Business Services
Head of Service Business Plans Update 2024/25
Appendix 1

Providing innovative, forward thinking and trusted advice and services to protect and promote the interests of Aberdeenshire Council

Appendix 1: Contents

Directors Introduction

I am delighted to introduce the Business Services Directorate Business Plans. The Plans guide the work of teams across Business Services and can and should be seen as living, breathing documents that capture key activities that will be taken forward together with a measurement of performance.

The Plans continue to evolve and have been refreshed this year to ensure greater consistency in reporting. The Plans will guide improvement activity enabling self-evaluation in order to allow us to look at actions and priorities. We are committed to utilising the Plans in an effective way and to that end we will commit to using the Plans as a basis for quarterly performance reviews where each Head of Service will discuss the performance of their area of responsibility with the wider Business Services Directorate Management Team. This will enable peer support, challenge and improvement.

The Business Services Directorate is committed to supporting the wider organisation, working with partners and delivering transformation. The plans set out ambitious and realistic targets which will allow us to deliver across these areas while dealing with the challenges that invariably arise. The challenges include, but are not limited to, reducing resources, rising costs, shifts in demand and areas of recruitment challenge. Despite these challenges our teams remain committed to delivering the best service possible for Aberdeenshire, organisation and citizen. As we move forward transformation will be at the heart of what we do. Transforming takes many guises and will involve changes across Business Services as we seek to be more efficient and take a modern approach to our service delivery. Business Services will also be at the heart of supporting transformation across the wider authority in order to deliver for our citizens and our communities.
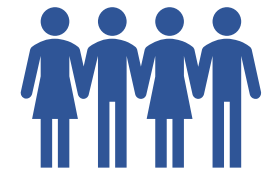
Rob Simpson, August 2024
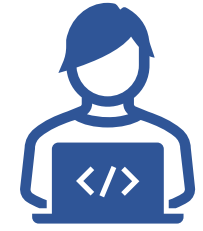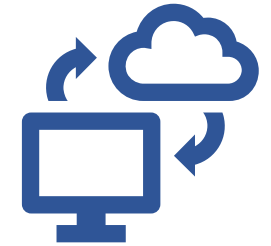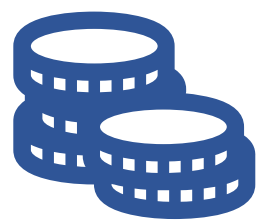
Business Services delivers a range of services and functions that support the front-line services of the Council and helps them achieve their aims and objectives within the framework of a modern and effective organisation. We have contact with every household and ratepayer in Aberdeenshire through the Revenues Taxation team; we oversee public perception of the Council through corporate communications and customer services; we have contact with every employee of the council via Legal & People; we enable flexible working arrangements with robust IT networks and support; and our property team have responsibility for a range of services focussed on managing the council's physical assets.

The 2024-2025 revenue budget for Business Services is £52.254m. Business Services priorities are aligned to the Council Priorities of: A Sustainable Economy, Connected Communities, and Living Well Locally.

Structure and Functions

Director of Business Services

Commerical & Procurement Shared Services

Shared Service with Aberdeen City

Procurement of all Goods and Services

Procurement Strategy, Policy and Advice

Contract Register

Benefits Tracking

Scotland Excel Regional Hub

Supplier and Contract Management

Customer & Digital Services

Communications & Marketing

Web User Experience

Customer Services

Service Points and Contact Centre

Feedback Team

Business Strategy

Equalities

Community Planning Partnership

Policy & Performance

Business Change

Digital Strategy

IT networks and devices

Cyber Security / Information Security

Finance

Corporate Finance

Accountancy

Revenues

Integrated Benefits

Payments

Risk Management & Business Continuity

Legal & People

Committee Services

Information Governance

Democratic/Governance

Civic & Liquor Licensing & Gambling

Registration Service

Advice & Representation

Elections

Property & Conveyancing

Developer Obligations & Infrastructure

Commercial

HR Operational & Transactional

AskHR

HR Resourcing

Learning & Development

Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Digital Development

Property & Facilities Management

Construction Programme Delivery

Capital Planning

Property Asset Management

Facilities Management

Energy Management

Estates Management

Statutory Building Compliance

Area Managers (Buchan & Formartine)

Leadership of Area Management Team

Management of Area Committee

Community Planning Partnership

Community Plan

Working with Local Communities

Working with Partner Organisations

Tackling Poverty & Inequalities

Community Asset Transfer

Vision and Values

Business Services' Vision is:

"Providing innovative, forward thinking and trusted advice and services to protect and promote the interests of Aberdeenshire Council."

We will do this by:

 ➢ Engaging effectively with customers and residents to provide the best services;
 ➢ Enabling employees to fulfil their potential by equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills and tools;
 ➢ Promoting good governance by ensuring the right things are done in the right way, but the right people at the right time;
 ➢ Encouraging innovation to create a culture of improvement.

The challenges we face

Finance

Aberdeenshire Council, like many councils across Scotland, is navigating through financial challenges amidst rising costs and heightened demand for local services. This has a significant impact on all directorates including Business Services and we are seeking to be proactive in navigating the challenges by transforming our services, improving our processes and ensuring our systems and support are fit for the future of Aberdeenshire Council.

Area of Recruitment Challenge

Business Services is not immune from recruitment challenges. As we transform across Aberdeenshire Council we would like to 'springboard' people into new areas of the business, upskilling, developing and creating opportunity. We will also look at how we deliver our services in order to competitively recruit to roles where we struggle to attract and retain.

Digital

As we seek to modernise and transform our services it is critical we continue to develop and upskill our teams. Future service delivery within Business Services and across Aberdeenshire Council may mean deployment of digital tools such as chatbots and artificial intelligence together with many other tools. Such deployment will create efficiency and aid the roles of colleagues. The critical challenge is in how we implement and ensure we take people with us.

Strategic and Service Priorities

The service priorities must align with Aberdeenshire Council's strategic priorities which is referred to as the golden thread and means that every task of every employee within the Council contributes to achieving better outcomes for the people of Aberdeenshire.

COUNCIL PLAN

PLACE-BASED STRATEGY

Everything we do will consider the impact on our places and will be informed by the voices of our communities.

A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.

LIVING WELL LOCALLY

We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.

SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change and the drive to net zero will be at the heart of how we make decisions and deliver services to support the delivery of our strategic priorities in the long-term.

| **Commercial & Procurement Shared Service** | **Customer & Digital Services** | **Finance** | **Legal & People** | **Property & Facilities Management** |

Drivers

Business Services work together, and in partnership, through a variety of plans, reports, and strategies, which support us to form and achieve our priorities.

Council

Council Plan

Best Value Assurance Report

Area & Partnerships

Local Community Plans

Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

Connected & Cohesive Communities

Customer & Digital Services

Aberdeenshire Council's Digital Strategy 2020-25

Community Engagement

Communications Strategy

Customer Service Charter

Mandatory Code of Practice Acceptable Use IT

Customer Service Strategy

Finance

Corporate Charging Policy & Framework

Financial Regulations

Legal & People

Scheme of Governance

Councillors Code of Conduct

Information Governance

Procurement

Procurement Governance

Joint Procurement Strategy

Internal Audit

Internal Audit Charter

Property & Facilities Management

Corporate Asset Management Plan

Capital Plan

Enablers

There are a number of enablers which support our reporting and measuring of our priorities.

These include a number of internal and external strategies and reports, as well as various reporting platforms, such as Pentana.

Public/Committee Reporting (Scrutiny)

Senior Leadership Reporting (Oversight)

Operational Teams Performance Data (Evidence based decision making)

Business Plans

The following 2024 - 2025 business plans outline the strategy and goals of each function in Business Services:

• **Commercial & Procurement Shared Services**

• **Customer & Digital Services**

• **Finance**

• **Legal & People**

• **Property & Facilities Management**

COMMERCIAL & PROCUREMENT BUSINESS PLAN 2024 – 2025

Vision Statement

To deliver innovative, sustainable, cost effective and high-quality strategic procurement services, maximising outcomes and value and fostering collaboration.

Service Function and Purpose

The Commercial & Procurement Shared Service provides Commercial and Procurement services to all Council Services under a shared service arrangement with Aberdeen City and The Highland Council. A range of Strategic Services are provided to partners to the Shared Service agreement, delivered by the Category and Commercial Management and Commissioning, Procurement and Contracts (Social Care) teams:

Category and Commercial Management	The primary role of the Category & Commercial Management Team is to enable the partner councils to achieve their strategic objectives through the delivery of goods, works and services procured externally and to deliver improved value/increased revenue opportunity aligned to the vision and mission statements within the Joint Procurement Strategy. The strategic services provided by the team are: – Data management, performance, analytics and insight – Procurement strategy, legislation, policy, guidance, training and advice – Category Management (for all strategic categories of spend) – Commercial Management – covering revenue opportunities
Commissioning, Procurement and Contracts (Social Care) Team Vision: "Together we can commission better, procure with value, and contract in partnership"	Buying health and social care and some other specific services, such as education services, is a complex area which requires consideration within the Council's overall approach to the procurement of goods, works and services. This is because these services can have a considerable impact on the quality of life and health of service users. The responsibility for deciding on which social care services to commission rests with senior managers in the respective councils and in the health and social care partnerships. The Procurement for Children's Services is designed to reflect The Promise (see further details in next section). Main work streams are as shown below for the team: – Commissioning – supporting our colleagues in the councils and the health and social care partnerships to develop and implement strategic commissioning plans – Procurement – tenders; direct awards; compliance with governance – Contract management – administration; routine monitoring; noncompliance activity; supplier relationship management – Quality Assurance – this is not a core element of a contracts team but something we have developed ourselves to help us manage our complex and varied workload.

Scotland's Independent Care Review - The Promise

The Promise was published in February 2020 and laid out five foundations:
– Voice - children must be listened to.
– Family - where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay and families must be given support to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.
– Care - where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.
– People - the children that Scotland cares for must be supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce, who in turn must be compassionate in their decision making and care.
– Scaffolding - Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed.

Commissioning and procurement services should reflect the recommendations of The Promise and take a human rights-based approach underpinned by the UNCRC. Children and families should be at the centre of decision-making, and children should decide whether they wish to stay with their family or not, providing it is safe. Where external placements are required every effort should be made to keep the child in their local area wherever possible. Commissioning and procurement of services should increase the emphasis on preventative and whole family work, rather than acute/crisis, whilst recognising that long term support may be required to keep families together. Competition should be discouraged and collaborative working is recommended. Longer contract terms are to be considered to ensure stability of service delivery when services are meeting standards and making an impact. Regulatory bodies must scrutinise any presence of profit to ensure that funds are properly directed to the care and support and make sure that the most vulnerable children are not profited from.

Strategic Oversight - The Shared Service is overseen by the Strategic Procurement Board, the board is comprised of Senior Leaders from across the 3 Councils currently chaired by the Chief Executive for Aberdeenshire Council and has responsibility for:

– Oversight of the delivery of the services set out in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the partners to the joint arrangement.
– Oversight of a programme of digitisation of as many procurement processes as possible across the shared arrangement.
– Providing oversight of the roll out of a procurement capability programme across the shared arrangement.

Reviewing the performance of the service using Key Indicators and providing scrutiny and challenge, KPI's agreed by the board are as contained in the Business Plan and reported to the Strategic Procurement Board quarterly.

Service Priorities

Service Priorities and how they support the Council Plan

The Council Plan was agreed in June 2024 and sets out the Council Strategic Priorities

Aberdeenshire Council works with and for our communities. We will provide essential local services and additional help to those who need it most.

A sustainable economy

We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.

- Support new and existing businesses to thrive and provide fair work opportunities
- Secure inward investment to sustain economic growth
- Contribute to the creation of a skilled and resilient workforce by developing the skills our children and young people need for learning, life and work now and in the future
- Equip residents to meet key challenges and transitions in their lives through lifelong learning
- Attract and retain people of working age to the region.

Connected communities

We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.

- Support communities to articulate the challenges facing them and how we can achieve better outcomes together
- Collaborate with partners and communities to attract investment to enhance travel and transport connections between our towns and villages
- Encourage and promote active travel – supporting healthier, more sustainable and environmentally friendly travel options
- Improve digital connectivity by securing investment for better infrastructure for homes and businesses

Living well locally

We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.

- Help people to lead independent lives through prevention and early intervention, providing care and support to those most in need
- Facilitate the provision of affordable housing
- Work with and support opportunities for residents to be healthy and active
- Improve the life chances of people at risk of falling into poverty, or already living in poverty
- Promote greater participation by communities so we are working to shared and collective ambitions in our places
- Ensure children and young people have a greater say in matters that will affect them now and in the future

How we will work with communities

- Everything we do will consider the impact on our places and will be informed by the voices of our communities. We will involve communities and service users in shaping our services, including how and where they are delivered. We will work with local people to actively shape the places they live and work in, through supporting volunteering and helping them to make the best use of the assets and resources in their area.

