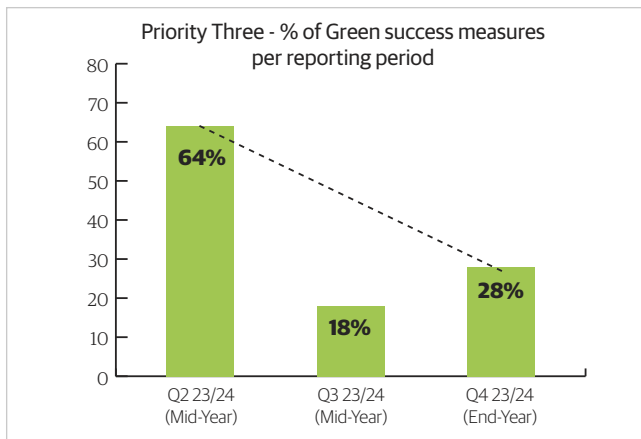
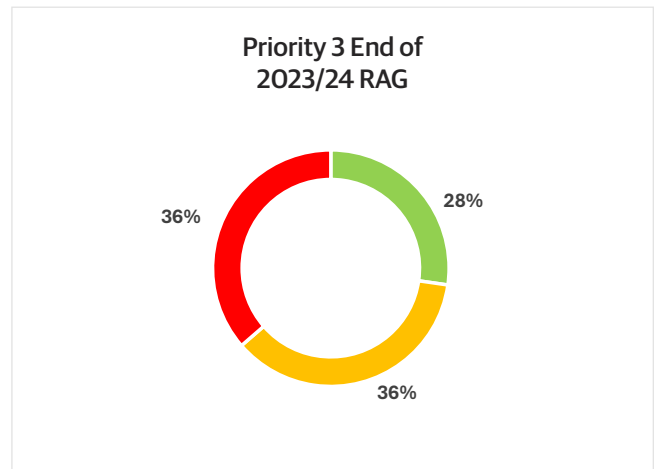
# Priority Three: Supporting a thriving economy and green transition

## Success measures against targets at EOY 2023/24

Our priority is to build an economy that is competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable and an environment that we value, enjoy, protect and enhance.

After the review of the Council Plan in September 2023, the number of success measures to track our performance in supporting a thriving economy and green transition grew from 19 to 22 (with a further 8 related measures in the financial sustainability enabler) to more robustly scrutinise the work being done in this area.

The trend results for Priority Three success measures overall are as follows:



\* The graphs are not comparative, they are illustrative of the direction of travel for each performance rating.

## How are we doing?

With the addition of three success measures in September 2023, the proportion of measures reporting as on track or exceeding target has increased since Quarter 3 in 2023/24. However, there is work to be done to improve the performance of 64% measures which are currently reporting as amber/red.



## Summary of what's gone well:

| <b>GREEN - On Track Success Measures for Priority Three</b>                         |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Percentage of programmed budget spent in the Council's Capital Plan                 | CO2 emissions from Fleet  | Percentage of our vehicle fleet that are zero emission vehicles  |
| Percentage of overall carriageway length to be considered for maintenance treatment | Residents within Forth Valley that are within a 10-minute walk from a publicly accessible EV charge point | Percentage of properties that require an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and have a rating of D or better |

## Achievements

- In 2023/24 the Council spent 93% of its capital budget (2023/24 target was 90%). This was continued improvement in an area that was as low as 60% in 2021/22 and reflects a proactive approach towards strategic investment allocation and monitoring through the Strategic Asset Modernisation Board (SAMB) led by the Director of Place and Chief Finance Officer:
  - The **Falkirk Town Centre Development Masterplan** was approved in August 2023. The proposed masterplan defines and describes how the town centre could potentially change over the next 10 to 20 years, taking into account the challenges and pressures the area faces and the opportunities that the new town hall will bring.
  - c£520k of capital spent on significant play renewal projects at Muiravonside Country Park, Southview, Laurieston Public Park, Anderson Park, California Park and Laurie Park.
  - Executive agreed the Council's LHEES (strategic framework to improve energy efficiency and decarbonise heating across Falkirk area).
- The Council added 53 new electric vehicles in 2023/24 to the Fleet. These were a mix of cars, small vans and large vans covering varying council services. In addition, in February the milestone of one million miles travelled in our electric vehicles. This contributed to a 21% reduction in emissions from vehicles. Fleet continues to make great progress in reducing emissions. This is through the continued investment in HVO coupled with the fleet replacement programme.
- The target for our road network is to achieve the Scottish Average or less for 'Percentage of overall carriageway length to be considered for maintenance treatment' with performance recorded as 32.73% against a target of 34%. This has been achieved due to a £7m investment in Roads in 2019/20 approved as part of the Council's budget and has allowed Roads additional spend on capital resurfacing schemes over the last 3 years covering a substantially larger area of the network than baseline budgets allow.
- The target for 'Residents within Forth Valley that are within a 10-minute walk from a publicly accessible EV charge point' was met (15%).
- Percentage of properties that require an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and have a rating of D or better achieved the target set out in the Plan. There may be no movement on this measure as EPCs are required, by law, to be updated every 10 years so could be some time before we have any further progress.

