

Falkirk Council

Best Value thematic management report

Transformation: how councils are redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes



Prepared by Audit Scotland
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Key messages

- 1 The council is in the third wave of the Council of the Future transformation programme. The programme and individual projects are aligned with the council's priorities and financial plans, with transformation and improvement considered an enabler in the Council Plan. Due to this there is not a separate overarching transformation plan.
- 2 Information on individual projects which currently make up the Council of the Future programme and savings achieved through previous waves of the programme are available and are reported to the Council of the Future Board. However, there is a lack of transparency as this information has not been published externally.
- 3 The council faces a £58.5 million funding gap between 2025/26 and 2029/30. Previous waves of the Council of the Future programme and other council decisions have already achieved savings and changed service delivery. However, the financial challenge remains significant and the council will need to be ambitious and radical to continue to respond to this challenge.
- 4 The council has strong officer-led governance arrangements in place to monitor transformational activity through the Council of the Future Board. The council has effective arrangements in place for reporting progress on transformational activities to the senior leadership team, but there is scope to improve how progress is reported to elected members. The recently appointed Performance and Planning Manager is considering how transformation is reported through the performance management framework.
- 5 The transformation programme is well-resourced and frequently monitored. The council is in the early stages of moving away from a central Programme Management Office to one where there are project officers with relevant expertise relating to the project area and based within services.
- 6 The council engages with communities but it is not always clear how the engagement has influenced changes to service design. The council has recently implemented an updated approach to equality and poverty impact

assessments but the extent to which these are informed by engagement with communities varies.

- 7 The council acknowledges that more work could be done with partners on transformation projects as this has been very limited to date and there are no examples of projects which are jointly funded. Work has commenced in partnership with Clackmannanshire Council to review opportunities for future transformation, but this is at a very early stage.
- 8 Impact reporting is carried out internally through project workbooks and project closure reports, but public impact reporting is limited.

Introduction

1. Transformation is about radically changing how councils operate and deliver services to achieve planned outcomes in a financially sustainable way ([Transformation in councils](#), Accounts Commission, October 2024). The [2023 Local Government Overview \(LGO\)](#) notes that councils have never faced such a challenging situation. Service demands have increased after the Covid-19 pandemic and funding is forecast to reduce in real terms.

2. The Accounts Commission's Transformation in councils report recognises that, while work has been ongoing in relation to local government transformation for decades, a step change is required and the pace and scale of transformation must increase significantly. Transformation, through greater collaboration with partners, will be key for councils to deliver more sustainable service models in challenging financial climates.

3. This report sets out how the council is redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes.

4. [The Accounts Commission's Strategy \(2021-26\)](#) sets out its priorities to focus on inequalities, funding, communities and recovery. The [Code of Audit Practice](#) sets out the Best Value work required to report on these priorities.

5. This report covers the thematic aspect of the Best Value audit requirements. The Commission has directed auditors to report on transformation and how councils are redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes. In carrying out the work, auditors have considered the following questions:

- To what extent does the council have clear plans for transformation that link to its priorities and support long-term financial sustainability?
- To what extent do the council's programme management arrangements facilitate effective oversight of its transformation plans?
- To what extent are partners and communities involved in the development and delivery of the council's plans for transformation?

- To what extent has the council considered the impact of its transformation activity, including on vulnerable or protected groups?

6. An improvement action plan is included at Appendix 1 of this report. This sets out audit recommendations in key areas, and the council's planned response including responsible officers and dates for implementation.

7. The coverage of the work is in line with the expectations for council's arrangements for the seven Best Value themes in the [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, Best Value Statutory Guidance 2020](#) and we have considered the Accounts Commission's transformation principles set out in [Transformation in councils](#).