Climate change

- Climate change and the drive to net zero will be at the heart of how we make decisions and deliver services to support the delivery of our strategic priorities in the long-term. Our decisions will be informed through the lens of climate change to support our communities to have a sustainable future.

Set out clearly how the service activity supports the Priorities and Outcomes in the Council Plan 2024-29 and how it reflects evidence in the strategic assessment. *This section should be 1-2 pages and no more than 3.*

Key priorities for the Commercial & Procurement Service for 2024/25 are set out below and how these link to the Council Plan is set out below:

Priority	Strategic Priority	Anticipated Delivery by:
Delivery against Joint Procurement Strategy Themes • **Governance** • **Policy** • **Food Procurement** • **Net Zero** • **Community Wealth Building (Procurement Pillar)** • **Commercialisation**	A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally How we will work with Communities Climate Change	31 March 2025 Strategy reviewed annually to ensure alignment with key priorities.
Transformation Programme (Delivery of External Collaboration & Partnership Thematic Priority)	A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally How we will work with Communities	31 March 2025
Development of a Community Benefit and Sustainable Procurement Policy	A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally How we will work with Communities Climate Change	31 March 2025
Revision of the Commercial Sponsorship Policy	A Sustainable Economy	31 March 2025
Review and update Delegated Procurement E-Learning	A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally How we will work with Communities Climate Change	30 September 2024
Improve access to Contract Data **(Roll out of new contract register platform)**	A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally	30 June 2024
Delivery of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (EVIF) Project • **Tender** • **Contract Award** • **Commence Implementation**	A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally How we will work with Communities Climate Change	31 March 2025
Delivery against Procurement Savings Target for 2024/25	A Sustainable Economy	31 March 2025
Enablement of Service Savings for 2024/25	A Sustainable Economy	31 March 2025

The place strategy was agreed in June 2024 and sets out our commitment to work more closely with our partners to deliver the services that will have the greatest impact for our communities.

Services are expected to demonstrate how they are adapting and changing their working approaches to give a strong emphasis to Place and actively contribute to the development and delivery of Place Plans.

Please set out how you will ensure your services and teams are supporting the Place agenda, as well as stating how Service Priorities will link with the Place Strategy and Place Plans with reference to the strategic assessment 2024/25, Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and Intermediate Zone summaries.

The Community Wealth Building theme of the Joint Procurement Strategy 2023-2026 will be a key enabler to supporting the Place agenda.

Community wealth building (CWB) is an approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people. Developed initially by the Democracy Collaborative in the United States and championed in the UK by the progressive economics think tank Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), Community Wealth Building aims to ensure the economic system builds wealth and prosperity for everyone. Community Wealth Building provides a framework around five pillars as shown below, for the purposes of the Joint Procurement Strategy the Spend Pillar relates directly to procurement and is the focus of this theme.

The procurement and commissioning of goods and services by local authorities and key anchor institutions is a crucial lever in the building of community wealth. It is vital the Council and key partners use their purchasing power and convening abilities to deliver economic, social, and environmental justice to the region through the progressive procurement and commissioning of goods and services. By progressive procurement and commissioning, we mean a number of things. First, it is about increasing the importance of procurement as a corporate function. Second, it is about increasing levels of spend with local organisations and Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMES). Third, it is about using procurement and commissioning levers to address the local economic, social, and environmental challenges faced.

The Joint Procurement Strategy will play a pivotal role in furthering this aim and protecting and furthering local economic development in the short, medium and longer term and there is a clear link to how activity under this theme will support the Place agenda.

Service Performance Indicators 2024-2029

Service performance measure	Action	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Monitor number of officers undertaking training	Monitor training reports and numbers of officers submitted delegated procurer forms/maintain DPA register.	Knowledgeable and skilled delegated procurers	Mel Mackenzie & Neil Stephenson	Ongoing
Further development of mechanisms of capturing the voice of those with lived experience		Ethical commissioning principles are met	Neil Stephenson	31 March 2025
Strategic objectives from each services' commissioning plan aligns to Council and Team strategic plans	Engagement with Services in work plans/commissioning plans. Review and oversight of Procurement Approval Forms.	Clear linkage across services resulting in resource and financial efficiencies	Mel Mackenzie & Neil Stephenson	31 March 2025
>95% contracts include clause relating to community benefits >95% contracts include clause relating to fair work	Ensure templates include relevant wording for Delegated Procurers for use in Procurement Activity. Monitor and track performance against these KPI's quarterly and provide an annual update within the Annual Procurement Report presented to committee.	Ensure through procurement we include Community Benefits, Fair Work and Sustainability criteria so the subsequent contract will improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing in a way additional to the main purpose of the contract.	Mel Mackenzie & Neil Stephenson	31 March 2025

Service performance measure	Action	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
>75% contracts include Carbon Reduction Measures	Ensure templates include relevant wording for Delegated Procurers for use in Procurement Activity. Monitor and track performance against this KPI quarterly and provide an annual update to committee through the production of the annual procurement report	Ensure through procurement we include Community Benefits, Fair Work and Sustainability criteria so the subsequent contract will improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing in a way additional to the main purpose of the contract	Mel Mackenzie & Neil Stephenson	31 March 2025
>30% spend with suppliers to be local	Provide guidance and support to local suppliers through Supplier Development activity. Internal engagement on methods of engaging with Suppliers in advance of procurement, working closely with the Procurement Development Officer in Economic Development.	Developing the local economy, redirecting wealth back into the local economy and placing control and benefits into the hand of local people	Mel Mackenzie & Neil Stephenson	31 March 2025
80% spend is under contract – no maverick spends	Monitor and track performance against this KPI quarterly. Produce quarterly compliance reports and provide support to areas demonstrating under target performance.	Support all service areas to adhere to governance	Mel Mackenzie & Neil Stephenson	Ongoing

Benchmarking & Self-Evaluation

Benchmarking is carried out across key areas as listed below:

1. The Service benchmarks performance against information published by Scottish Government and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.

2. Benchmarking is also undertaken when developing Strategy, Policy and Guidance with information gathered and reviewed around best practice from other local authorities in Scotland.

3. Contracts are regularly benchmarked against other local authorities for examples of best practice and against market rates on cost.

Procurement performance is benchmarked against that of other local authorities under Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) – Bi-Annual assessment due to take place May 2024, self assessment against pre-established questions is conducted in advance of the session.

The PCIP assessment provides a means of measuring and reporting on the procurement and commercial capability of organisations through the provision of evidence, based around a series of set questions and other evaluation methods.

As this assessment is planned to take place during this financial year, there are no immediate plans to undertake further self-assessment using the PSIF framework.

Financial Profile

Commercial & Procurement Shared Services Budget for 2024/25

The budget is agreed annually by Full Council in February, the budget agreed for Procurement for financial year 2024/25 is £911,000.

The budget for Procurement covers:

1. Aberdeenshire Council's share of the Shared Procurement Service costs; and
2. Aberdeenshire Council's membership fee for Scotland Excel.

Link to the budget report:

https://aberdeenshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s17088/4%2024%2002%2022%20Council%20Budget%202024-29.pdf

Budget Profile for 2024/25 is as per below:

Commercial and Procurement 2024/25 Budget Profile	
Supplies and Services (inc. Scotland Excel Membership)	£184,000
Payment to Third Parties (Shared Service Costs)	£997,000
Grants	(£226,000)
Income	(£44,000)
Total Budget	£911,000

Our People: Staffing & Workforce Planning 2024-25

Service Staffing Profile

Organisational Chart

Aberdeenshire Council have identified, at a corporate level, that all Business Plans must address the following workforce planning activities to support the Council in being fit and flexible for the future: Wellbeing, Digital Skills, Diversity and Succession Planning, Establishment Control. Services also identify actions relating to industry and service specific drivers based on their own internal and external environmental analysis to ensure they have the right people in the right place doing the right things at the right time for them to meet their overall service outcomes and priorities.

Workforce Planning requires a level of forecasting and should be in place for a rolling 3-year period as many workforce planning actions require time to come to fruition, e.g. natural turnover, skills development, succession planning. Also providing a transparent 3-year workforce plan allows for better transparency and levels of engagement with the workforce.

Key priorities and updates are provided below.

Measures of Success/ Progress Update

Workforce planning for the Shared Service would be conducted under Aberdeen City Council workforce planning activities with any staffing or structure changes approved by the Strategic Procurement Board, as required under the collaboration agreement that governs the shared service arrangement.

The model for Strategic Workforce Planning:

To deliver against the workforce strategic outcomes outlined in the Target Operating Model 1.2, the following section breaks down our planned activities into five key areas of work, along with specific objectives and projected timeline. These are:

Right Structures	Right People	Right Skills	Right Place	Right Support
Setting up our council in a way that supports our cultural aspirations	Building our capacity through attracting, recruiting, moving talent	Building capability through awareness, desire, knowledge and ability	Working where and when is best for the work and the customer	Supporting employees to thrive, personally and professionally

Workforce Plan

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Wellbeing	**Issue/ Risk**	Absence rates for C&PSS have been minimal across the first three quarters of 2023/24. See below table on average number of days lost per FTE: <table><tr><td>– **Quarter 1** – **2023/24**</td><td>– **Quarter 2** – **2023/24**</td><td>– **Quarter 3** – **2023/24**</td></tr><tr><td>– **0.8**</td><td>– 1.5</td><td>– 1.5</td></tr></table> CPSS absence is comparatively low compared to organisational trends.	31 March 2025
	Action(s)	1. As an employer Aberdeen City Council provides a range of mental health and wellbeing interventions and support; supports staff through the cost-of-living crisis; recognizes and supports work/life balance and enables individuals to remain in work or return to work effectively. Include as regular topic in team meetings to highlight support available. 2. Absence levels regularly reviewed by the CPSS Health & Safety committee to identify concerns and highlight to SMT.	
	Progress/ Measure	1. Measurement of absence trends quarterly – with discussion at SMT on reasons to identify any further support measures which could be put in place. 2. Attendance levels for Mental Health Training.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Skills	**Issue/ Risk**	Pressure of workload preventing team investment in Professional Development/Attendance at training.	31 March 2025
	Action(s)	1. Annual training plan and required funding to be agreed by the Strategic Procurement Board to allow for staff development and to support growing talent to allow for succession planning. 2. Team to be provided with time and space to ensure they can attend training, management to discuss ongoing continuous development during 1:1 meetings.	
	Progress/ Measures	1. Monitoring of team training plans on a regular basis 2. Ongoing discussion with individual team members during 1:1's	
Diversity	**Issue/ Risk**	In 2023 employees were given access to record and maintain their Equality and Diversity details through the Core HR system at the present time managers do not have access to the employee equalities data available. We are aware however that the age profile of workforce presents a potential area for concern, most of the team are aged 30 and over.	31 March 2025
	Action(s)	Identification of potential opportunities to include apprenticeship, graduate placements and entry level roles to teams. Review recruitment practices to ensure there is no gender bias, including advert text and job profiles particularly for senior management roles and encourage female colleagues to consider progression into leadership roles.	
	Progress/ Measures	1. Monitor number of opportunities for apprenticeships, graduate placements 2. Review and monitoring of data relating to recruitment	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Succession Planning	**Issue/ Risk**	A degree of vulnerability across the team around age profile. Established career pathways exist, however a focus on development around business-critical roles where succession planning would be of benefit is required.	31 March 2025
	Action(s)	We seek opportunities to attract and support young people entering our workforce, our data; and have clear and structured career pathways in place to proactively enable employees to progress their careers and seek to develop the younger workforce through identification of opportunities for apprenticeship, graduate placements and entry level roles to teams. To support this we will identify business critical roles where succession planning is required and through Continuous Review and Development (Annually) identify where team members are keen to progress in their career/identify any gaps.	
	Progress/ Measures	1. Monitor the % of roles filled internally. 2. Monitor the use of CR&D conversations to identify personal development, employee engagement and job satisfaction.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Establishment Control (FTE, Agency, Overtime use)	**Issue/Risk**	Turnover rates in C&PSS have remained low across the service with the total FTE at a stable level across the last year, team are invested in work supporting the Council(s) with procurement activity giving a wide variety of tasks, flexible/smarter working and recognition of the work of the team supports low turnover. Agency use is low at present but as demands and recruitment/retention challenges increase this is a potential area of risk.	31 March 2025
	Action(s)	Continue to monitor turnover. Monitor demands/workload across the team to continue to balance workloads/give variety/responsibility.	
	Progress/ Measures	1. Measure staff turnover figures – reported through SMT 2. Measure agency usage – reported through SMT	

Concluding Summary

In working to deliver the priorities within this Commercial & Procurement Shared Services Business Plan, we aim to follow the commitment of our procurement vision which is:

"to deliver innovative, sustainable, cost effective and high-quality strategic procurement services, maximising outcomes and value and fostering collaboration"

CUSTOMER & DIGITAL SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN 2024 - 2025

Vision Statement

Customer & Digital Services is a valuable resource of business intelligence, professional advice, technical expertise and customer service excellence that drives Aberdeenshire towards delivering the council's priorities.