## What we are focussing on:

| <b>RED - Missed Target Success Measures for Priority Three</b> |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| Town Vacancy Rates (LGBF)                                      | Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (LGBF) | Percentage of procurement spend spent on local enterprises (LGBF)   | Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use (LGBF)       |
| CO2 emissions from operational buildings                       | Biodegradable waste sent to landfill      | Percentage of progress toward the Council's net zero target by 2030 | Percentage of progress toward the 2030 Falkirk area-wide interim carbon reduction target |

## Challenges

- The cessation of a number of external funding schemes such as the Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme, Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Placed Based Investment Programme restricts opportunity to invest in our local area for regeneration and sector growth. Our target of 14.0% for 'Town Vacancy Rates' was narrowly missed with the 2022/23 (latest available data) result coming in slightly above at 14.7%. Nevertheless, this result is on par with pre-Covid levels and ahead of the Family Group figure of 16.2% (although behind the Scotland figure of 17%).
- Employment levels continue to be a challenge as we come out of a recession and businesses continue to experience the effects of high inflation and borrowing costs. The measure 'Gross Value Added per capita' is impacted by a number of factors not directly in the control of the Council however it is a useful metric to monitor as part of the basket of LGBF measures selected by the council in order to benchmark against others. Performance has declined since 2021/22 slightly and is not yet back to pre-covid levels. Our ranking in the list of Scottish Councils performance is exactly at the mid-point where we are ranked 16th in the country.
- The Corporate Procurement Unit figures show a year-on-year increase in local spend and local spend as a percentage of influenceable procurement spend. During 2022/23, the Council's total influenceable spend equated to £275.1m. The Corporate Procurement Unit calculate that the Council spent £95.3m with local enterprises, which equated to 34.6% of the influenceable spend. On the same basis of calculation, the percentages of spend with local enterprises for the preceding four years were 31%, 33%, 34% and 34.2% respectively. The Corporate Procurement Unit will liaise with the Improvement Service to understand the divergence of calculation that shows the Council failing to hit this target (with a published result for 2022/23 of 27%) while continuing to work hard to encourage spend with local enterprises.
- The LGBF measures 'The proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use'. The Council's Strategic Property Review will rationalise the operational estate and have a positive impact on this measure as part of a phased approach. It is anticipated performance will improve in future years due to the impact of these plans moving us from current performance levels of 85.3% (target was 89%). The Council currently ranks at position 21 (of 32) councils in Scotland. However, when comparing with our assigned Family Group we are only very slightly behind their reported figure of 85.9%.