Principle	
Vision	<p>Have a clear vision that sets out the intended end state of any transformation activity, focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering large-scale recurring savings or generating income for the council, contributing to its longer-term financial sustainability • improving outcomes for citizens in line with council priorities • taking a whole-system approach to see and realise opportunities both within councils and more widely • meeting the needs of the people who use services and reduce inequalities • focusing on preventative activity, where applicable, to reduce the demand for services and to make them sustainable in the longer term.
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear on the scale of the change required and ensure transformation plans are sufficiently ambitious to credibly respond to the scale of the challenge. • Commit staff with appropriate skills, time, and resources to ensure transformation occurs at the scale and pace required and that there is enough capacity for the changes to be embedded. • Be clear about the timescales, costs, outcomes, and anticipated impacts of transformation projects. • Show urgency and progress projects at pace without compromising appropriate governance on projects.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear process for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting progress. • Put in place effective governance and escalation processes so that the transformation activities are well managed in their own right, but also able to be given priority alongside other business-as-usual activities.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop better working relationships with communities and/or partners to achieve a sustainable model of service delivery. • Actively consider the opportunities offered by regional or national sectoral collaboration, or by integrating services locally with partners, or by supporting individuals and communities to achieve desired outcomes in place of an existing service. • Learn from good practice across Scotland and beyond.
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new ways of thinking, including innovation, creativity and a desire, willingness, and action to change and do things in new and different ways that achieve the outcomes needed. • Embed the right culture and behaviours to manage change and help maximise the contribution of all the team.

Transformation planning

8. The council needs to ensure it can deliver sustainable services now and in the future, and difficult decisions will need to be made to achieve this. The Accounts Commission's [Local government budgets 2024/25](#) briefing noted that the cumulative funding gap of all councils between 2025/26 and 2026/27 is £780 million. This means that, cumulatively, councils need to identify and deliver recurring measures such as savings or increased income of five per cent of their overall revenue budget to be financially sustainable in the short term.

Findings	Evidence
<p>The council has a well-established transformation programme in place, Council of the Future, which is linked to its Council Plan priorities and financial strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council of the Future (COTF) transformation programme has been in place since 2017 and is currently in its third wave of projects. • The council does not have a standalone transformation plan but has embedded transformation and improvement in the Council Plan. Transformation and improvement is considered one of three 'enablers' which should support the delivery of the council's vision and priorities. There is also a link between transformation and the financial strategy. • In the Best Value Assurance Report published in 2022, several recommendations were made around COTF, including ensuring there was a focus on transformation projects which will deliver savings. The council reviewed the COTF programme and removed elements that did not add value and set criteria for projects to be included. • The programme now differentiates between transformation projects and improvement projects. Transformation projects aim to deliver significant financial and transformation benefits, whilst improvement projects are efficiency and improvement projects which deliver a mix of efficiency savings and drive continuous improvement.

The council has projected a budget gap of £58.5 million over the next five years. The council aimed to deliver £26 million of savings through the COTF programme over this period.

The council reports savings on COTF projects to the COTF Board but there is a lack of transparency with these savings not being published more widely.

