

Annual Review of Priorities and Ambitions



2024

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The 2021-24 Plan Update recognised that the pace and extent of progress, coupled with the challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic, necessitated a shift in how we work to deliver our ambitions.

As part of this change, an annual high-level review of progress against achieving these ambitions was introduced. This is the third and final version of this type of report to end the 2021-2024 cycle. The previous two reports can be found here www.fife.gov.uk/performance

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1. Introduction

The challenges identified in the ten-year Plan for Fife 2017-2027 under the original four themes have since been exacerbated by external factors - including the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and the accelerating climate emergency - which have all affected both people and places. The focus for the 2021-24 Plan Update was to address new priorities for recovery and renewal in this period.

During 2024, Fife Partnership Board (FPB) considered progress, opportunities and challenges against each priority via a 'deep dive' themed meeting approach in February (Community Wealth Building), May (Addressing the Climate Emergency), August (Tackling Poverty & Preventing Crisis and Health) and the final meeting in November deliberating on (Leading Economic Recovery). A summary overview is presented in the table in Section 2.

FPB also considered in August this year, the Fife Strategic Assessment 2024 Report which is produced every three years to support the on-going development of the Plan for Fife. The report is an evidence-based snapshot of the state of Fife and provides a synthesis of the latest research, evidence and assessment about Fife to highlight the shared challenges facing local communities and partner agencies.

The report provides a section on Performance which includes; an assessment against the State of Fife indicators which are the high level monitor of whether the Plan for Fife process is having the desired strategic impact it aims to achieve and also an assessment of performance against the Community Planning Outcomes Profiling Tool(CPOP). The CPOP is based on a snapshot of data across all Community Planning Partnerships against a set of core measures on key life outcomes.

In summary – the findings for Fife from both assessments reveal a worsening picture for almost all outcomes and significant inequalities in outcomes between most and least deprived communities and that the gap is also widening over time. To read the detailed report go to : [Fife-Strategic-Assessment-2024-Final.pdf](#)

The Fife Strategic Assessment and this Annual Review of Priorities & Ambitions for 2023/24 is intended to support Fife Partnership Board to review progress and to simulate leadership discussion on whether we are doing the right things, approaching them in the right way and achieving the right level of impact. Following review work, strategic assessment findings and the deep dive deliberations over 2024 – Fife Partnership Board decided that despite the challenges, the commitment to fairness and the related priorities remain valid.

FPB has set out the agenda for the final three years of the Plan for Fife for the period 2024-2027. This is to retain focus and action on; tackling the root causes of poverty and inequality, building the local economy and community wealth and addressing the impacts of climate change.

The emphasis for the next three years is to develop and test a collaborative programme approach with partners which seeks to address the common goals beyond individual organisational approaches moving towards a whole systems approach to shape investment, service redesign and allocation of resources.

2. Progress Against Recovery and Renewal Priorities

The 2021-24 Plan identified the need to continue to address the ambitions of the original 2017-2027 plan, whilst addressing new priorities for recovery and renewal coming from the pandemic and the accelerating climate emergency.

The desired outcomes set out in the 2021-24 Plan for each of the Recovery & Renewal Priorities were the guiding focus for the Delivery Boards during 2024. Fife Partnership Board considered a deep dive focus on each Priority over its four meetings in 2024 to reflect on progress and to consider future direction. A snapshot for each Board and a summary of the review work and deliberations are presented in the table below.