- Our emissions from operational buildings only reduced by 1% from 2022/23 to 2023/24. Whilst our energy consumption has reduced overall year-on-year, the emissions factor used to calculate emissions from consumption for electricity was increased by 7%. This meant that although overall consumption had decreased, the emissions arising from that consumption was calculated higher than previously expected. Overall Falkirk Council's emissions decreased by 24% from 2022/23. Whilst there is still work to do to meet target, this is the single biggest in-year reduction made since emissions reporting started in 2014/15. The main reason for such a significant annual reduction was due to the residual waste contract, as much of the residual waste is no longer going to landfill but is instead incinerated and used for energy.
- Although narrowly missing our own internal target for the household waste recycling rate (Biodegradable waste sent to landfill), the Council returned a rate of 51.4% which is still a notable improvement from the previous period. Since October 2023, the Council has not sent any Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) to landfill. The zero target for 2023/24 was not met due to the new contractual arrangements not commencing until late in the year, but this should be met for 2024/25. The Council is one of the first authorities in Scotland to secure a non-landfill solution for its residual waste and is also one of the few authorities in Scotland which is fully compliant with the requirements of the biodegradable landfill ban, effective from 1 January 2026.
- The Capital budget remains a challenge for Falkirk Council to meet our 2030 organisational net zero target, there is not sufficient capital resource to ensure that all of our operational buildings are energy efficient and run on zero direct emissions heating systems.
- The most recent figures available from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero cover the calendar year 2022 (2,207kt CO<sub>2</sub>e). Falkirk's area-wide emissions decreased by 2% from the previous year, driven by a reduction in industry generated emissions, which make up around 63% of the total area-wide emissions. Without major reductions on this front, we will continue to not meet area-wide targets for 2030 (65.1% against a target of 72.6% in the Council Plan for 2023/24). Through national initiatives such as energy network improvements and carbon sequestration, and local projects such as the Forth Green Freeport, Growth Deal, SPR, our fleet decarbonisation programme and various improvements in how to deal with waste, we will see further reductions in industry related emissions and this will have a positive influence on reaching the longer term 2045 net zero target area wide.

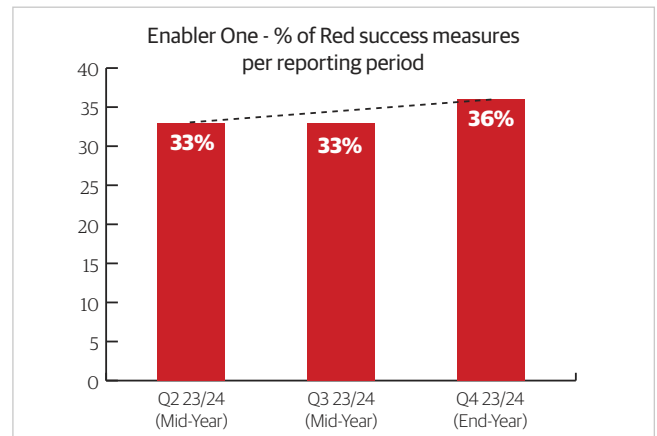
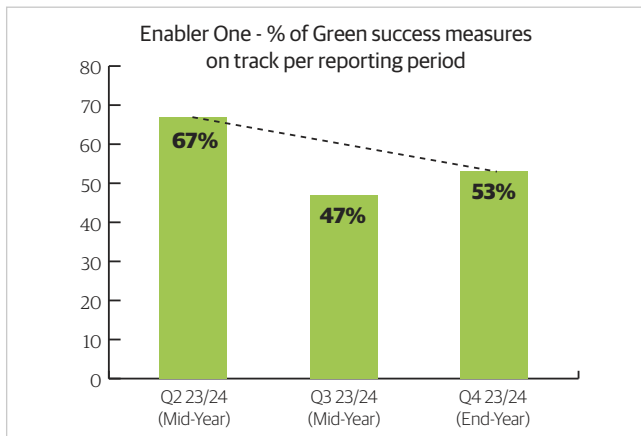
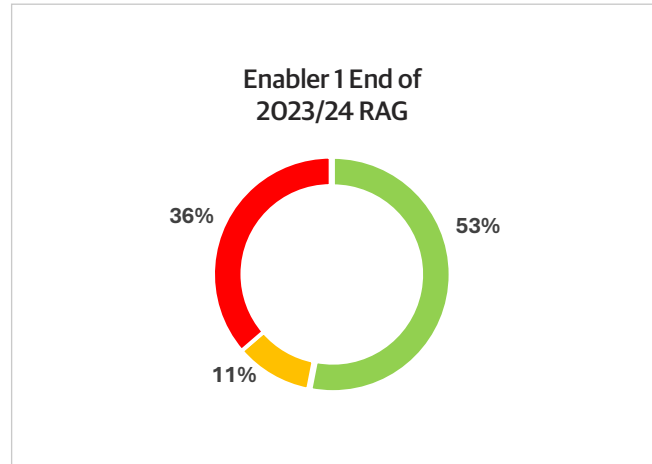


# Enabler One Performance: Financial Sustainability

## Success measures against targets at EOY 2023/24

Financial sustainability means having short, and long term, financial stability. After the review of the Council Plan in September 2023, the number of success measures to track our performance in Financial Sustainability grew from 3 to 19. These were split into two areas. 11 measures focus on operational measures spanning across many council services in the organisation. The remaining 8 measures focus on a range of strategic measures which monitor the decisions made within the financial strategy such as the way the Council intends to allocate budgets (and whether we are meeting these ambitions).