- The council has projected a budget gap of £58.5 million between 2025/26 and 2029/30.
 - In the council's [Controller of Audit Report](#) published in May 2024, there was a recommendation that the council needs to identify further savings and take difficult decisions to ensure it can bridge its projected budget gap.
 - Previous waves of the COTF programme have focused on generating efficiency savings and have included an analogue to digital telecare project, developing an online school payment system, introducing an online health and safety system for reporting workplace incidents and a single managed structure for all staff involved in clerical / administration support services.
 - The council planned to save £26 million from the COTF programme over the five-year period to 2028/29. Savings plans have subsequently been revised to £14.7 million over the same period as a result of the decision not to progress with the learning week project and other projects within the programme. The council therefore needs to be more ambitious and look at alternative ways to make more radical changes and generate further savings required to address the financial challenge.
 - In the 2025/26 budget, £10 million of recurring savings have been approved for the year. This includes £5.8 million relating to operational savings and £4.1 million of savings that had been approved through earlier reports to Committee. These include COTF projects, such as the Strategic Property Review and significant decisions such as the closure of a school.
 - The 2025/26 budget paper included seven savings proposals totalling £1.2 million to be considered. Only one of these savings, amounting to £0.06 million, was approved by members. This package of savings proposals was prepared at short notice due to members not approving alternatives previously presented. The council plans to review these, and if appropriate, present again to members at a future date.
 - The council has introduced a new approach to self-assessment which aims to identify some 'quick wins' for services and to identify transformational projects that could be added to the COTF programme. The pilot is currently focusing on transport and digital.
 - There is a lack of information in the public domain about what savings have been achieved through the COTF programme over previous years. There have been no closure reports published at the end of each wave to give an overview of this.
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Findings	Evidence
<p>There is a lack of transparency around the aims of individual projects which make up the Council of the Future Programme. The council's transformation projects have to comply with a set of criteria to be included in the programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wave three of the programme started in 2022. There are currently 11 projects in the programme for the 2025/26 financial year. There were initially 13 projects planned for 2025/26 but two projects have been removed due to decisions made by elected members and Scottish Government policy. These projects related to primary and secondary school reviews. • The aims of individual projects making up the COTF programme are only reported internally to the council and are not publicised. • All projects have to comply with specific criteria, such as: supporting one of the three Council Plan priorities; generating savings of more than £0.25 million in the first 12 months or £0.5 million within 24 months; and having support from the Corporate Management Team or the administration. The savings achieved should also be recurring. It is considered good practice to have specific transformation criteria for projects and more information on the criteria set by Falkirk Council is provided at Exhibit 1. • Project workbooks are completed for each project to support delivery. These provide a summary and scope of the project, how it links to the Council Plan priorities, details of finances and a project plan. The workbooks also help to track and report on project progress and performance throughout the project. • The council uses a gateway process to ensure that each project has been properly evaluated, planned and delivered at key points.

Recommendation 1

The council should clearly set out the savings delivered through the COTF programme in its future reporting.

Exhibit 1

Criteria for Transformation Projects set by Falkirk Council

At the start of the current wave of transformation the council set criteria against which projects would be identified and judged. This ensures a focus on major transformation projects which will deliver savings and projects required to support those transformational savings:

Criteria	Definition
Strategic Fit with the Council Plan	Transformation project supports one of the four key priorities of the Council Plan or the enabling priorities.
Provides a significant opportunity for Transformation	<p>The project will deliver existing /improved/ redesigned services at a lower cost.</p> <p>The project will generate savings of more than £250,000 in the next 12 months, or £500,000 within 24 months.</p> <p>The only exception would be projects worth more than £1 million over 5 years, and projects which are enablers for the wider savings – such as digital transformation.</p>
Positive probability of success	<p>The project has the support of CMT and the lead Director.</p> <p>Ideally there is benchmarking with other Councils that shows it is deliverable.</p> <p>Capacity exists or can be allocated to deliver the project in the next 12-24 months.</p> <p>The project has in-principal support from the Administration pending formal Council approval.</p>

Source: Falkirk Council

Programme management

9. It is essential that the council has good programme management arrangements in place to ensure it is making sufficient progress against its transformation plans. It is important that the council has the structures and the staffing resource in place to deliver its transformation ambitions. In addition, the council must ensure that both senior officers and elected members have appropriate oversight of progress.

Findings and evidence relating to the council's programme management arrangements

Findings	Evidence
Strong officer-led governance arrangements are in place to facilitate effective oversight of transformational activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The governance arrangements for COTF were revised in response to recommendations made in the council's Best Value Assurance Report, which was published in January 2022. The council adopted more officer-led arrangements to allow for greater leadership. This included the creation of the Council of the Future Board and three simplified Directorate Boards.• The COTF Board meets every two months. It is responsible for upholding and implementing the council's vision for transformation, maintaining the scope of the portfolio and ensuring transformation is resourced and managed effectively to deliver tangible benefits.• There is strong ownership from senior leadership across the council, with the board being chaired by the chief executive and members include directors and heads of service.• A self-assessment was completed in April 2024 which covered the operation of the COTF Board. The exercise identified some areas for improvement. The council advised that any improvement actions identified as part of this exercise are operational and progressed as necessary through existing COTF governance processes. The council provided an example of how one of the improvement actions has been taken forward. The self-assessment has been a regular item in the COTF Board action tracker since May 2024.