Community Wealth Building Progress 23/24	Opportunities & Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fife Council Life Chances model extended to include guaranteed jobs for participants on successful completion of the programme. • Following the successful Life Chances pilot in Fife Council, the programme has been extended to other partner organisations with several active placements taking place in NHS Fife and the third sector. NHS Fife and Fife Health & Social Care Partnership are identifying a pipeline of possible Life Chances placement opportunities. A total of 60 placements are being offered across Fife in 2024/25. • The Food4Fife Strategy and Action Plan (2024-2029) was approved in May 2024 and puts CWB at its heart with a strategic action plan incorporating several elements of CWB including procurement, local business, and community ownership and capacity building. • As part of decentralisation improvements on place-based working, Fife Council supported Kirkcaldy & District Men’s Shed to make upgrades to its facility through the use of community benefits via public sector supply chain. • During the build process of the Dunfermline Learning campus, Fife Council and Fife College worked with contractors, BAM and Balfour Beatty, to deliver social value in addition to the contract value. The schools opened in 2024 and delivered a total of £33.4m of social and local economic value, 35% of the contract value. The college campus will open in 2025. • A new Build Fife Programme was delivered in early 2024, providing 12 companies in the construction and associated sectors with skills and knowledge for operating in the construction sector and in tendering with the public sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merging the CWB Support Group with LER Board provides opportunities to strengthen the alignment of delivery of economic and social outcomes. • Opportunity to scale CWB action with partners via development of a collaborative programme. Focus on joint procurement and maximising Life Chances. • Challenge to evidence impact. Priority development work is required to focus on stronger alignment of delivery, metrics, monitoring and evaluation. • Challenges remain in embedding CWB at scale due to established policy approaches, systems and processes. • The Scottish Government’s Programme for Government confirms Community Wealth Building legislation will be introduced to the Scottish Parliament in 2024/25.

Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis

Progress 23/24

- The Winter Programme was supported with £5.3million of funding in the areas of fuel, food and cash support – mostly at the point of crisis.
- An additional £1.8million was also added to the Scottish Welfare Fund.
- There has been success in partnership working, training and project implementation and in the availability and use of evidence and data to shape policy.
- Preventative measures have focussed on benefit maximisation campaigns and energy advice and fuel top-ups.
- Warm and welcoming places have provided space for to break social isolation and to provide food and wider support.
- Large scale benefit update campaigns have helped to increase people's income. Financial gain to date is estimated at £6.7million.
- The Low-Income Family Tracker has provided evidence of current and future need, helping to target support.

Opportunities & Challenges

- Significant challenges remain in recovering from the health, social and financial crises of recent years.
- On-going challenge is the need for public service redesign to support prevention alongside providing critical support.
- TPPC Board has identified learning and lessons from the considerable resource investment in crisis support in recent years including the need for greater understanding on impact and fragmented funding investment and commissioning across partners.
- Opportunities for collaborative programmes have been identified with employability and community wealth building Life Chances work and with reduce and re-use priority of the ACE Board to link with the household support project.

Leading Economic Recovery

Progress 23/24

- During 2023/24 Business Gateway Fife supported a total of 614 new business start-ups, which created an estimated 812 new jobs.
- £1.3m of funding was awarded to Fife businesses through a Business Efficiency Grant Scheme which provided grants of up to £20k to support net zero and digital development ambitions.
- During 2023/24 £75.6m of inward investment was secured for Fife, investment that is estimated to create 499 additional jobs and safeguard 170 existing jobs.
- The Forth Green Freeport Outline Business Case and designation of tax sites in Rosyth and Burntisland were approved by the Scottish and UK Governments.
- The City of Dunfermline was provisionally awarded £5m of Levelling Up Funding in the UK Government's 2024 Spring Budget towards cultural regeneration projects.
- 1,835 people living in Fife started a Modern Apprenticeship in 2023/24, 4.9% more than the year before and 243 young people enrolled in a Foundation Apprenticeship, 17% more than the previous year.
- In 2023/24, 2,588 people facing barriers to employment were supported on employability programmes - 740 or 29% of whom then progressed into employment
- Fife Council, Fife Voluntary Action, Fife College, and NHS Fife are all formally accredited Real Living Wage employers.

Opportunities & Challenges

- Fife has been underperforming in a number of economic indicators and stubborn inequalities persist.
- Uncertainty with future UK and Scottish Government funding, including funds to replace the UK Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds, represents a challenge as any reductions or delay in investment will impact the delivery of several economic development and employability programmes.
- Merging the LER Board and CWB Support Group provides opportunities to strengthen the alignment of delivery of the Fife Economic Strategy with the ambitions of the Plan for Fife.
- Opportunities exist to identify collaborative programmes and projects with across Boards and with partners for the 2024 - 2027 period. This includes exploring projects to increase payment of the real living wage and digital inclusion with the TPPC Board.
- The designation of the Forth Green Freeport will provide significant employment and investment opportunities.