The trend results for Financial Sustainability success measures overall are as follows:



\* The graphs are not comparative, they are illustrative of the direction of travel for each performance rating.

## How are we doing?

This enabler has over 50% of measures reporting as on track and a further 11% having just missed target. The proportion of measures that are not hitting target has been fairly consistent across the period although is increasing slightly at year end 2023/24.



## Summary of what's gone well:

| <b>GREEN - On Track Success Measures for Enabler One</b>   |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Healthy and efficient use of reserves – maintain reserves within the range of the general fund reserves policy | Ratio of general fund income that is used to fund borrowing costs from capital investment (LGBF) | Support services as a percentage of total gross expenditure (LGBF)               |
| The cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax (LGBF)   | Percentage of income due from Council Tax received by the end of the year % (LGBF)               | Cost of trading standards and environmental health per 1,000 population £ (LGBF) |
| Net waste disposal cost per premises (LGBF)  | Road cost per kilometre £ (LGBF)   | Cost per attendance of sport and leisure facilities (LGBF)                       |
| Cost per library visit (LGBF)  |  |  |

## Achievements

- In September 2023 the [Falkirk Council Financial Strategy 2024/25 - 2028/29](#) was approved by Council. The Finance Team firmly recognise the priorities set out in the Council Plan and have concentrated efforts to further strengthen links between the priorities and the [2024/25 Annual Revenue Budget](#) which was approved in February 2024.
- During 2023/24 the Audited Annual Accounts for 2022/23 were approved with clean audit certificate, as expected.
- 2023/24 expenditure (subject to audit) was reported to the Executive in June 2024. The initial outturn shows that spend was £5.8m less than budgeted. However, £9.6m of non-recurring funding was required to balance the position.
- Across 2023/24 period the Finance team delivered a programme of training sessions with Elected Members – including Treasury and wider budget issues.
- 'Healthy and efficient use of reserves – maintain reserves within the range of the general fund reserves policy' performance achieved target at 2.5% (target 2%). The latest report estimated that the Council had an unrestricted reserve of £11.8m, within the Council's strategic policy range of £8.5m-£12.4m at March 2024. Final accounts will be confirmed in the autumn.
- The success measure in the plan 'Ratio of general fund income that is used to fund borrowing costs from capital investment' is not given a target as such, but the budgets as currently approved by Members as part of the General Fund. The issue is not about meeting a specific target but rather ensuring that the level of investment and borrowing is affordable and sustainable going forward. The current capital strategy projection is that the percentage will increase over the next five years. This is because of the increase in borrowing to support the Capital Programme which this will lead to more borrowing costs. At 2.1% of its revenue budget being used for borrowing costs Falkirk Council has a lower amount than the Scottish average (5.4%). However, increasing borrowing and debt levels, reduces the revenue budget available on day-to-day expenditure. Levels of affordability will be unique for individual councils and so the national average cannot be used as a target.
- There are a number of 'operational' measures from the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) included in the plan that the Council monitors and benchmarks against other Scottish Councils. The following measures met or exceeded target:
  - Support services as a percentage of total gross expenditure
  - The cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax
  - Percentage of income due from Council Tax received by the end of the year
  - Cost of trading standards and environmental health per 1,000 population
  - Net waste disposal cost per premises
  - Road cost per kilometre
  - Cost per attendance of sport and leisure facilities
  - Cost per library visit.