Findings	Evidence
<p>The transformation programme is effectively resourced and this is continually monitored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council is in the early stages of moving away from a central Programme Management Office to one where there are project officers with relevant expertise relating to the project area and based within services. The council reported that it has found projects to be more effective when the project officers are embedded in the service project teams. • During the interviews conducted with the council we were advised that work has been done to ensure that staff are on board with change and this culture has been created across the organisation. The council has enabled some of the projects to be resourced by a range of council staff, such as Connected Falkirk. • The COTF Board meets every two months and has oversight of ongoing projects which allows the council to allocate additional resource if required when a project is not meeting targets. • A Spend to Save reserve is held which can be used to assist transformation projects, including covering costs of additional resource. At 1 April 2024 the balance was £3.1 million. In December 2024 the council reported that £1.1 million of this had been committed. • A template has been developed for any Spend to Save reserve (formerly Change Fund) bids to ensure that funding is only granted where COTF criteria is met and that savings are to be delivered as a result of the funding.

Findings	Evidence
<p>The council has effective scrutiny arrangements in place for reporting progress to the senior leadership team however reporting to elected members could be improved in some cases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COTF Board comprises senior leadership. It receives updates on the overall status of the transformation projects and individual projects which show a Red, Amber or Green status for milestones and financials. The financial status is decided by the finance team. If a project is red or amber mitigating actions are outlined. It also monitors spend from the Spend to Save reserve as part of these updates which is included as a standing agenda item. • The COTF Board operates on a model of exception reporting which means that they focus on projects which are not meeting targets. • Project closure reports are prepared at the end of projects which give consideration to lessons learned and areas which need further work. The closure reports also include information on savings delivered and amounts used from the spend to save reserve to deliver the project. The project closure reports are presented to the COTF Board. • Six monthly public updates are provided to the Scrutiny Committee which includes reporting on the high-level performance indicators relating to transformation. Additional updates on certain projects which are most relevant to the public are provided to council committees and members of the public can view these papers. • Elected member briefings are held on certain projects, which provide in-depth information about project progress. Recent briefings have focused on the Strategic Property Review. • Consideration is being given to enhancing updates provided to the Financial Strategy Group around transformation as this group includes council officers as well as the leaders and other representatives of each political party. • The council has recently appointed a Performance and Planning Manager who is considering how transformation is reported through the performance management framework.

Recommendation 2

The council should enhance reporting to elected members to ensure they have oversight of the full transformation programme.

Partnership working and community engagement

10. The [Best Value in Scotland](#) report noted that councils must now rethink how they work together, and with local partners and communities, to provide financially sustainable services. Few councils provide services jointly or share support services across different councils to a great extent. The scale and nature of the challenge, as set out in the [Transformation in councils](#) report, means that it is only by working more collaboratively that councils and their local partners, communities and the third sector will be able to provide sustainable local services.

Findings and evidence relating to the council's partnership working and community engagement arrangements

Findings	Evidence
There is limited evidence that the council is working with partners to deliver transformation. It will be important for the council to work with partners to identify opportunities to deliver more radical transformational change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date, transformation projects included in the COTF programme have been delivered by the council. • In interviews with the Chief Executive and Transformation Lead, both recognised that more could be done to work with partners in delivering transformation and plan to do this in wave four of COTF. • The council has recognised in its budget papers that future phases of COTF must consider how transformation can be achieved by working more with partners. Given the scale of the challenge facing all councils in Scotland, it will be important for the council to work with partners to explore opportunities for radical transformational change. • The Council has commenced a Discovery project in partnership with Clackmannanshire Council. This is to explore future transformation opportunities which could be done in partnership. This is being led by an external private sector partner. • The Council is actively involved in the Solace and Improvement Service transformation project with the council's Director of Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services being the Project Director for the transformation through collaborative procurement part of this. Other officers from the council are now involved in the