Service Function and Purpose

Customer & Digital Services sits within the Council's Business Services Directorate and provides the first point of contact for our customers dealing with around 225,000 enquiries each year. It has responsibility for the provision of advice and support to services on communications and marketing, community engagement, corporate strategy and policy, performance, data, Best Value and equalities. We provide core IT services to the organisation and support digital change and innovation.

Customer Services	Communications & Marketing	Strategy & Innovation	IT
Delivering high quality customer service by ensuring we are accessible and that customers are treated fairly and considerately.	Ensuring people feel informed and engaged in the work of the council.	Using data intelligence, engagement and performance to support the strategic direction of the organisation. Enabling and leading strategic organisational change initiatives through direct support, guidance, tools and facilitation. Building a culture of benefits realisation through a programme led approach.	Provision of core IT services, including infrastructure, devices, systems and data storage which are effective, available, resilient and secure.
50.5 FTE **(61.8 FTE as at 1st April 2022)**	**10.5 FTE** **(11 FTE as at 1st April 2022)**	**30.2 FTE** **(30.5 FTE as at 1st April 2022)**	**85.2 FTE** **(96 FTE as at 1st April 2022)**

Service Priorities

The Council Plan was agreed in June 2024 and sets out the Council Strategic Priorities

Aberdeenshire Council works with and for our communities. We will provide essential local services and additional help to those who need it most.
Customer & Digital Services supports all aspects of the Council's Strategic Priorities through advice and support to Council Services and Elected Members. Customer & Digital Services priorities contribute to the delivery of the Council Plan, in particular supporting the Council's Transformation Programme and supporting the performance framework by which cllrs can measure the impact of the Council Plan on our communities and use our communications channels and resources to increase visibility of the Council Plan and priorities, with a focus on the need for participation and to encourage community voices to be heard.

A sustainable economy
- We actively promote apprenticeship opportunities across the service
- We support the development of the skills our children and young people need for learning, life and work now and in the future through the provision of curricular IT services.

Connected communities
- We support strong engagement and participation with communities through advice and guidance to teams
- We develop corporate policy which sets the direction for the Council
- We deliver universal public, NHS and curricular network services to all council sites allowing flexible and resilient use of networked council sites.
- Promoting behaviour change and access to services to support our communities
- Deliver and support community planning in order to achieve better outcomes for our places

Living well locally
- We provide customer contact through a range of channels, responding to local need and demand, whilst supporting all services to directly deliver Council priorities.
- Statutory function to manage/support Council response to customer complaints.
- We develop and monitor the place strategy and policy
- We support the place plans with clear and relevant data to support local decision making

Delivering a place-based approach

The place strategy was agreed in June 2024 and sets out our commitment to work more closely with our partners to deliver the services that will have the greatest impact for our communities.

Services are expected to demonstrate how they are adapting and changing their working approaches to give a strong emphasis to Place and actively contribute to the development and delivery of Place Plans.

An oversight of our commitment to delivering a place-based approach:

Strategic	HoS will co-sponsor the Inverurie Place Plan Establish a community planning framework to support the delivery of place plans
IT	Support the development of the place toolkit with tech-based automated tools Develop and deliver flexible and resilient IT infrastructure and services that support place-based changes to council sites and services.
Strategy & Innovation	Deliver and support the place strategy and policy Provide local data sets which support the delivery of Shaping Places for Wellbeing Appointment of a place data officer to support place teams and communities in developing and delivering their place plans Support engagement and participation by communities in the Place Plans
Customer Services	Ensure customers can access council information and support via a range of channels. CS Strategy will consider support requirements in local areas in conjunction with Place Plans.
Communications & Marketing	Actively promote Place through all communication workstreams where relevant and play an active role on the involvement in local place plans which are in development. We will also review our communications allocation to consider closer alignment to place than policy. Update communication channels, including the website, to better reflect place

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

Our priorities for the year ahead:

C&DS Area	Priority	Priority Ref
Strategic	• Supporting medium term financial sustainability by delivering the transformation Data, Digital and technology workstream	**ST1**
	• Creation of a new Council Plan	**ST2**
	• Support delivery of the Place Strategy	**ST3**
Customer Service	• Implementation of the new Customer Service Strategy, supported by stakeholder engagement	**CS1**
	• Transfer of face-to-face queries from 5 Service Points to signposting/support at agreed LLA venues	**CS2**
	• Assess the criteria and potential alternatives for a CRM system to effectively support the Customer Service Strategy	**CS3**
	• Review the whole customer journey to ensure appropriate responses to customer enquiries are provided within relevant timescales	**CS4**
Comms & Marketing	• Entire refresh of comms strategy, with a focus on Place.	**CM1**
	• Migrate all web content as part of ground-up web content review	**CM2**
	• Focus on team wide involvement in Transformation strategy communications	**CM3**
	• Embed creative and accessibility skills across the organisation.	**CM4**
Strategy & Innovation	• Deliver a framework for Place-based community planning	**SI1**
	• Develop and implement data strategy and data hub	**SI2**
	• Develop equality outcomes 2025	**SI3**
	• Deliver the Big Data, Digital and Tech Transformation workstream	**SI4**
	• Lead the Digital Programme	**SI5**
	• Support transformational change through the application of service design and change management best practice and governance	**SI6**
IT	• Delivery of the Next Generation Local Area Network, including universal services and reduced carbon footprint	**IT1**
	• Review corporate device provisioning and funding	**IT2**
	• Review Microsoft 365 licence functionality & allocations	**IT3**
	• Supporting the council in the delivery of key projects including Transformation & Ward Pages replacement	**IT4**
	• Implement new IT strategy and team structure	**IT5**

Service Performance Indicators 2022-2027

C&DS Priority	Service Performance Measure	Action	Baseline	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale (include key milestones where appropriate)
CS1 CS2 CS4	Average call wait times for Customer Services	Deployment of technology (AI and webchat), new CRM, ongoing recruitment, end to end process redesign for top 5 customer transactions	2022-23 – 7 mins	Target: 5 minutes Amber Threshold: 6 minutes Red Threshold: 7 minutes	Improvement in how we support customers with their enquiries	Customer Services: Michelle Milne Caroline O'Shaughnessy & David Anderson	Ongoing Reported quarterly
CS1 CS2 CS4	Customer Services call abandonment rate	Deployment of technology (AI and webchat), new CRM, ongoing recruitment, end to end process redesign for top 5 customer transactions	2022-23 – 31%	Target: 22% Amber Threshold: 25% Red Threshold: 30%	Reduced requirement for customers to call us back	Customer Services: Michelle Milne Caroline O'Shaughnessy & David Anderson	Ongoing Reported quarterly
CS1 CS4	Complaints Investigation responses fully resolved within 20 working days	All Services to continue to log complaints via the corporate Feedback Team following the Complaints Handling Procedure, to ensure Customer Services manages the process to meet the 20-working day timescale	2022-23 – 88.1%	Target: 95% Amber Threshold: 92% Red Threshold: 90%	This is an agreed target reported to SPSO and Local Authority Complaints Handling Network	Customer Services: Michelle Milne Caroline O'Shaughnessy & David Anderson	Ongoing Reported quarterly

Service Performance Indicators 2022-2027

C&DS Priority	Service Performance Measure	Action	Baseline	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale (include key milestones where appropriate)
CM1	Engagement with the council via social media	The number of users who interact with our social media content over a quarter	Q2 2022 number=	Target: 1500000 Amber Threshold: 1425000 Red Threshold: 1350000	A trusted engagement channels for residents to share and comment on council activity	Communications: Sarah Rochester & Neil Moir	Ongoing, quarterly
CM2	Council Website: Quality of Content	Quality assurance review of = readability, accessibility, broken links, misspellings, and grammar	Q1 2022 data – 84%	Target: 87% Amber Threshold: 86% Red Threshold: 85%	Clearer, easier to understand content, less disrupted user experience, and compliance with website accessibility regulations	Comms – Website Team: Marta Mlynarczyk	Ongoing
SI1	Percentage of engagement activity carried out on the Engage Aberdeenshire platform where feedback is provided to participants		New indicator	80%	Increase public confidence in Council engagement	Jane Wilkinson	

C&DS Priority	Service Performance Measure	Action	Baseline	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale (include key milestones where appropriate)
SI3	Percentage of employees who have completed equality training		New indicator	90%	Increased awareness of equality obligations across the organisation.	Jane Wilkinson	
SI6	Percentage of Service design interventions that have resulted in business improvement		New indicator	70%	Reduce cost of service delivery across the Council.	Andrew Rattray	
IT1 IT4 IT5	IT Service Desk customer tickets logged (rolling 12 months)	Focus on automation, more service requests (delivering what the organisation neds) and less incidents - getting it right first time with resilient, secure systems and services	April 2022 = 54537 April 2023 =52135	Target: 50,000 Amber Threshold: 51,000 Red Threshold: 53,000	Continued decrease in overall volume numbers to meet target during 2024/25	IT Ray Wilson	Ongoing – with annual reviews of targets
IT1 IT4 IT5	IT Service Desk response within SLA (monthly)	Channel shift from phones to chat with an associated reallocation of resources	April 2022 = 86% April 2023 = 88%	Target: 86% Amber Threshold: 84% Red Threshold: 82%	Continued decrease in contact by phone and an associated increase in contact through Chat	IT Jonathan Townsend	Ongoing – with annual reviews of targets

C&DS Priority	Service Performance Measure	Action	Baseline	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale (include key milestones where appropriate)
IT1 IT4 IT5	Completed cyber security training	Continue reporting of mandatory training, focusing on any groups not meeting the threshold and using training to reinforce improvement actions after any incident	Q1 22/23 = 63% Q1 23/24 = 91%	Target: 90% Amber Threshold: 88% Red Threshold: 85%	Expected to steadily increase completion rate during 2024/2025 with an associated increase in targets	IT Lars Frevert	Ongoing – with annual reviews of targets
IT1 IT4 IT5	Internet connection availability (monthly)	Ongoing capacity planning to ensure funding and provision of additional capacity to meet demand is provided. Contract management through regular supplier reports and meetings to ensure contracted SLAs are met.	April 2022 = 100% April 2023 = 100%	Target: 99.7% Amber Threshold: 99.5% Red Threshold: 99.0%	Continuing to meet or exceed contracted availability	IT: Alec McVean	Ongoing – with annual reviews of targets

C&DS Priority	Service Performance Measure	Action	Baseline	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale (include key milestones where appropriate)
IT1	Reduced Carbon Footprint	Consolidation of our network estate combined with the deployment of new hardware that is 50-60% more energy efficient with reduce energy consumption significantly when the next gen network rollout is complete.	Feb 2022 = 0 KgCO$_2$ Saved July 2024 = 51204 KgCO$_2$	124,000 KgCO$_2$ Saved	Continuing to work towards target	IT: Alec McVean	Ongoing reviews of target
IT1	Universal Network Services	All available network services available to be enabled at all sites 24/7	New indicator	100% Network sites with Universal Service	Target met	IT: Alec McVean	end of 24/25

IT has been participating in the SOCITM Benchmarking process to varying degrees since 2006/7 to help us ascertain whether we are delivering services in an efficient and productive manner and to help inform our strategy. Whilst the benchmarking topics, questions asked and indeed technologies have changed significantly over the years we have recently focussed on completing the Cost and Delivery benchmarking modules:

Cost: Examines the cost efficiency of our IT service. By comparing our organisation with others, we can identify areas for cost reduction and those that require additional investment. As well as measuring the overall cost, it monitors device, support and network costs.

Delivery: Provides insight into the relative size of our IT service, and how we develop our staff. It helps to identify if we are investing in the correct end-user devices; if we have the correct level of staffing and whether we are adopting the best policies to assist those staff.