## What we are focussing on:

| <b>RED – Missed Target Success Measures for Enabler One</b>   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Reducing reliance on non-recurring reserves to balance the budget gap over the period of the financial strategy     | Ratio of housing income that is used to fund borrowing costs from capital investment (LGBF) | Percentage of savings delivered in year                          |
| Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year (LGBF) | Cost of Planning & Building Standards per planning application (LGBF)                       | Cost of Parks and Open Spaces per 1,000 of the Population (LGBF) |
| Cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population £ (LGBF)   |   |  |

## Challenges

- Scottish Government Grant is projected to be flat cash over the next 5 years, although costs are increasing in line with inflation, creating a funding gap of c£62m (as per last reported figure).
- There are high expectations of service delivery in comparison to the funding envelope available.
- It is becoming increasingly challenging to identify savings options.
- 'Reducing reliance on non-recurring reserves to balance the budget gap over the period of the financial strategy'. For the 2024/25 revenue budget approved in February, £22.5m of non-recurring reserve (service concessions) were applied to balance the budget, an increase of £7.2m from 2023/24 budget. The advice to Members is that it is clear that this cannot continue. The position in 2024/25 was impacted by some late changes and correspondence from the Scottish Government. However, the budget book did provide models for how the Council can get to an improved position over time.
- 'Ratio of housing income that is used to fund borrowing costs from capital investment' is not given a target as such, but the budgets are approved by Members as part of the General Fund and Housing Investment Programmes. These indicators do not show targets, but the performance against budgeted figures. The current housing investment strategy projection is that the percentage of borrowing costs that will need to be funded from revenue will increase over the next five years. This is because of the increase in borrowing to support the Capital Programme which this will lead to more borrowing costs. Falkirk Council Housing Revenue Account has a lower amount of its revenue budget being used for borrowing costs than the Scottish average. However, levels of affordability will be unique for individual councils and so the national average cannot be used as a target. For this indicator, the issue is not about meeting a specific target but rather ensuring that the level of investment and borrowing is affordable and sustainable going forward. In the current housing investment strategy, the percentage is set to increase significantly over the next five years. However, the Council will need to balance delivery of housing improvements with budget challenges.
- There are a number of 'operational' measures included in the plan that the Council monitors and benchmarks against other Scottish Councils. The following measures did not meet target but are scrutinised quarterly by the Corporate Management Team via quarterly reporting and are currently under consideration:
  - Percentage of savings delivered in year
  - Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year
  - Cost of Planning & Building Standards per planning application
  - Cost of Parks and Open Spaces per 1,000 of the Population
  - Cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population £.



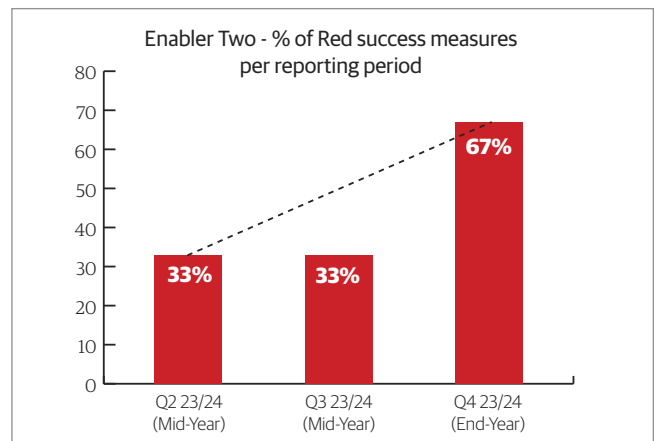
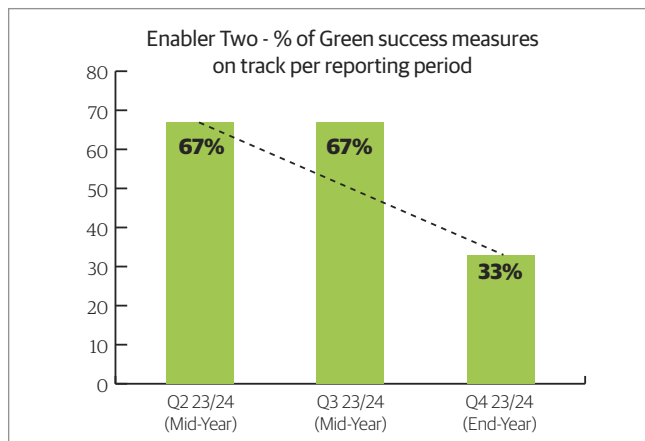
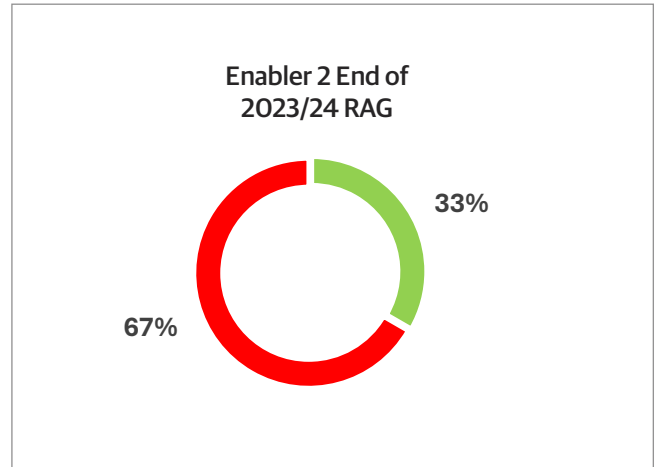