Findings	Evidence
	<p>project as well with the council hoping to benefit from this cross-council working.</p>
<p>There is a lack of joint funding arrangements between the council and partners for transformation projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date the council has funded all of the transformation projects within the COTF programme. • The collaboration project that is currently being discussed with Clackmannanshire Council will be jointly funded by the two councils.
<p>The council engages with its communities and vulnerable groups, but it is unclear how this consultation influences transformation projects, and the level of engagement varies between projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council carried out a budget consultation for the 2025/26 budget. It stated in its Financial Strategy that three phases of consultation would be carried out but only two phases were completed. According to the council, phase three was not completed as it was felt that the larger savings options were already subject to separate standalone consultation exercises. • The council has different levels of engagement dependent on the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In its review of libraries, the council carried out engagement with communities and used feedback to inform its five-year strategic plan for the library service. Several new services were introduced as a result of the engagement with communities, such as digital device lending and digital drop-in sessions, gardening clubs and jigsaws and board game sessions. – The council has undertaken consultation and engagement with community groups, third sector organisations and national and regional organisations as part of its Strategic Property Review (SPR) (Case study 1). A survey was carried out between December 2022 and January 2023 on the principles of the SPR and to identify anyone with protected characteristics who may have been impacted by closures or for groups interested in further discussions. Eleven public engagement events also took place. • At the 2025/26 budget setting meeting, elected members expressed concern regarding the lack of information within the revenue budget report on the impact of proposed service cuts. This included a lack of consultation, recognising that six from a total of seven savings options did not confidently demonstrate compliance with the General and Public Sector Equality Duties. • The council published a new Community Engagement Strategy in January 2025, covering the period from January 2025 to January 2028. An action plan and community charter have also been published. The Charter sets out the levels of participation communities can expect

Findings	Evidence
	through consultation and engagement processes. The strategy was developed in consultation with communities and partner organisations.

Case study 1 Strategic Property Review

The aim of the Strategic Property Review (SPR) is to consider future property requirements and aims to reduce the number of properties the council operates which are in poor condition. As part of the approach to SPR, the council is looking at alternatives to the closure of properties such as community asset transfers (CAT), alternative delivery models and improved financial performance. In January 2025, a council report outlined that over £3 million of net annual savings would be achieved from 2028/29 onwards. Elected members agreed three phases of the review. A dedicated team has been established to ensure there is a corporate approach to property asset management and to prioritise delivery of the SPR.

There are currently 27 properties in phase two of the project which are progressing with a CAT. To support community groups to consider a CAT, the council has created a £3 million Capital Enabling Fund which is funded through the SPR revenue savings. This fund is available to community groups undergoing Community Asset Transfer with financial support for eligible repair and building works. This can be applied for as part of the Community Asset Transfer application.

Source: Audit Scotland

Recommendation 3

The council should consider where there are further opportunities to deliver more radical transformational change alongside its partners.

Recommendation 4

The council should ensure community engagement is consistently factored into its decision-making processes where appropriate and should clearly document how engagement with communities has informed changes to services.

Impact of transformation

11. It is important that the council has success measures in place to demonstrate the impact of its transformational activity on service quality; outcomes for people who use services, inequalities and/or savings.

Findings and evidence relating to the impact of the council's transformation activity

Findings	Evidence
<p>The council carries out equality and poverty impact assessments for its transformation plans and has recently implemented an updated approach for these. However, the extent to which equality and poverty impact assessments are informed by engagement with communities varies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Controller of Audit report, which was published in May 2024, sets out that the council has an Equalities and Human Rights Working Group which oversees related activities. The council has also appointed an Elected Member Equalities Champion to raise the profile of equalities in decision-making processes. • We reviewed equality and poverty impact assessments (EPIAs) for the Strategic Property Review and Waste Review and found varying degrees of community engagement depending on the nature of the project being considered. An EPIA has been prepared for each of the assets being considered as part of the Strategic Property Review. The impact assessments clearly set out who has been consulted as part of the assessment when applicable. • There is a section in the impact assessments for mitigating actions which have been taken in response to identified impacts on protected characteristic groups. In the examples reviewed, the mitigating actions are appropriate for the level of impact the change will have. • A formal EPIA was not conducted for the Connected Falkirk programme, instead equalities were considered as part of the reports on this project to the Emergency Executive committee which was in place due to the COVID pandemic.¹ This project pre-dated the council's decision that all project/investment decisions would be