Delivery	
2021/22	**2022/23**
Users per ICT ▫▫▫▫■	Users per ICT ▫▫▫▫■
Devices per 'support specialist' FTE ■▫▫▫▫	Devices per 'support specialist' FTE ▫■▫▫▫
No. of users per service desk FTE ▫▫▫▫■	No. of users per service desk FTE ▫■▫▫▫
ICT - Turmoil ■▫▫▫▫	ICT - Turmoil ■▫▫▫▫
Number of devices per user ▫▫▫▫■	Number of devices per user ▫▫▫▫■
Number of workstations per user ▫▫▫▫■	Number of workstations per user ▫▫▫▫■
% of all devices purchased in the year ▫▫▫▫■	% of all devices purchased in the year ▫▫▫▫■
Users per printer ■▫▫▫▫	Users per printer ■▫▫▫▫
Users equipped for flexible working ▫■▫▫▫	Users equipped for flexible working ■▫▫▫▫
Screens per workstation ▫▫▫▫▫	Screens per workstation ■▫▫▫▫
Average Bandwidth per site ▫▫▫■▫	Average Bandwidth per site ▫▫▫▫■
Adoption of Governance Standards ▫▫▫▫▫	Adoption of Governance Standards ▫■▫▫▫
% of technical FTEs in 1st Line support ▫▫▫▫■	% of technical FTEs in 1st Line support ▫▫▫▫■

Cost	
2021/22	2022/23
N/A	

	2022/23
Percentage spend on ICT	■□□□□
Cost per ICT FTE	□□□■□
TCO per device	□■□□□
Spend on devices per user	□□□■□
Support costs per user	□□■□□
% of ICT spend on networks	□□□□■
Network spend per user	□□■□□
Network spend per device	■□□□□
Grand total expenditure on ICT	□■□□□
ICT spend per head of population	□■□□□
ICT spend per user	■□□□□
Acquisition cost per device	■□□□□
Average support cost per device	□■□□□
Total spend on network	□□□□■
Network spend per site	□■□□□
Spend on training per ICT FTE	■□□□□

With many organisations having different structures, particularly around the management (and therefore inclusion of) education IT, it is sometimes not possible to directly compare all organisation's data but with more than 20 organisations taking part trends and subsets of the benchmarking data provide important insights into our relative performance. In addition to comparing with other organisations they also provide a historical record of our performance and how it has changed.

Local Authority Complaints Handling Network Data

	Aberdeenshire 22/23	Family Group 22/23	Scottish Average 22/23
Complaints per 1,000 population	**7.97**	5.8	11.45
Complaint Outcomes			
Stage One – Partially & Upheld	**44%**	62%	73%
Stage One – Not Upheld	**56%**	38%	27%
Stage Two - Partially & Upheld	**27%**	37%	41%
Stage Two – Not Upheld	**73%**	63%	59%
Average Response Time (in days)			
Stage One (5-day target)	**8.1**	6.4	9.1
Stage Two (20-day target)	**18.88**	25.21	20.91
Closed Within timescale			
Stage One	**67%**	74%	74%
Stage Two	**78%**	58%	70%

Awaiting updated information for year 2023-24

Across the wider service, we work collaboratively with other local authorities through various national forums including:

- Scottish LA Comms Network – topline benchmarking survey created in collaboration with National Comms group, April 2024.
- Community Planning Network
- Scottish Councils Equality Network
- Local Government Digital Office
- Local Authority Customer Services Managers Group
- Local Authority Complaints Handling Network

The activities carried out in Customer & Digital Services are not reflected through the indicators in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF). You can view the LGBF dashboard here.

Benchmarking & Self-Evaluation

Customer & Digital Services were the first team in the council to pilot the new approach to self-assessment using the PSIF model in 2022. The improvement actions identified have been delivered. The management team will review the impacts of these actions with teams and make further improvements as needed, prior to the next full PSIF exercise due in 2025.

- Create a governance structure around plans and clear signposting to plans relevant to CDS.
- Improve our approach to how key performance information is presented to staff to ensure it supports positive changes to service delivery.
- Look at the ways the service can make better use of customer feedback to ensure it is reflected in service design and delivery.
- Review current approaches to workforce planning to ensure they are fit for purpose in terms of staff profiles and skill gaps.

Financial Profile

Head of Service Narrative

Customer and Digital Services is adapting constantly to the financial challenges facing the organisation. At the core of our activity over the coming year we will be leading and delivering the data, digital and technology workstream as part of the transformation programme. Initially we will focus on driving efficiencies across administrative functions by automating processes, providing online services, deploying technology to remove the need for manual inputs, and increasing the use of corporate systems to drive improvements for our customers, like bookings. As we are delivering this programme of work, we will be exploring the use of AI and increasing our use of data to target where our interventions will provide the greatest financial return on investment. We will work towards embedding an Enterprise Architecture model across the Council, driving whole council improvements through investment in corporate systems, whilst also addressing the very real challenge of technical debt. We will continue to invest in cyber resilience, so our networks, data and information are safe.

We continue our network replacement programme, moving into our education estate once all corporate sites are upgraded. This programme will be delivered as a rolling programme as our capital allocation allows.

Over the last three years, Customer & Digital Services has reduced in size dropping from 199.3 FTE in 2021/22 to 176.4 FTE in 2024/25, a reduction of over 11%. These reductions have largely fallen in IT and Customer Services and is having an impact on the service's ability to respond to the needs of the wider organisation and our customers. We are responding to this by reviewing our service structures, deploying technology to automate key processes and transactions (though the deployment of ChatBots and automation), and being clear with services what we can, and cannot do, within the resources we have. As a team we will continue to prioritise our activity to where our interventions can have the greatest impact on our staff, residents and customers.

The budget is agreed annually by Full Council in February.

Customer & Digital Services Budget for 2024/25

	24/25 Budget £'000
Staff Costs	9,279,500
Premises Costs	6,400
Transport	25,200
Supplies & Services	3,679,600
Grants	(15)
Income	(175)
Total	12,800,700

Broken down by team, the budget is as follows:

IT	7,915,800
Strategy & Innovation	2,015,900
Customer Services	2,006,100
Comms & Marketing	592,900

IT Capital Budget for 24/25 is £1.450m

Service Staffing Profile

Organisational Chart

```
                        Head of Service
                      Customer & Digital
                           Services
                          Kate Bond
```

Communications & Marketing Sarah Rochester	Customer Services Michelle Milne	Strategy & Innovation Fiona McCallum	IT Alec Mcvean
Comms & Marketing	Frontline Advisors	Policy & Performance	Application Development
Creative Services	Feedback Team	Data & Analytics	Customer Support
User Experience Team	Development Team	Digital Programme Team	Data & Servers
	Training Team	Change Team	Service Delivery & Security
		Project Management	

Aberdeenshire Council have identified, at a corporate level, that all Business Plans must address the following workforce planning activities to support the Council in being fit and flexible for the future: Wellbeing, Digital Skills, Diversity and Succession Planning, Establishment Control. Services also identify actions relating to industry and service specific drivers based on their own internal and external environmental analysis to ensure they have the right people in the right place doing the right things at the right time for them to meet their overall service outcomes and priorities.

Workforce Planning requires a level of forecasting and should be in place for a rolling 3-year period as many workforce planning actions require time to come to fruition, e.g. natural turnover, skills development, succession planning. Also providing a transparent 3-year workforce plan allows for better transparency and levels of engagement with the workforce.

Key priorities and updates are provided below.

Measures of Success/ Progress Update:
Over the last 12 months the following progress has been achieved in relation to the actions set in the 2023 Business Plan:

Wellbeing
- Between March 2023 and March 2024, stress accounted for 154 days lost to the service, with depression accounting for 235 days lost. ***This is a significant reduction by 60% and 28% respectively on the previous year.***
- All managers have completed Mental Health at Work training.
- 87% Wellbeing Platform and App have been discussed and promoted to every team. This includes a specific Lunch & Learn session for all C&DS staff.
- Support information has been highlighted to all staff. This includes a focus in the C&DS Virtual Staffroom (SharePoint page).
- PPPs and 1:1s regularly take place to provide a framework for constructive feedback and allow for conversations on workload and commitments to be discussed.

Skills

- Extensive training programmes in place for front-line Advisors on Services has been delivered.
- PPPs and 1:1s regularly take place where training/development is discussed.
- Annual training plans have been integrated into PPPs and teams plan processes with the expectation that all staff have an annual plan. This is aligned with a shift in focus to request the training that's required, and funding looked for externally if available. Learning statistics are gathered through a time recording process and reported through IT metrics.
- Customer Services has recently introduced a new coaching programme for all front-line Advisors, Supervisors and Team Leaders.
- Communications & Marketing have regular team learning workshops, discussions on training opportunities and budget. There are also, national discussions on training opportunities via the Government Communications Service. The Service Manager has begun a mentoring programme to support others in the organisation.
- Head of Service participated in an Executive Stretch demonstrating leadership and an openness to continuous learning.
- In Strategy & Innovation a training programme has been developed and training opportunities are shared on the Team chat. Training is a standing agenda item at Strategy & Innovation management team meetings.
- Coaching and mentoring is promoted through monthly 1:1s and PPP conversations in Strategy & Innovation.

Diversity

- iTrent reports are being used to analyse recruitment and employee data.
- Managers' toolkit is being utilised to track employee data.
- Further apprenticeship opportunities have been created.
- Student placement opportunities have been created within Strategy & Innovation.

Succession Planning

- New technology-based teams have been implemented throughout IT. Training needs are highlighted as well as utilising training that has been carried out (e.g. security) to provide new opportunities for staff and remove single points of failure/knowledge.
- There is a focus on internal recruitment opportunities to help with retention rates whilst matching services and service levels, to align with staffing changes such as VS.
- Succession planning is discussed as part of the PPP.
- In Strategy & Innovation the need for succession planning was identified and this is now incorporated into Team meetings and 1:1s. Significant progress has been made across all teams in terms of upskilling and knowledge sharing and this continues to be an area of focus.
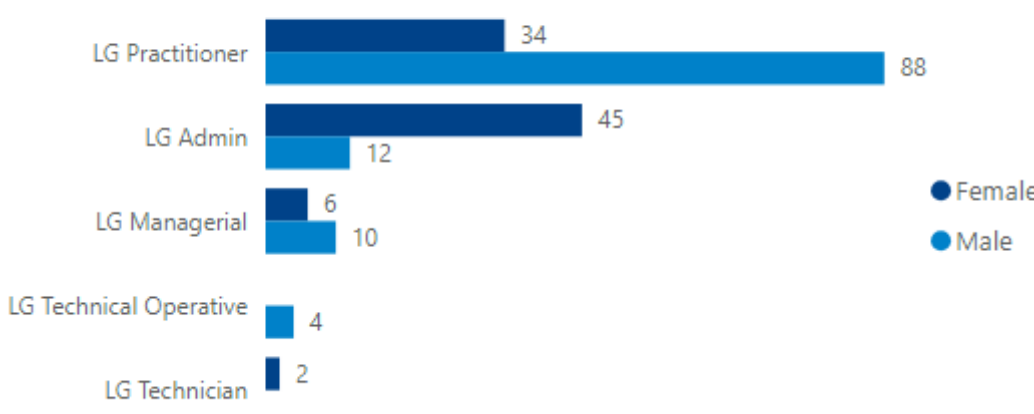
Establishment Control

- Customer Services piloted new ways of working. Following the pilot period, this is now being rolled out across the team. Customer Services will continue to monitor the impact.
- Regular monitoring and delivering on PSIF activities take place.
- In Strategy & Innovation regular reviews of performance indicators take place to ensure these remain relevant and we continue to speak to other authorities about benchmarking opportunities.
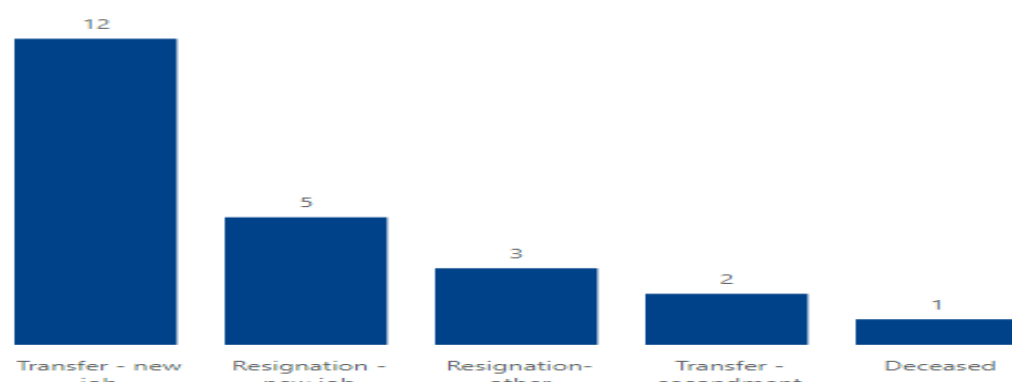
Workforce Plan

Wellbeing	Issue/Risk	During 2023, 38 C&DS employees signed up to use the 87% app. Less than 10 employees participated in this year's assessment. As a result, due to anonymity reasons, an in-depth breakdown is not available. In November 2023, a pulse survey was available to staff to rate their own wellbeing. The results from this show C&DS following a similar pattern to the whole organisation with a slightly worsening picture with decreased in the Excelling and Thriving categories and an increase in the lower 3 categories.	
	Action(s)	87% Wellbeing Platform and App to continue being discussed and promoted to every team. Support information to continue being highlighted and provided to the whole service via the Virtual Staffroom (C&DS Team SharePoint page) allowing all employees to be aware of the range of support available to them. PPP conversations to continue being carried out regularly with all team members to provide a consistency to the supportive conversations being had by managers, to provide a framework for constructive feedback and allow for regular conversations on workload and commitments to be discussed.	Ongoing
	Progress/ Measure	Monitored at C&DS Management Team by quarterly analysis and insights from Workforce Power BI and 87% Wellbeing data.	Report and monitor through CDSMT- updates