# Enabler Two: Transformation and Improvement

## Success measures against targets at EOY 2023/24

Council of The Future (COTF) is the Council's main transformation programme. The three measures in this enabler have been in the plan since its inception and remain unchanged. The COTF Board tracks Council transformation projects through to completion and the measures here are designed to assess the success of the Board.

The trend results for COTF success measures overall are as follows:



\* The graphs are not comparative, they are illustrative of the direction of travel for each performance rating.



## How are we doing?

Any change to a status of a measure impacts the tables above significantly due to only having three measures in this enabler in total. The reduction was due to the 'Percentage of projects that have clear benefits which can be measured' measure moving from 'on track' in Q3 to 'target not achieved' in Q4 2024/25.

The Council approved an updated Financial Strategy in September 2023 for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29 setting out how priorities aligned with the budget. The council has identified approximately £38 million of recurring savings through transformation, fees and charges. The Council of the Future (COTF) programme sets out the Council's ambitions for transformation and improvement. The £38 million savings noted above includes £31 million savings to be delivered by the COTF programme over the next five years.

## Summary of what's gone well:

### GREEN - On Track Success Measures for Enabler Two

Percentage of projects monitored and reported

## Achievements

- The Council of the Future (COTF) change programme in 2023/24 saw the completion of core projects in Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services and Place Services. Based on 2023/24 project monitoring and reporting (100% against target) the following achievements can be charted:
  - Libraries Project: delivered £371k in savings and refreshed the library service with a strategic plan and structure to deliver the necessary outcomes. The project involved engaging with staff, local citizens and community organisations to be responsive to needs and proactive in providing information, resources, support for literacy and reading, culture and creativity, digital skills, social inclusion, mental health and wellbeing and warm welcoming community hubs.
  - Waste Review (1) Project: delivered £775k in savings. The project reviewed and implemented changes within the waste service to ensure the Council remains in line with the national code of practice (following ratification of Scottish Government circular economy bill and to reflect on new national schemes such as the deposit return scheme which changes how the waste service operates). The project delivered changes to underpin the Council's ambition to move towards net zero and transform service delivery to generate financial savings and meet legislative obligations.
  - Zero Based Budgeting Transport Project: completed in 2023/24. For 2022/23 the project delivered £500k of efficiency from various workstreams including reduced employee travel expenses, cheaper fuel costs following electrification of fleet, reduced hire costs and other areas.
- The overall savings attributed to the transformation programme for 2023/24 is c.£4.8m.
- The progress of the transformation programme was also noted in the Council's [Best Value report](#) (considered by Council in June 2024), in which the Accounts Commission remarked on the strengthening of the Council of the Future Board to "ensure the delivery of the Council's transformation programme and the associated savings".
- To ensure that the programme remains on track to deliver meaningful transformation and significant savings, a COTF self-assessment exercise was undertaken, which recognised the need to continue with the rigorous approach taken by the COTF governance framework.
- It continues to provide sound governance support for political decision making, which has underpinned key projects over the course of 2023/24 including the Strategic Property Review, Sport and Leisure Project and consultations on Education services.
- From a wider Education perspective, due to the senior leadership team re-structure, an opportunity was taken to re-profile Children's Services' projects and the impact of this will be reported as part of the COTF governance framework.