Recommendation 4 - The council should ensure community engagement is consistently factored into its decision-making processes where appropriate and should clearly document how engagement with communities has informed changes to services.

¹ The Connected Falkirk programme was a digital learning initiative which involved rolling out personal devices to school pupils.

Findings	Evidence
	<p>accompanied by an EPIA. The devices were provided equitably and has been found to positively impact some protected characteristic groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council completed a review of libraries which has resulted in a new strategic plan for libraries being developed. As part of this work a detailed EPIA was completed which sought views from various groups of people including vulnerable groups. • For the 2025/26 Budget, an EPIA was conducted for the Early Learning & Childcare: reduce commissioning of funded ELC places from private partners proposal. The EPIA notes that no engagement took place with parents to ascertain the impact this will have on the children, parents and staff.
<p>Financial savings have been quantified for two of the three case studies provided, while the third case study focusses on non-financial benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council was asked to provide Audit Scotland with examples of successful transformation projects. The examples provided were the ongoing Strategic Property Review, Waste Review and Connected Falkirk Project. • The Strategic Property Review is aiming to achieve recurring savings of £3.338 million from 2028/29 onwards. In January 2025, an update on the Strategic Property Review noted that all Phase 1 savings have been delivered. This amounted to property cost savings of £0.076 million in 2023/24 and £0.622 million in 2024/25. • The Waste Review intended to deliver recurring financial savings of £0.775 million and the council have reported that this is being achieved. • The Connected Falkirk case study did not set out specific cost benefits for the project, but the council identified that the introduction of the programme increased staffing efficiency and helped make greater use of subject specialists across the council to support subjects (Case study 2, page 21). This project contributed to the reduction of two FTE teachers across secondary school staffing allocations.

Findings	Evidence
<p>The council has a range of reporting structures in place to monitor performance of the transformation programme. However, there is a lack of detail surrounding the performance against indicators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council has developed three performance indicators in relation to the transformation and improvement enabler in the Council Plan: Percentage of projects delivered on time and on budget; Percentage of projects monitored and reported; and Percentage of projects that have clear benefits which can be measured. Performance against these indicators is reported on a six-monthly basis as part of the Council Plan reports and is included on the Falkirk Performs section of the website. There is a lack of commentary in relation to activity that has contributed to performance against the indicators. • Each of the three directorate plans (Place Services, Children's Services and Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services) incorporate actions in relation to transformation. • The most recent end of year report on the Council Plan includes a section which sets out the achievements in relation to the transformation and improvement enabler including savings which have been achieved in relation to some of the projects. The mid-year reports could be enhanced to include similar information on the latest achievements of the transformation programme. • Internal project closure reports consider impact of the project and the milestones which have been achieved.

Recommendation 5

The council should provide additional detail on the performance measures to demonstrate the impact of transformational activity to the public.

Case study 2 – Connected Falkirk

The Connected Falkirk programme was a digital learning initiative which involved rolling out personal devices to school pupils. The initial programme of work was from 2019 to 2024.

The programme has enabled subjects to be delivered virtually where a subject is not offered at a particular school.

The council's Connected Falkirk transformation project has improved satisfaction with the service and delivered improved outcomes for those who use the service.

An independent report was carried out by Queen Margaret University into the impact of the Connected Falkirk Programme. The research included focus groups of students and teachers and used online questionnaires. The research found that there is strong reported evidence of iPad device use reducing barriers to learning and that there is a reported improvement in digital skills of both teachers and pupils as a result of the programme.