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Skills	**Issue/ Risk**	Budget reductions require that digital tools are utilised to their full capacity, therefore the workforce need to be equipped with the skills to continually learn and develop their digital skills.	
	Action (s)	Training Needs Analysis to continue being developed and carried out by team managers and digital skills gaps to be identified, so appropriate training/coaching can be developed/ undertaken. Continue development of appropriate training and coaching programmes to support development in areas where skills gaps are identified. Digital skills to continue being included in staff PPP discussions and in team meetings. Managers to identify training opportunities. Managers to continue encouraging discussion of digital improvement in team meetings, encouraging staff to suggest ideas for exploration.	Ongoing
	Progress/ Measure	Monitor changes in the staff Digital Skills TNA and subsequent interaction with CDSMT/L&D. Training materials for Digital Skills monitored.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Diversity	**Issue/ Risk**	The age profile of workforce continues to present a potential area for concern, with 4% of employees under the age of 20 and 34% of the workforce over 50. CDS has a majority female leadership team in contrast to many other services, however profile of diversity changes at practitioner level with over twice as many men at LG practitioner level as women 88 v 34. LG admin level roles see 45 women to 12 men. Jobholder Distribution (top 5 where applicable) LG Practitioner 34 / 88 LG Admin 45 / 12 LG Managerial 6 / 10 LG Technical Operative 4 LG Technician 2 ● Female ● Male	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Diversity cont'd	**Action(s)**	Continue developing talent pipelines and career pathways to support workforce development, and support employee progression in the organisation (See succession planning). Teams and individuals to consider Zig Zag opportunities. Review recruitment practices to ensure there is no gender bias, including advert text and job profiles particularly for senior management roles and encourage female colleagues to consider progression into leadership roles. Continue developing the younger workforce through identifying potential opportunities to include Apprenticeship and entry level roles to teams.	Ongoing
	Progress/ Measures	Monitor the diversity profile of the workforce through the Workforce Profile Dashboard and report to CDSMT on changes.	
Succession Planning	**Issue/ Risk**	Knowledge share across teams with specific skillsets - value of everyone knowing everything v risk of one or two skilled in specific areas. Ability to attract and retain due to market forces, visibility/desirability of council as an employer of choice. Age profile of CDS as above.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
	Action (s)	Identify business critical roles for which potential successors are required. Identify growing talent to fill these roles in the future. Provide clear development pathways, a wide range of activities and a dedicated succession plan programme nurturing internal talent.	31 March 2025
	Progress/ Measure	Monitor the % of roles filled internally. Monitor the use of PPP conversations to identify personal development, employee engagement and job satisfaction	Report and monitor through CDSMT-updates
Establishment Control (FTE, Agency, Overtime use)	**Issue/ Risk**	Customer Services continues to have a much higher turnover than the rest of C&DS – accounting for 62% of all leavers. The prime reason for this is due to progression opportunities available across the organisation and lack of flexibility in front-line roles. Turnover rates in C&DS have remained relatively low across the service as a whole – averaging 0.65%. This contrasts with Customer Service turnover – averaging 3.25%. Leaving Reasons (top 5 where applicable) 12 — Transfer – new job 5 — Resignation – new job (external) 3 — Resignation- other 2 — Transfer – secondment 1 — Deceased	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Establishment Control (FTE, Agency, Overtime use) cont'd	**Action(s)**	Continue to monitor turnover in line with indicators above. Monitor demand on priority areas and take corrective action where possible. Customer Services piloted new ways of working. Following the pilot period this is being rolled out across the team. Customer Services will continue to monitor the impact.	Ongoing
	Progress/ Measures	Reduction in turnover through supportive and corrective measures as highlighted above.	Report and monitor through CDSMT- updates

Concluding Summary

In working to deliver the priorities within this Customer & Digital Services Business Plan, we aim to deliver services that are valued by the wider organisation. As a team we want to be seen as approachable, helpful and solution focused. We will provide a friendly and helpful first point of contact to our customers.

FINANCE SERVICE
BUSINESS PLAN 2024 - 2025

Vision Statement

Forging Financial Resilience, One Strategic Move at a Time: Our Finance Service ensures seamless pay and rewards, precision accountancy, efficient treasury management, timely debt recovery, effective tax administration, and swift and accurate payment of welfare benefits. We are dedicated to cultivating sustainability and resilience at an individual community and organisation level, empowering them to navigate change with confidence and foresight.

Service Function and Purpose

Finance sits within the Business Services Directorate and is one of the few Council services that is in contact with every household, business, employee, and elected member.

It plays an important role in the overall financial sustainability of the Council in facilitating the preparation of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Reserves Strategy and the annual revenue and capital budgets and reporting on the annual financial performance through the preparation of the statutory financial accounts.

The Revenues Service manages and collects all taxation income due to the Council through Business Rates (14,000 properties), Council Tax (122,895 council tax dwellings) as well as the collection of income through Sundry Debtors (56,000 invoices annually).

Through the Aberdeenshire Support and Advice Team residents in Aberdeenshire can receive a range of welfare benefits worth around £30 million per annum.

The Pay and Rewards Team ensures that over 16,000 employees and elected members are paid accurately and timeously each month.

The Finance service is also home to Risk and Resilience, providing advice and support to services on emergency planning, civil contingencies, organisation resilience, CONTEST Counter Terrorism strategy, serious organised crime, business continuity, risk management and Royalty and Events planning ensuring the council meets its obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Corporate Finance – 87.21 FTE				
The Corporate Finance Management Team comprises 4 FTE (1 Service Manager and 3 Team Leaders)				
ASAT	**Accounts Payable**	**Risk & Resilience**	**Financial Management System**	**Development & Financial Training**
56.21 FTE Actual 52.48 (incl. 2 Apprentices)	13 FTE Actual 9.2 FTE	5 FTE Actual 4 FTE (incl. 1 externally funded fixed-term post)	5 FTE Actual 4.2 FTE	3 FTE Actual 2 FTE
• Customer Queries • Housing Benefit • Council Tax Reduction • Discretionary Housing Payments • DHP Budget Monitoring • Provision of information to Social Work in relation to Financial Assessments. • Crisis Grants • Community Care Grants • Scottish Welfare Fund budget monitoring • Free School Meals • School Clothing Grants • Blue Badge applications • Aberdeenshire Educational Trust • Appeals • Working with third parties, DWP and/or CAB	• Process supplier invoices • Queries from suppliers and services • Payment Runs • Purchase Cards • Supplier Records • Construction Industry Scheme Payments • Foreign Payments • Monitor Elcom Electronic Invoicing • Oxygen SIS Scheme	• Civil Contingencies • Emergency Planning and response • Community Resilience • Counter Terrorism • Serious Organised Crime • Royalty Portfolios • Risk Management • Business Continuity • Event Safety Consultee	• Maintain, test and control the Council's financial management system – Oracle E-Business • This system is key to the financial planning and management of the organisation and is used to produce the Council's statutory annual financial statements. • Provision of financial data and analysis • Liaise with software supplier. • Operational support to users of Oracle • Maintain, test and control I-Procurement the Council's purchasing system. •	• Developing of Power BI Reports • Oracle E-Business Upgrades • Training on use of Oracle E-Business • Training on the use of Power BI Reports • Developing Robotic Process Automation for Payables • GDPR Compliance • Developing virtual centralised automated invoice processing option • Working with E&IS on the SAVE Replacement

• Working with Private Landlords in relation to tenancy changes, and/or supported accommodation developments. • Overpayment of Housing Benefit on going benefit recovery • HB Estimates & Subsidy Claim • Document Management • Process development and mapping • Submission of Monthly, Quarterly, 6 monthly and yearly returns to DWP/Scottish Government •			• Input Files from Feeder Sytems into the General Ledger • Input Receivables Files to Oracle to produce customer invoices	

Revenues - 82 FTE			
The Revenues Management Team comprises 4 FTE (1 Service Manager and 3 Principal Officers)			
Taxation	**Income Management**	**Income Recovery**	**Revenues & Benefits Systems**
36 FTE Actual 31.5	12 FTE Actual 11.5	18 FTE Actual 17	12 FTE Actual 9.5
• Billing & Administration of Council Tax • Billing & Administration of Business Rates • Billing & Administration of BIDS • Grants • Working with Third parties including Assessors, Scottish Water, Citizen Advice, and DWP • Management & administration of Local Taxation Discounts, Exemptions and Reliefs	• Management of Direct Debits including BACS compliance • Management of Debit/Credit Card payments including PCI DSS compliance • Management of: • Bank Contract • Cash in Transit Contract • Third Party Payments Contract • Bank Account Reconciliations • Control Account Reconciliations • Sundry Debtor Administration	• Corporate recovery of Council Debts • Management of Sheriff Officer Contract • Management of debt held by Legal Services • Income Support and Universal Credit deductions • Sequestrations, Liquidations, and Trustees cases • Credit Checking services • Gone Away cases and Tracing Services • Working with Third Parties including Citizen Advice, DWP, Sheriff Courts, Accountancy & Bankruptcy and Sheriff Officers.	• Manage, maintain, test and develop the systems used by the Revenues and Benefits teams • System user support • Management of Systems Support & Maintenance Contracts • IT Liaison • Critiqom Liaison • BACS files • **Service Development** • Civica Digital 360 Upgrade • Enhanced automation for the Corporate Arrears Recovery system

Strategic Finance –30.27 FTE			
The Strategic Finance Management Team comprises 4 FTE (Service Manager & 3 Team Leaders) The Strategic Finance Service is currently reviewing its staffing structure to address risks highlighted by External Audit – a revised structure will be introduced in 2024/25 which will include the appointment of apprentices			
Business Partnering	**Revenue Accounting**	**Capital Accounting & Treasury**	**Shared Insurance Service**
3.8 FTE	15.47 FTE	4 FTE	3 FTE
• Financial monitoring of Committee reports and providing financial advice at Committee Meetings. • Providing Financial advice and information to Directorates to support forecasting and analysis to help with decision making and setting of strategies. • Advise on the application of and raise awareness of the Council's financial regulations	• Financial monitoring of Committee reports and providing financial advice at Committee Meetings. • Providing financial advice to budget holders to support decision making. • Preparing statutory annual accounts (including Trusts and Common Good Funds) • Preparation and monitoring of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and revenue budgets • VAT – accounting and returns. • Completion of statutory financial returns • Financial regulations and policies • Provide financial services to Nestrans and Create Homes	• Financial monitoring of Committee reports and providing financial advice at Committee Meetings. • Preparation of statutory annual accounts • Preparation and monitoring of the General Services and Housing Capital Plans • Completion of statutory financial returns • Evaluation of capital projects. • Provide advice on financial regulations. • Monitoring of Developer Obligation funds and Road Bonds • Undertake all Treasury Management activities (borrowing, investments, banking) for Council, Nestrans and Create Homes • Cash flow forecasting and monitoring • Leasing	• Provision of insurance services to Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils

Payroll & Rewards – 34.86 FTE The Payroll and Rewards Management Team comprises 4 FTE (Service Manager and 3 Team Leaders)			
Payroll	**Reward & Analytics**	**Payroll & HR Systems Development**	**Travel & Employee Benefits**
14.7 FTE Actual 16.05	8.53 FTE Actual 7.55	5.89 FTE Actual 6.86	6.37 FTE Actual 6.37
Provision of a comprehensive payroll function for Council employees, Elected Members, Pensioners and external staff groups, i.e., NESTRANs, elections staff and individuals within scope of the IR35 regulations. • Process all related paperwork and notifications from services, external organisations, and other bodies to ensure correct payment of salaries or remuneration. • Perform payroll calculations (automated and manual) and review error and exception reports to identify issues for rectification. • Process forms completed by employees to join or leave the various pension schemes in operation, i.e., LGPS, SPPA and NEST.	**Ensure that the Council's pay structure and conditions of service are fit for purpose and comply with statutory legislation and national agreements.** • Propose changes to the pay structure and terms & conditions of employment based on internal and external research and analysis. • Creation of associated reports and briefings and management of any required workforce and Trade Union consultation activity. • Produce guidance for services and employees on the application of the pay structure. • Identify appropriate employee benefit schemes to enhance the current package, assessing their value to the council against the	**Develop, support and maintain the council's HR/Payroll system, associated reporting tools and processes.** • Plan, develop and create technical solutions using the iTrent system to improve council processes. • Test new functionality introduced via the regular updates made to iTrent. • Respond to queries and issues from system users concerning iTrent and its self-service portals. • Liaise with the system supplier, MHR, by raising helpdesk calls about problems and issues with the operation of iTrent. • Perform a range of tasks on a daily (i.e., new user creation), weekly (i.e., financial code	**Provision of a comprehensive travel service for Council employees and Elected Members and administration of employee benefits and relocation schemes.** • Review error and exception reports relating to online mileage & expense claims to ensure the corporate T&S procedure is being correctly applied. • Design and book UK and international travel itineraries for employees and Elected Members (approx. 4,000 requests per annum). • Undertake administration of the Employee Benefits scheme which includes a range of salary sacrifice solutions and an overarching web-based portal. Workload involves statutory