What we are focussing on:

### RED - Missed Target Success Measures for Enabler Two

Percentage of projects delivered on time and on budget

Percentage of projects that have clear benefits which can be measured



### Challenges

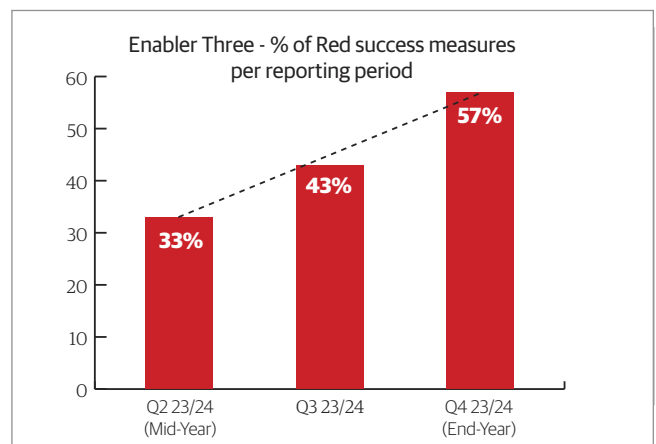
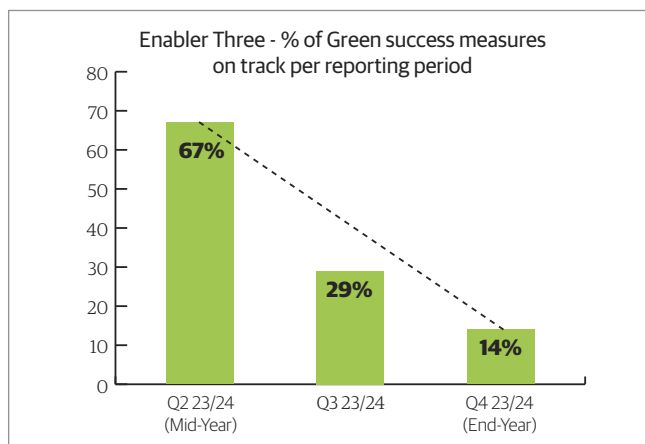
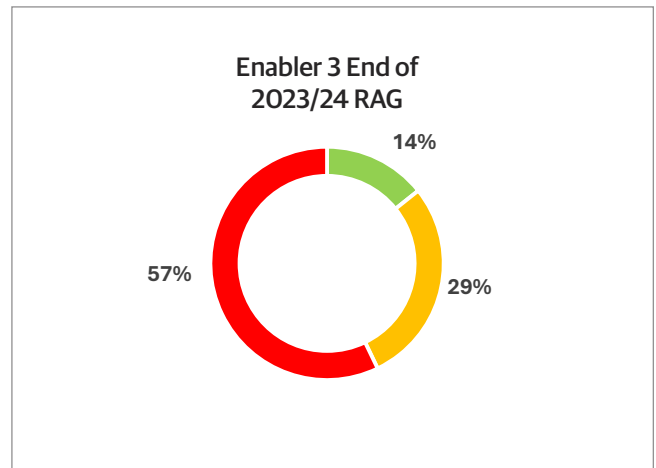
- Ensuring the ongoing delivery of the COTF transformation programme is critical. The COTF Board will continue with focused efforts to give projects the right focus by continuing to consider the barriers to projects being delivered on time and take the necessary supportive action, at the right time, to keep the programme on track and deliver projected benefits.
- As reported to Council in February 2024, the Revenue Budget 2024/25 and Financial Strategy reflected that in previous years the Council allocated £1m to the Change Fund to support delivery of COTF projects. The COTF Board utilise this funding arrangement as required during 2024/25 for required resource allocation across the change programme. However, demand for resource has been lower than anticipated. It was agreed that the balance of the existing Change Fund will be transferred to the Spend to Save reserve and the recurring allocation would be released back to the General Fund, helping to reduce the funding gap.
- Work is underway to make sure all projects have up to date project plans and financial profiling, this includes the recently reprofiled education projects, with a focus on delivering on time and on budget. Work will be done to assess future transformation projects and to horizon scan across other organisations to learn from their work, to support the Council's Financial Strategy.

# Enabler Three: Valued Sustainable Workforce

## Success measures against targets at EOY 2023/24

In order to have a Valued Sustainable Workforce the Council needed to embed new ways of collaborative working, providing our employees with the tools and support they need to deliver quality services and deliver upon the priorities and commitments in the Council Plan. After the review of the Council Plan in September 2023, a number of success measures were added to track the response to a basket of measures from our Employees Pulse Survey increasing the number of indicators here from 3 to 7.