The Connected Falkirk programme has enabled certain subjects to be delivered virtually. In 2023-24 around 155 pupils were in the 5 virtual classes, 63 of which were studying virtually/ were not present in the physical class with the teacher. Attainment results have been strong over the years of the virtual learning programme in Falkirk Council. Specifically, pass rates for Higher Politics have been over 74 per cent, Advanced Higher History over 83 per cent and Advanced Higher Maths over 74 per cent.² For Higher History and Higher Politics, the virtual pupil results were higher than the in-person local authority pass rates for these subjects last year.

Source: Audit Scotland

² These figures are pre-2023 as at the time of reporting results for 2024 had not been published.

Appendix 1

Improvement action plan

Issue/ risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>1. Transparency around the savings planned and delivered to date</p> <p>It is unclear what savings in the past have been delivered as a result of transformation waves and which projects will contribute to bridging the budget gap.</p> <p>The council may not be able to deliver sustainable services if required savings are not achieved.</p>	<p>The council should clearly set out the savings delivered through the COTF programme in its future reporting.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>An assessment of performance on COTF savings will be incorporated into the annual Budget report, the annually updated Financial Strategy and the End of Year performance report.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Chief Finance Officer</p> <p>Actioned by</p> <p>Autumn 2025</p>
<p>2. Elected member reporting</p> <p>Reporting to elected members is currently project specific and lacks an overarching view of transformational activity.</p> <p>There is a risk that elected members do not have appropriate oversight of the overall transformation programme.</p>	<p>The council should enhance reporting to elected members to ensure they have oversight of the full transformation programme.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Information on the Transformation Programme will be incorporated into the annual Budget report and annually updated Financial Strategy, enabling two updates to Members per year on the programme.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Chief Finance Officer</p> <p>Actioned by</p> <p>Autumn 2025</p>

Issue/ risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>3. Partnership working</p> <p>To date the council has focussed on internal transformation and has not involved partners in this process.</p> <p>Without external collaboration opportunities to provide sustainable local services may be restricted.</p>	<p>The council should consider where there are further opportunities to deliver more radical transformational change alongside its partners.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Consideration will be given to further opportunities for radical transformation alongside partners, following receipt of the Discovery report being developed in partnership with Clackmannanshire Council. This will enable the Council to consider opportunities internally, with Clackmannanshire, and where appropriate, with other partners.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services</p> <p>Actioned by</p> <p>Autumn 2025</p>
<p>4. Community engagement</p> <p>The council has engaged with relevant community groups, including vulnerable groups, on service redesign projects, but it does not always clearly document how the engagement has influenced changes.</p> <p>The council has also engaged with communities in the completion of certain equality and poverty impact assessments before the proposal is approved but this is not done consistently.</p> <p>There is a risk that the council does not identify and mitigate against potentially negative impacts of its transformational activities on communities.</p>	<p>The council should ensure community engagement is consistently factored into its decision-making processes where appropriate and should clearly document how engagement with communities has informed changes to services.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Consideration will be given to appropriate community engagement in line with the Council's recently revised Community Engagement Strategy, for relevant areas of work. This will be incorporated into reports presented to Committee/Council for decisions.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>All Directors</p> <p>Actioned by</p> <p>As and when relevant reports are presented to Committee/Council for decisions.</p>

Issue/ risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>5. Impact reporting</p> <p>Progress reporting on the transformation programme is done through limited performance indicators which do not explain the impact transformational activity is having on council services.</p>	<p>The council should provide additional detail on the performance measures to demonstrate the impact of transformational activity to the public.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Reports to Committee/Council which respond to recommendations 1 and 2 will be public reports and available on the Councils website. In addition, consideration will be given to how the Transformation programme is reported through the performance management framework, to ensure better clarity on the impact.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Chief Finance Officer</p> <p>Actioned by</p> <p>Autumn 2025</p>

Falkirk Council

Best Value thematic management report

Transformation: how councils are redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes



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