- Investigate and respond to payroll-related queries and calls submitted by employees and services (approx. 25,000 per annum).
- Participate in projects and working groups that have staffing and payroll implications, e.g., TUPE transfers, review of pay & conditions etc.
- Respond to requests for information from a range of external bodies including HMRC, SPPA, NESPF, Courts, Solicitors, Landlords, Mortgage Lenders and Credit Reference agencies.

relevant employment and ITEPA regulations.
- Model the impact of pay awards and Living Wage increases on the pay structure.
- Develop and maintain a range of toolkits and calculators used by employees and services.
- Maintain and update the organisational structure held within the iTrent system.
- Extract, model and communicate a range of management information and analytics to inform strategic and operational decision-making processes.
- Participate in projects and working groups that have staffing and payroll implications, e.g., TUPE transfers, review of pay & conditions etc.

updating) and monthly basis (i.e., creating ledger files).
- Ensure system users have been set up with the correct security and develop & maintain validation processes to ensure that data entered into iTrent is complete and in the correct format.
- Produce and maintain a suite of Business Objects reports that send information automatically to teams or systems on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis.
- Build and maintain relevant processes and procedures within Cherwell that relate to the employee lifecycle.
- Test new system upgrades and provision of regular reporting on Cherwell and Talentlink.
- Build and enhance platforms and processes for a range of Finance and Legal & People teams and customers utilising new (i.e., Chatbot, RPA) and existing functionality.

eligibility checks, amendments, removals, and associated administration.
- Undertake administration of the council's Car Club solution. This includes providing advice and guidance to employees to ensure best value and contract management as it relates to invoicing arrangements.
- Provide guidance and administrative support in relation to the two corporate relocation schemes which are in operation.
- Undertake statutory reporting obligations in respect of all taxable benefits, including payments to HMRC.

Service Priorities and how they support the Council Plan

The Council's Strategic Priorities are set out in the Council Plan, which was agreed in June 2024 and Finance supports this Plan and the Priorities within it by:

❖ Ensuring efficient, effective, and economic financial management, including the collection of business rates, council tax, and sundry debtors, the Finance service ensures that the council has the necessary revenue to deliver essential local services. This financial stability is critical for ensuring that the Council. can fulfil its statutory duties, is able to respond to new opportunities and pressures and leads in service development and delivery.

❖ By supporting the Council's Transformation Programme to ensure that the Council make better use of our assets, closer working with partners and agencies to bring about a joining up of all services at a local level.

❖ Effective emergency planning and civil contingencies ensure that the council is prepared to respond to crisis, protecting and supporting communities during emergencies

Service Priorities and Activities	Council Priorities				How the Service Priorities support the Council Priorities
	Sustainable Economy	Connected Communities	Living Well Locally	Climate Change	
Local Taxation, Accounts Payables, Accounts Receivables and Business Improvement Districts (BIDS)	√			√	• The efficient processing of accounts payable and receivable, alongside the collection of Business Rates, Council Tax and Business Improvement District Levies (BIDS), helps businesses manage cash flow and operational stability, fostering a strong and diverse economy. • Minimises our carbon footprint with the use of online forms for collection of data.
Treasury Management	√			√	• Sound Treasury Management and Council organisational resilience will attract and manage inward investments, sustaining economic growth and making the region more appealing to investors.

Pay and Rewards	√		√	√	- Managing Pay and Rewards effectively, the Finance service ensures the Council can attract and retain a skilled workforce. This includes maintaining and updating the Council's pay & grading structure and conditions of service, the provision of a comprehensive payroll function and delivery of employee benefits and salary sacrifice schemes that enable employees to access cars, bikes, home & electronic goods and additional voluntary pension contributions. - Partnering with Financial Wellbeing Services to provide employees with financial education, access to affordable loans, savings and pay advances e.g. Grampian Credit Union, Salary Finance. - Minimises our carbon footprint by developing and maintaining systems that increase the use of online functionality for a range of HR and payroll tasks. - Encouraging sustainable business travel through use of audio, video and web conferencing, use of public transport, low emission pool vehicles, the cycle to work scheme and access to ultra-low emission vehicles through the car benefit scheme. - Partnering with carbon conscious companies who offset and reduce emissions e.g. Tusker, the Council's car benefit scheme provider.
Financial Management	√	√	√	√	- Financial Stability allows the Council to offer good services, drawing working-age individuals to the region. This includes overseeing the Council's finances and implementing robust management and reporting practices. - Prudent Financial Management allows for the allocation of funds to community projects, enhancing resilience and vibrancy, infrastructure projects, including travel, transport, and digital connectivity all of which support the development of well-connected communities. - Prudent financial management and the collection of funds for Affordable Housing Projects allows for the allocation of funds for affordable housing.

					• Finance advice and financial management support for Nestrans supports a sustainable economy and connected communities. • Integrating climate change considerations into financial planning ensures that the council's operations and investments support the long-term goal of net-zero emissions. • A well-managed Finance service is pivotal in supporting the council's strategic priorities by ensuring financial stability, enabling efficient resource allocation, and fostering economic, social, and environmental sustainability. • Ensuring the organisation's financial sustainability through prudent financial management enables the organisation to fulfil its obligations to children, Aberdeenshire's future, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when it comes to the provision of education, freedom from violence, abuse, and neglect, the right to be listened to and taken seriously, access to proper housing, food, and clothing and the right to relax and play.
City Region Deal and Investment Zones	√				• The provision of sound financial management and scrutiny services to the partnership that comprises the City Region Deal and the Investment Zone supports a sustainable economy across the region.
Emergency Planning Response, Resilience, Risk and Business Continuity	√	√	√	√	• Emergency Planning, Response and Resilience contribute effectively to the development and delivery of multi-agency activity in support of countering the ever-evolving threats and risks from serious organised crime and terrorism. This includes • The promotion of Business Continuity allows small and medium enterprise businesses to be more resilient to shocks and sustainable over the longer term, making Aberdeenshire a more attractive location for businesses and communities to operate and thrive. • Business Continuity ensures organisational resilience and allows the council to maintain essential services and support communities effectively, even during disruptions.

						• Developing a more resilient culture in and across the communities of Aberdeenshire, through networked learning, maximising funding opportunities and supporting creation, maintenance and development of resilience groups ensures communities can enhance both physical and digital world connectivity and resilience. • Identifying how international and national threats and risks translate to and impact as local risks, emergency planning and risk and resilience management can effectively support capacity building in communities and enhance collective Council and community preparedness to deal with, respond and recover from incidents and emergencies. • Business Continuity Plans allows the council to maintain essential services and support communities effectively, even during disruptions. • Emergency response plans ensure that support is available to the most vulnerable in communities. • Effective risk management practices help the council identify and mitigate climate-related risks, ensuring a sustainable future for the community. •
Welfare Benefits Services – Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Housing Payments, Crisis Grants, Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants				√	√	• Efficient Welfare Benefits processing and financial support including assessments for blue badge entitlements enable people to lead independent lives and provide essential support for the financially vulnerable in Aberdeenshire. Improving the life changes of those at the risk of falling into poverty or already living in poverty. • Assessing and awarding Free School Meals and School Clothing Grants contributes to healthier children, improved academic outcomes, and economic well-being within local communities. • Minimises our carbon footprint with the use of online forms for collection of data.

					• The provision of a wide range of welfare benefits is crucial when it comes to the provision of direct financial support to families, helping lift children out of poverty and enabling the organisation to meet its responsibilities under the UNCRC when it comes to access to proper housing, food and clothing. •
Blue Badge		√	√		• The timely processing of blue badge applications allows the disabled and mobility issues to live locally and stay connected to their communities.

The Finance service, through effective management of accountancy and data analysis from council tax, business rates, sundry debtors, discretionary housing payments, housing benefits, Scottish Welfare Fund support, can help in understanding the fundamental narrative of a place, the reasons why it needs to change, and what its future should be. This understanding is crucial for making financial decisions that align with the needs and aspirations of the Place Plan.

By managing accounts payable, accounts receivable, and treasury management, the Finance service ensures that separate actions dovetail into an overall programme for change. This involves coordinating financial resources and investments to support the implementation of the Place Strategy.

The Finance service helps establish a sensible governance structure for financial decisions through robust risk management and oversight mechanisms. This ensures that financial resources are used effectively and responsibly to deliver the Place Strategy.

By adopting an integrated, collaborative, and participative approach to decisions about services, land, and buildings, and by managing emergency planning, civil contingencies, and organisational resilience, the Finance service helps maximise the impact of combined resources.

Movement

The Finance service can through the support to the capital plan ensure that the development and maintenance of infrastructure that promotes active travel, such as bike lanes and pedestrian paths is considered as part of prioritisation of projects. This includes managing budgets and grants efficiently to ensure these projects are financially viable and sustainable.

Through effective treasury management and the collection of business rates and council tax, the Finance service ensures that sufficient funding is available for public transport projects.

Cycle to work scheme encourages active travel. Car Benefit scheme provides access to low emission vehicles. The Travel & Subsistence procedure encourages use of public transport.

Spaces

Financial support for Community Asset Transfers allowing communities to be actively involved in Community Empowerment.

The Finance Service, through the Risk & Resilience Team is pro-active in development of preparations for delivery of activity that will be required to meet the statutory requirements of The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill (pending enactment) which will deliver, through cross-service involvement, protective security and safety enhancements to key Publicly Accessible Locations in our Places. Additionally, the Risk & Resilience Team ensure that communities are protected from harm be meeting the requirements of the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 2015, and Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996 in respect of key infrastructure sites.

Resources

Efficient processing of welfare benefits and risk management ensures that residents receive timely and adequate support services. This includes health and social care services, emergency planning, and civil contingencies to support vulnerable populations during crises.

By managing business rates and ensuring timely collection of revenue, the Finance service supports local economic development initiatives.

The Finance Service, through the Risk & Resilience Team are leading partners in the Grampian Local Resilience Partnership which collectively prepares for and responds to emergency and incident impacts affecting the communities of the Northeast of Scotland. Effective resourcing and continued pro-active partnership involvement ensures that appropriate levels of preparedness are maintained and enhanced to deliver statutory response and recovery mechanisms by Cat 1 responders (of which Aberdeenshire Council is one) across all Places in Aberdeenshire.

The Finance Service, through the Risk & Resilience Team contributes under statutory direction to the emergency planning for response and recovery across key infrastructure sites located in Aberdeenshire, exerting influence where appropriate to co-ordinate multi-agency planning and preparedness supporting the care and maintenance of these sites and wider connectivity to locality and Place.

Stewardship

The Finance Service, through the Risk & Resilience Team and via the Grampian Local Resilience delivers effective resourcing and continued pro-active partnership involvement ensuring that Aberdeenshire Council, along with partners, can deliver effective, co-ordinated response to incidents and emergencies and contribute to the recovery and ongoing care and maintenance of any Place(s) impacted.

Civic

The Finance Service, through the Risk & Resilience Team are prominent partners in the Grampian Local Resilience Partnership which collectively prepares for and responds to emergency and incident impacts affecting the communities of the Northeast of Scotland. Effective resourcing and continued pro-active partnership involvement ensures that a sense of safety and trust in the response by Category 1 responders, as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (of which Aberdeenshire Council is one) is engendered across the communities and Places in Aberdeenshire.

The Finance Service, through the Risk & Resilience Team is pro-active in development of preparations for delivery of activity that will be required to meet the statutory requirements of The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill (pending enactment) which will deliver, through cross-service involvement, protective security and safety enhancements to key areas of our public facing estate and also in publicly accessible areas, resulting in 'safer spaces in Places'.

The Finance Service, through Risk & Resilience, working with other partner agencies aim to further develop positive activity to deter and divert serious organised crime groups from operating in and across Aberdeenshire and contribute to an increased feeling of safety in our Places.

Performance measures are there to highlight achievements and as a means of revealing strategic and operational issues that have the potential to adversely impact the achievement of the Council Priorities and Council Plan.

The Finance Service collects and analyses data in respect of a range of performance measures that provide data on the impact of resourcing decisions and an early warning of potential issues that may impact on the Council Priorities and outcome objectives, which can then be used to target further research to inform future plans or inform budget and funding decisions locally and nationally.

The Finance Service will provide Elected Members with access to a Quarterly Performance Dashboard and will provide a Performance Health Check to Policy Committees on the six-monthly basis explaining what the performance measures may be indicative of, the 'So What Question', for example increased levels of deprivation, debt issues with a Place based lens where possible.