The trend results for Valued Sustainable Workforce success measures overall are as follows:



\* The graphs are not comparative, they are illustrative of the direction of travel for each performance rating.

## How are we doing?

The three original measures in this enabler focus on staff turnover and absence. These have been fairly consistent since the inception of the Plan with a slight decline in the absence excluding teachers measure at end of year. Performance for this enabler is largely due to the inclusion of the Employee Pulse Survey measures which were added in September 2024. The survey took place in January 2024 and has still to be repeated after an appropriate interval. Officers are working hard to ensure improvement actions are implemented prior to the next survey which is due in early 2025 which should see a positive impact on this enabler overall.





## Summary of what's gone well:

### GREEN - On Track Success Measures for Enabler Three

Staff turnover rate

## Achievements

- In September 2023 the Council's revised Workforce Strategy and Workforce Plan were approved by Council and are part of the Council's strategic planning and management framework. The Workforce Strategy supports delivery of the Council Plan, within the financial context in which we work. The Strategy provides a framework for future changes within our workforce to ensure we have the right people in the right place at the right time.
- A Council wide and Service Workforce Plans flow from the strategy, identifying key actions to address and respond to the challenges and changes we make to deliver on our priorities. Workforce Plans for 2023/24 were developed and are currently being refreshed for 2024/25.
- **Best Value Thematic Review of Falkirk Council**, for 2023/24, focused on Workforce Innovation and the accompanying action plan was agreed at Audit Committee in June 2024 and was positively received.
- Staff turnover rate continued to fall within the expected levels set out in the plan and continue to perform well below the national average.

**What we are focussing on:**

| <b>RED - Missed Target Success Measures for Enabler Three</b> |  |
|---|--|
| Sickness absence percentage EXCLUDING teachers                | I know where to find support for my personal wellbeing |
| I feel involved in making change happen where I work          | My team are communicating well and staying connected   |

**Challenges**

- Overall, the Best Value Thematic Review of Falkirk Council, for 2023/24 was a positive reflection of the challenges and progress that we have made across our workforce however a number of improvement actions were identified and work on these has been scheduled into our future work plans.
- As part of the review of the Workforce Strategy and developing our new workforce action plans for 2024/25, it is evident that our workforce challenges remain consistent for the coming years, with recruitment and attraction being one of the main challenges identified by managers and value and recognition raised by our employees as part of the employee experience work undertaken. An additional Human Resources Officer Full Time Equivalent (FTE) role has been agreed to assist in the management of absence cases across the Council and recruitment is underway.
- All Services are due to review their Service Workforce Action Plans. The recommendations from Audit Scotland will be built into this review. Workforce Planning Employee Focus Groups will be set up within each Service along with workshops to support the review and development of their plans during August / September. Draft Service Workforce Action Plans are to be produced by October 2024 with the Corporate Workforce Plan scheduled to be developed by the end of the year. As part of the review of the Corporate Workforce Plan, consultation will take place with Trade Unions on the draft plan. In addition, the Plan will be made available to all employees to submit views and comments prior to submission in line with the latest employee survey where we fell short of meeting targets for 'I know where to find support for my personal wellbeing', 'I feel involved in making change happen where I work' and for 'My team are communicating well and staying connected'.
- Service Workforce Action Plans will include an assessment of hybrid working, with a survey to fully assess the impact of hybrid working from both an employer and employee perspective by March 2025.
- In response to the Best Value review, an assessment and action plan will be developed to support a transition of skills across the workforce to bridge gaps identified, by December 2025. As part of this process, an assessment of good practice on skills assessments. A number of new recruitment and retention initiatives have been developed and work will commence on reviewing these techniques. In addition, performance measures will be reviewed to ensure they align with challenges and issues identified along with results from the latest employee experience survey.



# Conclusion

Our Council Plan priorities set out our commitment to improving services for customers, within the financial parameters of our Financial Strategy.

Our performance management approach helps us do this, as it ensures we remain focussed on what is important to our service users and communities and that we provide efficient and effective services.

We have put in place systems and processes that enable us to make decisions based on sound data, track our progress and achieve planned developments to services and performance.

Our performance reporting journey continues for the lifespan of the Council Plan, with the next public performance report reflecting the mid-year progress status for 2024/25.