Addressing the Climate Emergency

Progress 23/24

The ACE Board has prioritised identifying joint outcomes to focus collaborative efforts across the Partnership:

- Decarbonising our estate through energy efficiency, low carbon energy and renewable generation,
- Using our land assets to benefit climate action
- Making our places more resilience to the impacts of climate change
- Reduce our climate impact from travel and waste
- Maximising the environmental benefit from our procurement
- Improving our climate communications through co-ordination
- Improving our climate communications through co-ordination, including Fife Council awarded Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation and Climate Action Fife awarded “Partnership award” at the Scottish Climate Awards in 2024.

Opportunities & Challenges

- Decision taken by the ACE Board to focus efforts on exploring opportunities to scale and accelerate the impact of programme and project collaborations across partners.
- A number of delivery plan projects are now being developed including; DLC Sustainable Travel Plan, Climate Resilience Places, Land Assets, Renewables Energy Generation, Energy Business Model, Re-Use and Redistribution and Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure.
- Further opportunities exist to explore potential with the other Boards; Poverty, Economy and Community Wealth Building.

3. Review of Ambitions

The annual review of progress against the ambitions is not about describing the activity that has been happening but looking at what impact this activity has had on the ambition by reviewing progress with performance indicators aligned to the Plan4Fife. There is a need to regularly review the indicators that are actively being used to monitor performance for the Plan4Fife to ensure they remain relevant and fit for purpose. This is a priority for 2025.

Inclusive Growth and Jobs	Progress Against Ambitions
 <p>Ambition Economic activity and employment in Fife is improving faster than the rest of Scotland</p>	<p>In 2024, although there was an increase in the number of small and medium-sized enterprises, overall, the number of businesses in Fife fell for the fourth consecutive year.</p> <p>In 2023/24, employment rates were above pre-pandemic levels in most parts of Fife and Fife’s overall employment rate was higher than the Scottish rate. Fife’s latest unemployment rate was at a record low and lower than the Scottish unemployment rate.</p> <p>Whilst the proportion of people in Fife claiming out of work benefits is now lower than before the pandemic, it is still above the Scottish rate</p> <p>The proportion of residential and commercial properties with access to super-fast broadband continues to increase in Fife, and is at a higher rate than in the Scotland as a whole.</p>
<p>Economic activity and employment in Mid Fife is catching up with the rest of Fife and Scotland</p>	<p>Mid-Fife continues to under-perform compared to other parts of Fife, particularly concerning issues relating to poverty. This is illustrated by continuing high numbers and rates of out-of-work benefits claimants in Kirkcaldy, Cowdenbeath and Levenmouth, and significant decreases in business numbers in some parts of Mid-Fife, particularly Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy areas, since the start of the pandemic.</p>
<p>Fife has year on year increases in visitor numbers and tourism spend</p>	<p>Fife’s tourism sector is performing well following a significantly challenging pandemic period. Visitor numbers, employment supported by tourism, and the economic impact of tourism in Fife have all increased significantly from 2020</p>

Opportunities for Ambition

All



Fife has lower levels of poverty in line with national targets

Educational attainment continues to improve for all groups

Fife has reduced levels of preventable ill health and premature mortality across all communities

Progress Against Ambitions

Weekly earnings in Fife have increased in recent years, and the proportion of jobs paid less than the real living wage has also fallen. However, while Fife's earnings continue to remain lower than Scottish average earnings, there has been a narrowing of the gap in relation to residence-based earnings.

Poverty remains a significant issue for Fife, with the proportion of children living in low-income households continuing to increase, and at a much higher level than for Scotland. Fuel poverty also continues to increase in Fife, with nearly one in four Fife households now in extreme fuel poverty.

Developmental milestones for children and child protection re-registrations have remained fairly stable over the last several years in Fife.

Pupil attendance rates continue to reduce in line with the rest of Scotland.

Attainment levels for Fife pupils have increased over the last several years, including, literacy and numeracy at primary level, and SCQF level 5 at secondary, and positive destinations for pupils has also increased, although remains below the Scottish level.

All cause mortality in Fife, while stabilising over the last couple of years, is still higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Life expectancy in Fife, for both females and males, peaked around 2019/20, and has been reducing since then, in line with the rest of Scotland, although Fife remains slightly above the Scottish average.

Thriving Places

Ambition

Everyone has access to affordable housing options

Progress Against Ambitions

Child homelessness, people in temporary accommodation, rough sleeping, homeless households, and homeless allocations in Fife have all improved in the last year, but remain high.