Council priority	Service performance measure	Action	Indicative of	Responsible Officer	Timescale
A Sustainable Economy	Council Tax Collection In-Year	Percentage of Council Tax collected in-year	Impact of increase in the council tax database. Financial wellbeing of individual households. Impact of decisions on increasing council tax, including water and sewerage charges set by Scottish Water. Impact on bad debt provisions.		
	Business Rates Collection In-Year	Percentage of Business Rates collected in-year	Impact of increase in the business rates database. Financial wellbeing of businesses. Changes to Council policies using devolved powers. Impact of SG decisions on increasing rates poundage and changes to legislation. Impact on bad debt provisions.		

Council priority	Service performance measure	Action	Indicative of	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Sundry Debt Collection	Income received as a %age of opening sundry debt balance	Financial wellbeing of those liable for Council fees and charges. Impact of decisions on introduction of and increases to fees and charges.		
	Sundry Debt	%age of outstanding sundry debt that is more than 90 days old	Financial wellbeing of those liable for Council fees and charges. Impact of decisions on introduction of and increases to fees and charges. Impact on bad debt provisions.		
	Payables	Number of invoices paid in 30 calendar days as a %age of all invoices paid	Impact of Council payment processes on suppliers of goods and services.		
	Payables	Number of invoices paid in 10 calendar days as a %age of all invoices paid	Impact of Council payment processes on suppliers of goods and services.		
Connected Communities	Income Management	Number of card payments received	This indicates the extent to which Aberdeenshire residents choose to pay by card whether online, by telephone or face to face.		
	Income Management	Number of direct debit payers for council tax	This indicates the extent to which Aberdeenshire residents choose to pay by Direct Debit..		
	Income Management	Number of Post Office Payments	This indicates the extent to which Aberdeenshire residents choose to pay at their local post office or paypoint location.		

Council priority	Service performance measure	Action	Indicative of	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Living Well Locally	HB Speed of Processing – New Claims	No. of new claims processed Average number of days to process new claims -Target 27 days	Levels of deprivation Whether the resource allocation of budget and staffing is sufficient. Acceptability of scope and standard of service.		
	CTR Speed of processing – New Claims	No. of new claims processed Average number of days to process new claims -Target 27 days	Increase or decrease in deprivation Sufficiency of SG funding allocation. Whether the resource allocation of budget and staffing is sufficient. Acceptability of scope and standard of service.		
	HB Speed of Processing – Changes in Circumstances	Average number of days to process changes – Target 10 days	Whether the resource allocation of budget and staffing is sufficient.		
	CTR Speed of processing – Changes in Circumstances	Average number of days to process changes – Target 10 days	Acceptability of scope and standard of service.		
	Speed of Processing – Crisis Grants	Number of applications for crisis grants. Average number of days to process – Target 1 day	Increase or decrease in deprivation Sufficiency of SG funding allocation. Whether the resource allocation of budget and staffing is sufficient. Acceptability of scope and standard of service.		

Council priority	Service performance measure	Action	Indicative of	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Speed of Processing – Community Care Grants	Number of applications for community care grants. Average number of days to process – Target 15 days	Increase or decrease in deprivation Sufficiency of SG funding allocation. Whether the resource allocation of budget and staffing is sufficient. Acceptability of scope and standard of service.		

The Finance Service collects and analyses data in respect of several Service Performance Measures that inform the Council of its financial sustainability, the impact of strategic service decisions and the efficiency and effectiveness of service operations given the criticality of the Accountancy and Payroll functions to the Council. This will be reported to Elected Members as part of the Financial Performance Reporting cycle.

Service priority	Service performance measure	Action	Baseline	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
A Sustainable Economy	Payroll	Value of salaries and wages payments made correctly and timeously as a %age of the total value of payments made			Reduces adverse impact on employees, improves cash flow and reduces bad debts	Pay & Reward Manager	

Service priority	Service performance measure	Action	Baseline	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
A Sustainable Economy	Accountancy	Revenue - Actual versus Budget	N/A	100%	Demonstrates good cost control and living within our means to ensure financial sustainability.	Strategic Finance Manager	Throughout 2024/25
	Accountancy	Revenue - Actual versus Projected Outturn	N/A	100%	Demonstrates good cost control and understanding of cost drivers to manage risk throughout the year. This will support the Council living within our means and to ensure financial sustainability.	Strategic Finance Manager	Throughout 2024/25
	Accountancy	Capital - Actual versus Budget	N/A	100%	Demonstrates good cost control and living within our means to ensure financial sustainability.	Strategic Finance Manager	Throughout 2024/25
	Accountancy	Capital - Actual versus Projected Outturn	N/A	100%	Demonstrates good cost control and living within our means to ensure financial sustainability.	Strategic Finance Manager	Throughout 2024/25

Service priority	Service performance measure	Action	Baseline	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
A Sustainable Economy	Accountancy	Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Spend	N/A	8.5%	Demonstrate compliance with Medium Term Financial Strategy	Strategic Finance Manager	2024/25 to 20238/39 (Life of Capital Plan)
	Reserves	Usable Reserves as a %age of Council Annual Budget Net Revenue		N/A	Used as a measure of the Council's ongoing financial resilience and managed use of earmarked reserves to deliver Council priorities.	Strategic Finance Manager	Throughout 2024/25
	Reserves	Uncommitted General Fund Balance as a %age of Annual Revenue Budget		1.19% (£9m working balances as per Budget)	Used as a measure of the Councils ongoing financial resilience.	Strategic Finance Manager	Throughout 2024/25

Note: Whilst the performance measures detailed above are monitored and reported by Finance, most of these hinge on decisions and activities that take place within all Council services, for example revenue and capital spending decisions are made by services, who are also pivotal in evaluating the Projected Outturn.

Benchmarking

The Service can benchmark its performance against a range of measures with performance data published by the UK and Scottish Governments, the Local Government Benchmarking Framework and the CIPFA Scottish Performance Indicators. In addition, the Service utilises opportunities for ad hoc benchmarking in relation to specific areas of work or performance to contribute to and take advantage of areas, of best practice, through the professional bodies and national groups to which the professional teams are affiliated for example CIPFA Directors of Finance, COSLA Welfare and Social Security Advisory Group, Local Authority Resilience Group for Scotland, Grampian Local Resilience Partnership members, Institute of Revenue Rating and Valuation (IRRV).

The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF Indicators currently reported are:

National Indicator	Year (Latest Available Data)	Scottish Average	Aberdeenshire	Long Trend	Short Trend	National Ranking	Quartile Position
SCORP04: The cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax	2022/23	£6.84	£5.62	TBC	TBC	10	Two
SCORP07: Percentage of income due from council tax received by the end of the year	2022/23	96.2%	96.9%	Improving	Improving	14	Two
SCORP08: % of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days	2022/23	90.6%	91.5%	Improving	Improving	16	Two
SFINSUS1 Total useable reserves as a percentage of council annual budgeted revenue	2022/23	24.5%	12.9%			31	Four

National Indicator	Year (Latest Available Data)	Scottish Average	Aberdeenshire	Long Trend	Short Trend	National Ranking	Quartile Position
SFINSUS2 Uncommitted General Fund Balance as a % of council annual budgeted net revenue	2022/23	3.2%	1.4%			30	**Four**
SFINSUS3 Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - General Fund	2022/23	5.4%	6.4%			20	**Three**
SFINSUS4 Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - Housing Revenue Account	2022/23	21.3%	11.1%			6	**One**
SFINSUS5 Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure	2022/23	98.6%	100.0%			11	**Two**
SCORP09 Proportion of SWF Crisis Grants decisions within 1 day	2023/24	93%	98%			10	**Two**
SCORP10 Proportion of SWF community care decisions within 15 days	2023/24	86%	98.5%			12	**Two**

National Indicator	Year (Latest Available Data)	Scottish Average	Aberdeenshire	Long Trend	Short Trend	National Ranking	Quartile Position
SCORP11 Proportion of SWF Budget Spent	2022/23	130%	139.9%			12	Two
SCORP12 Proportion of DHP funding spent	2022/23	94.4%	75.5%			30	Four
Claimant Count as a % of Working Age Population	2023/24	3.1%	1.8%			4	One
Claimant Count as % of 16-24 Population	2023/24	3.6%	2.4%			6	One

The following benchmarking data is available via the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) for housing benefit:

National Indicator	Year (Latest Available Data)	Scottish Average	Aberdeenshire	Long Trend	Short Trend	National Ranking	Quartile Position
HB: Average number of days to process a new claim	2023/24	19	15			10	Two
SCORP12 Proportion of DHP funding spent	2023/24	7	5			7	Two

Finance will undertake the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) self-assessment in 2024/25 to support the delivery of improvement within the Finance service through a comprehensive review of our current activities. It is anticipated that this will inculcate an ethos of consistent continuous improvement across all teams within the service.

The Finance Service Budget for 2024/25:

Expenditure	£'000
Staff Costs	9,741
Payments to Third Parties	31,621
Supplies and Services	6,066
Transport	5
Premises Costs	1
	47,434
Income	
Grants income	(26,602)
Other Income	(4,981)
	(31,583)
Net Budget	**15,851**

Our People: Staffing & Workforce Planning 2023-2026

Service Staffing Profile

```
Head of Finance
  └─ Head of Service PA
       ├─ Strategic Finance Manager
       │    ├─ Businss Partnering to Directorates
       │    ├─ Accounting - Revenue
       │    ├─ Accounting - Capital & Treasury
       │    └─ Shared Insurance Service
       ├─ Corporate Finance Manager
       │    ├─ Advice and Support Team (ASAT)
       │    ├─ Accounts Payable
       │    ├─ Risk and Resilience
       │    ├─ Council's Financial Management System
       │    └─ Development and Financial Training
       ├─ Pay & Rewards Manager
       │    ├─ Payroll
       │    ├─ Reward and Analytics
       │    ├─ Systems Development & Support
       │    └─ Travel and Employee Benefits
       └─ Revenues Manager
            ├─ Taxation
            ├─ Income Management
            ├─ Income Recovery
            └─ Financial Systems Rates, Council Tax, Benefits
```

Measures of Success/ Progress Update

In respect of wellbeing, there have been positive signs with an overall reduction in calendar days lost due to sickness absence while the results from the employee survey suggest that Finance staff have experienced a general improvement in their wellbeing. However, the number of days lost due to stress increased in 2023 while uptake of the 87% wellbeing app remained relatively low. These factors highlight the ongoing need to actively monitor and manage staff wellbeing, as well as continuing to encourage uptake of the 87% app and other resources available.

The increased focus on digital technology to communicate and visualise data, for example using PowerBI and SharePoint, has reinforced the need to ensure that Finance staff have the appropriate digital skills and where gaps are identified, appropriate training/ coaching is provided.

The Risk & Resilience Team have improved staff awareness through the creation of the Risk & Resilience Hub allowing all council staff to access resources that improves the council's overall effectiveness in an emergency and through the innovative use of IT resources are developing processes to automate the management of Incident Management Teams during a response to an emergency making better use of officer time, improving decision making and impacts on our communities.

In terms of establishment control, the overall FTE figure for Finance fell during the 12-month period of February 2023 to January 2024 inclusive, from 222.81 to 215.78. This reflects the ongoing management of fixed-term contracts and requirement to generate in-year budget savings. As further staff savings are to be found in 2024/25, there will be an increased focus on ensuring that the post budget data held within the HR/Payroll system is accurate and up-to-date, and that the workload implications of operating with fewer staff are monitored, with digital solutions being developed and implemented, where appropriate, to automate existing processes and reduce manual intervention.

