

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

### DRAFT BUDGET 2014-15

#### SUBMISSION FROM FALKIRK COUNCIL

1. The Finance Committee of the Scottish Parliament has called for evidence on the draft budget for 2014/15, with a specific focus on the role of the National Performance Framework (NPF) in this regard. The following forms Falkirk Council's submission on this subject. Responses are categorised in accordance with the structure of the call for evidence and need to be submitted by 23 August 2013.

2. The Scottish Parliament's Finance Committee has invited views on a number of topics relating to the Scottish Government's NPF. The 50 national indicators and 11 purpose targets have been chosen by the Scottish Government as the most appropriate to measure performance. Whether the NPF works for the Scottish Government (SG) or not is up to the Parliament and the public to assess and not for an individual local authority to decide. Without going into the detail of the information held in the 50 national indicators and 11 purpose targets it is not possible to provide a detailed response to the bullet points. The following are some more general comments.

***The progress being made by the Scottish Government in meeting its 16 national outcomes as demonstrated by the 50 national indicators***

3. The Scotland Performs website demonstrates that good progress is being made on some of the national indicators and purpose targets but less progress on others while in some cases things have got worse. This is not surprising. More detailed analysis would be required to see to what extent progress, or otherwise, has been due to the work of the Scottish Government and public sector or whether there are other factors at work in influencing the indicators; and indeed whether the changes indicated reflect real change in the indicators and not just normal variation.

***The progress being made in relation to any specific indicator or target.***

4. We have no comments on any individual indicator or target.

***Whether the national indicators and purpose targets are an effective means of measuring the performance of government.***

5. National indicators and purpose targets can be useful, but they need to be closely aligned with the work which the SG does and the policies being implemented by the Government in order to make sense as a means of measuring the Government's performance.

***Whether there are additional indicators or targets which should be included to measure performance.***

6. We have no suggestions to make regarding additional indicators or targets.

***The data used to measure any of these indicators or targets.***

7. We have no comments to make on the data used to measure indicators or targets.

***The linkage between performance information and the Scottish Government's spending priorities.***

8. Information is provided on the SG website on the Government's role in influencing each indicator and some information on spending in that area. However, this does not appear to be specifically about spending priorities.

***Whether there is evidence of specific spending decisions resulting from the changes to the performance information within Scotland Performs.***

9. We are not aware of any evidence that specific spending decisions have been made as a result of changing performance information within Scotland Performs. However, spending decisions are often justified by reference to need and it may be that some decisions have been made on that basis. If a spending decision is made specifically on the basis of the Scotland Performs information, then it would be in the Government's interest to make this clear. On the other hand, future spending decisions can never be fully shaped by performance as there are a whole host of other factors that also need to be considered, e.g. addressing need, inequality and social justice.

***How should Scotland Performs be utilised to inform policy development and spending decisions?***

10. If the Scottish Government has correctly selected its indicators and targets then they should be used to look at progress in the policy areas to which they relate and could then be used to inform policy development and spending decisions. How that could be done would depend on the specific indicator and policy area.

***Is there a need for Scotland Performs to have a statutory basis?***

11. A strong case would need to be made which demonstrates the added value in putting the NPF onto a statutory footing. This doesn't exist at this time. It is more of a tool than a statutory instrument. Making the NPF statutory would reduce the ability of the Government to amend it as necessary on an on-going basis.

***Is there a need for wider public consultation in setting performance outcomes and indicators?***

12. Wider public input to setting performance outcomes and indicators would always be welcome, but a full scale consultation process is not required since the NPF should be the ultimate responsibility of the Government. We also need to be mindful of the historic lack of interest in this area by members of the public.

***Whether future spending decisions should continue to be shaped by the NPF, and if so how that should happen within Government.***

13. As previously stated The NPF should be considered as a tool for measuring both progress and performance towards the attainment of policy priorities. It is however one of a number of tools and factors which need to be taken into account in future spending decisions. Exactly how this should happen within Government is for the SG to determine but if they are committed to the NPF then they need to show how it has influenced their decision making.