Affordable housing delivered in Fife has reduced for the current year, although the cumulative number has increased year-on-year.

Tenancies sustained for more than one year have increased steadily from 2013, however they have since fallen back in the current year to 2018/19 levels.

High levels of retail vacancy in some of Fife's town centres continue, with Kirkcaldy, Kincardine and Dunfermline having the highest retail vacancy rates. Whilst most town centres saw the proportion of vacant retail units rise between 2019 and 2023, Cowdenbeath, Burntisland, Cupar and Kincardine all saw vacancy rates fall.

Recorded crime and anti-social behaviour cases have reduced in the last year in Fife.

Participation in physical activity has improved in the most recent year, and now exceeds pre-pandemic levels.

Satisfaction levels and visitor numbers for museums and theatres have improved, while parks, leisure facilities, and libraries have decreased.



Fife's main town centres stand out as attractive places to live, work and visit

All our communities benefit from low levels of crime and anti social behaviour

Every community has access to high quality outdoor, cultural and leisure opportunities

Community Led Services



Ambition

Our public services are more joined up and acting 'one step sooner'

Fife's communities and individuals are more involved in local decision making and in helping to plan and deliver local services

Progress Against Ambitions

The number of applications for crisis grants in Fife, and overall spend, have both decreased in the current year, in contrast to an increasing trend in previous years.

Those agreeing that they can influence decisions in their local area remains on target and above the Scottish average. However, this level has reduced for the 20% most deprived in Fife, and is below target.

Addressing the climate emergency



Ambition

Fife has lower levels of carbon emissions in line with national targets (75% by 2030 from 1990 baseline).

Progress Against Ambitions

Fife's CO₂ emissions continue to show reductions year-on-year

Area-wide emissions continue to show decreases from previous years.

Fife Council carbon footprint shows a continued reduction in the last couple of years.

4. Summary

This last annual report 2023/24 on priorities and ambitions for the 2021-2024 Plan period reflects the ongoing and not unexpected challenges that Fife continues to face in recovering from the pandemic and the cost of living crisis. The findings this year are not dissimilar to the position last year with Delivery Boards reporting progress on crisis intervention activity, improved use of data and evidence to target support programmes, mainstreaming of a community wealth building approach to recruitment and employability and increased community benefit capture. In support of local economic recovery there has been further success in securing investment and funding for Fife to support place regeneration, support businesses and to create local jobs. Action to address the climate emergency has been extensive from grant provision, community activity and partner collaboration which is all positively contributing to reducing Fife's carbon footprint.

Across the wider ambitions, there is a mixed picture with a positive story to tell in relation to positive destinations for pupils and an increase in attainment levels however the attainment gap remains and pupil attendance rates continue to reduce in line with the rest of Scotland. In relation to economic progress; while Fife's earnings continue to remain lower than the Scottish average, the gap between the average wages of people who live in Fife and Scotland has narrowed. More positively, fewer people are being paid less than the real living wage. Fife's tourism sector is performing well but challenges remain with business survival and high retail vacancy rates in some of our town centres.

Fife now has a higher employment and lower unemployment rate than Scotland, which have both shown marked improvement over the last year. Some people and families continue to face hardship with the number of people claiming out-of-work benefits in Fife - while lower than during and prior to the pandemic - still remaining above the Scottish average. Mid-Fife continues to under-perform compared to other parts of Fife, particularly concerning issues relating to poverty.

Poverty remains a significant issue for Fife, with the proportion of children living in low-income households continuing to increase, and at a much higher level than for Scotland. Fuel poverty also continues to increase in Fife, with nearly one in four Fife households now in extreme fuel poverty.

There has been an improvement in the last year in relation to child homelessness, people in temporary accommodation, rough sleeping, homeless households, and homeless allocations but these still remain high.

Participation in physical activity has improved in the most recent year, and now exceeds pre-pandemic levels positively contributing to overall health and well-being of people in Fife.

Despite the challenging social and economic context continuing to hamper improvement efforts, maintaining focus on the priorities is supporting partners to work collaboratively in the areas which will make the biggest difference to the achievement of the long-term ambitions set out in the Plan for Fife 2017-2027. In resetting the agenda for the 2024-2027 period, Fife Partnership Board has identified the need to lead public service reform in Fife by shifting to whole systems planning, investment and resourcing to make the step change required.