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Wellbeing	**Issue/ Risk**	The overall sickness absence rate within Finance during 2023, peaked at 2.70% in March (by comparison, the peak absence rate in 2022 was 3.20% in July). In total, there were 2,304 calendar days lost due to sickness absence in 2023, a reduction of 236 (-10.2%) on the previous calendar year. The largest single reason for absence during 2023 was stress, with 730 days lost (compared with 469 days lost in 2022). In respect of wellbeing, based on the responses to the employee survey in September 2022 and then when the same question was asked as a pulse survey in November 2023, Finance staff have shown a general improvement in their wellbeing, with increases in the number who are 'Thriving' and 'Surviving' while those 'Struggling' has declined. This improvement differs to the overall Council picture, where respondents have indicated a general decline in their wellbeing, with more staff struggling or in crisis. While the improvement within Finance is to be welcomed, it is recognised that there is a need to actively promote and manage wellbeing, which includes encouraging staff to make use of the 87% app and other resources available.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
	Action(s)	All managers to complete Mental Health at Work training course. 87% Wellbeing Platform and App to be discussed and promoted to every team at least once by the Team Leader to ensure all employees in the service are aware of this support mechanism. Support information to be highlighted and provided to the whole service allowing all employees to be aware of the range of support available to them. PPP conversations to be carried out at least once every six months with all team members to provide a consistency to the supportive conversations being had by managers, to provide a framework for constructive feedback and allow for regular conversations on workload and commitments to be discussed.	Continual process throughout 2024/25
	Progress/ Measure	Measures of progress to include: All managers have completed Mental Health at Work training. • An improved level of awareness of support resources throughout the whole service, measured through Wellbeing Assessments. • An increase in the number of employees saying they receive constructive feedback from their line manager. • A reduction in the number of days lost due to work-related stress from 2024 and onwards.	Quarterly monitoring

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Skills	**Issue/ Risk**	Differing level of digital ability amongst Finance teams across M365 and service-specific systems. Lack of awareness and understanding regarding available tools to support development of potentially time-saving digital solutions – including M365 Power Platform, RPA, API integration, Chatbot etc. Budget reductions require that digital tools are utilised to their full capacity, therefore the workforce need to be equipped with the skills to continually learn and develop their digital skills. Raising the skills and capability across the Duty Emergency Response Co-ordinator cadre to ensure all are effective leaders and decision makers in an Emergency Response.	
	Action (s)	Training Needs Analysis to be developed for M365 and the main systems used within Finance to identify digital skills gaps so appropriate training/coaching can be identified and provided. Digital skills to be included in staff PPP discussions and in team meetings. Managers to identify appropriate training and learning opportunities. Managers to encourage discussion of digital improvement in team meetings, encouraging staff to suggest ideas for exploration, liaising with Digital Champion(s) as appropriate. Instigation of a DERC skills development programme is underway consisting of a blended approach to learning; training delivered in house by Subject Matter Experts within the Risk & Resilience Team as well as promoting access to nationally recognised and delivered Emergency Planning & Resilience courses. All underpinned by improvements to the process for managing Incident Management Teams during an emergency.	Started in FY2023/24 to be fully complete in 2024/25

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
	Progress/ Measure	Monitor outputs from Digital TNAs and the resultant frequency of training/learning activities undertaken in response to outputs. Discussions through PPP Number of DERC's trained.	
Diversity	**Issue/ Risk**	There are limits to the employee equalities data available as across some protected characteristics categories, more than half of staff have either not responded or have selected 'Prefer not to say' in their responses. This indicates both a lack of engagement with the process and potentially a lack of confidence in the way the data will be used. The age profile of workforce presents a potential area for concern, with only 2 employees aged under 20 (0.82%) while 126 (51.6%) of the workforce are 50 or over, of whom 36 are aged 60 or over (15.6%). The overall Finance workforce remains predominantly female (81.6%).	
	Action(s)	Improve quality of data available and reporting for meaningful use. Staff to be encouraged to record and update their 'Sensitive Information' screen through their Employee Self Service accounts. Develop the younger workforce through identifying potential opportunities to include Apprenticeship and entry level roles to teams.	Ongoing Several apprenticeships recruited to in 2023/24, more planned in2024/25

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
	Progress/ Measures	Recognising that the provision of this information is voluntary, 100% return is not expected. However, the service should see improved data available across the service increased from the current rate.	
		Review the diversity profile of the workforce through the Workforce Profile Dashboard and report to Finance Management Team on changes.	
Succession Planning	**Issue/ Risk**	Unable to fill senior management roles and business critical positions including within strategic finance, system teams and payroll.	
		Age profile of Finance – potential loss of significant experience and knowledge due to the number of staff who may retire in the next 3-5 years	
	Action (s)	Identify business critical roles for which potential successors are required.	Throughout 2024/25
		Provide training, support and development opportunities to those staff who are seeking to improve or expand their skill set and who have shown the desire and potential to progress.	
	Progress/ Measure	Review the percentage of business-critical roles filled internally.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Establishment Control (FTE, Agency, Overtime use)	**Issue/ Risk**	The FTE figure within Finance reduced from 223.40 to 212.18 during the 12-month period of March 2023 to February 2024 inclusive.	
		The use of Fixed Term contracts has fallen during the above period from 60 to 38, as contracts are either ended or the employees take up positions elsewhere (either within or outside the Council). This type of contract can impact on attraction and retention of talent in a market where job security remains an important factor, although they may provide flexibility where budget pressures are a key consideration.	
		The main reasons for leaving over the past 12 months have included moving to another job with the Council (12), moving to an external job (9), taking up a secondment (5) or retirement (4).	
	Action(s)	Review the use of fixed-term contracts to ensure that this is the most effective means of filling posts, some of which will be business-critical. Where a vacant post is to be filled, ensure that a robust business case has been established and agreed by Finance Management Team, with all other options fully considered.	Throughout 2024/25
	Progress/ Measures	Review and manage the duration and average length of fixed term contracts at Finance Management Team	

Concluding Summary

To achieve the Council Priorities, our Finance Service strives to be a trusted partner within the organisation. We understand that every team within the Finance Service must underpin the Council's activities and we are committed to making a significant impact and driving positive change across the financial and risk and resilience landscape.

LEGAL AND PEOPLE BUSINESS PLAN

2024 – 2025

The vision of Legal & People is to Add Value as Aberdeenshire Council's Trusted Advisers.

Legal & People's key priority for 2024/25 is supporting the delivery of the Council Plan - A Sustainable Economy, Connected Communities and Living Well Locally. Legal & People will support the Place Strategy, the Transformation Programme and will continue to Add Value.

Service Function and Purpose

Legal & People sit within the Council's Business Services Directorate and provides Legal, Governance, HR and Health & Safety support and advice to all Council Services and Elected Members and the delivery of Recruitment, Licensing, Developer Obligations and Registration services.

The current FTE (Full Time Equivalent) of Legal & People (29 February 2024) is 148.22, with a headcount of 178 and 190 jobholders. This is an overall reduction of 10.76 FTE since 2023.

Governance (26.5 FTE reduced from 28.85 FTE in 2023*) * Governance budget also includes Head of Service and Business Co-ordinator		
Governance	**Democratic Services**	**Information Governance**
• Monitoring reports and providing legal advice to Council meetings • Providing advice on Ethical Standards, • Scheme of Governance, • Governance support to Aberdeenshire IJB. • Liquor and Civic Licensing, including processing applications and supporting Licensing Board • Common Good Funds • Trusts • Support to Data Protection representatives	• Monitoring reports and providing legal advice to Council meetings • Providing advice on Ethical Standards • Planning • Community Councils and Collaboration governance including City Region Deal • Clerking support to Council meetings • Advice on decision making processes and procedures. • FOI Review Panel • Aberdeenshire Children's Panel ***Trial merger of Committee Services Team***	• Data Protection (including Data Protection Officer • Freedom of Information • Data Sharing • Records Management

Commercial (17.90 FTE, remained same as 2023)		
Commercial	**Property & Conveyancing**	**Developer Obligations & Infrastructure**
• Commercial contracts • Aberdeen City Region Deal • Procurement law • Major project work • Grants/funding agreements • Data protection • Subsidy Control (formerly state aid) • Commercial legal advice	• Property related legal advice. • Title reports, searches • Purchases, Sales, Leases, Servitudes, Wayleaves, legal agreements • Security work, notices • Charging orders/ Housing Adaption grants • Land compensation • Flood prevention schemes • Common Good/ Community Asset Transfer • Major project work	• Assessment of planning agreements and securing of funds for use by Council Services to mitigate the impact of development on local infrastructure. • Working in partnership with Council Services, Communities, NHS and Property and Conveyancing team to coordinate DO function. • Completion of all s69 and s75 planning agreements and any required variations • Advise and lead on delivery of infrastructure for major and complex development sites. • Advise & completion on agreements for the delivery of Affordable housing

Advice (23.6 FTE reduced from 25.49 FTE in 2023)			
Advice	**Representation**	**Registration**	**Elections (virtual)**
• Education advice and placing requests. • Child Protection • Adult Protection • Employment law advice, including TUPE. • Permanence for looked after children. • Environment law advice • Debt recovery	• Representation of the Council's interests in all aspects of litigation in courts and tribunals • Child Protection Orders • Adult Protection Orders • Permanence Orders • Guardianships • Interdicts • Employment Tribunals • Education Appeals	• Birth registration • Marriage registration • Death registration • Marriage and civil ceremonies • Citizenship ceremonies • Family History Service	• Prepares and delivers local authority, Scottish Parliament, and General Elections

HR Operations (48.42 FTE, reduced from 53.82 FTE in 2023)		
HR Operations (ECS & BS)	**HR Operations (EIS & HSCP)**	**AskHR & Transactional**
• Advice and Guidance and ALDO content • Employee Relations • Service redesign • Trade Union Liaison • HR Policy Development • Early Exits and Voluntary Severance • Job Sizing	• Advice and Guidance and ALDO content • Employee Relations • Service redesign • Trade Union Liaison • HR Policy Development • Early Exits and Voluntary Severance • Job Evaluation	• AskHR Helpdesk • Recruitment • Employment Contracts • HR Portal content • Employee Changes • Maternity, leave, etc

HR Resourcing and Development (31.8 FTE reduced from 32.92 FTE in 2023)			
Health, Safety & Wellbeing	**Digital Workforce Development**	**Resourcing**	**Learning & Development and Learning Organisation**
• H&S training and ALDO content • Wellbeing Training and ALDO content • Accident and Incidents • Advice and guidance on all H&S matters • Risk assessments and H&S Audits • Occupational Health Contract • 87% wellbeing contract • EAP contract	• Development and management of Digital Champions community • Digital Training Needs Analysis Tool • Deliver organisational Digital Maturity Assessment • Digital learning content • Delivery of digital skills training • Provide corporate access third party/partner-led digital skills training • Digital learning pathways • Develop ALDO content. • ALDO functionality and reporting • Service specific learning portals in ALDO • Deliver employee Engagement Survey	• Workforce Planning guidance • Emergency Mobilisation • SVQ Centre Management • Pre-employment checks • Leadership and management appointments • Apprenticeships/Developing the Young Workforce • Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion in Recruitment • Agency Contract • Sponsorship	• Develop learning and tools around leadership, management & transformation behaviours and competencies. • Delivery of face to face and online learning • Develop new opportunities. • Develop/deliver bespoke learning. • Long service and employee rewards • PPP & competency framework • Support strategic development of talent for succession planning • Facilitate learning groups • Facilitation of leadership forum. • Facilitate learning and development opportunities and interventions • Develop and promote learning culture.

Service Priorities

Service Priorities and how they support the Council Plan

The Council Plan was agreed in June 2024 and sets out the Council Strategic Priorities – a Sustainable Economy; Connected Communities; Living Well Locally.

Legal & People is a (largely) corporate support service who provide legal advice/representation, HR advice and Health & Safety advice to Council services to support each of the three pillars of the Council plan. Our Service Priorities reflect how we support the Council Plan in the following specific ways: .

A sustainable economy

We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.

- Support new and existing businesses to thrive and provide fair work opportunities
- Secure inward investment to sustain economic growth
- Contribute to the creation of a skilled and resilient workforce by developing the skills our children and young people need for learning, life and work now and in the future
- Equip residents to meet key challenges and transitions in their lives through lifelong learning
- Attract and retain people of working age to the region

To support a sustainable economy, Legal and People will:

- Attract people to Aberdeenshire through sustainable and affordable workforce plans; reshaped employee procedures; an effective Pay Strategy, Reward Strategy and People Strategy, and promoting Aberdeenshire Council as an Employer of Choice.
- Ensure that the Organisation remains compliant with legislative change and develops and supports its workforce, including its safety and wellbeing
- Support and the 'Developing the Young Workforce' programme and deliver the provision of Apprenticeship Opportunities
- Support the Council as the largest single provider of business land and premises in Aberdeenshire, facilitating the sale or lease of land and premises to businesses whether existing or new start to generate economic growth and employment

- Through securing Developer Obligations and providing legal services, support the supply of affordable residential accommodation to assist in attracting persons to take up employment opportunities in Aberdeenshire
- Provide a licensing service to enable business and community activity

Connected communities

We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.

- Support communities to articulate the challenges facing them and how we can achieve better outcomes together
- Collaborate with partners and communities to attract investment to enhance travel and transport connections between our towns and villages
- Encourage and promote active travel – supporting healthier, more sustainable and environmentally friendly travel options
- Improve digital connectivity by securing investment for better infrastructure for homes and businesses

To support connected communities, Legal and People will:

- Through workSTYLE strategy support a flexible workforce that can work within communities
- Develop processes, procedures and training to support services in safely and effectively recruiting individual volunteers and community-based volunteer groups
- Support community connection by supporting the delivery of roads, rail connections and path networks
- Support the Returning Officer in the administration and delivery of election events
- Support public and elected member participation in democratic processes through Committees and Community Councils.

Living well locally

We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.

- Help people to lead independent lives through prevention and early intervention, providing care and support to those most in need
- Facilitate the provision of affordable housing
- Work with and support opportunities for residents to be healthy and active
- Improve the life chances of people at risk of falling into poverty, or already living in poverty
- Promote greater participation by communities so we are working to shared and collective ambitions in our places
- Ensure children and young people have a greater say in matters that will affect them now and, in the future

To support our residents to live well locally, Legal and People will:

- Support Housing/Property's procurement of HIP II framework and Minor works framework
- Support Aberdeenshire's Capital Plan major projects including the delivery of Peterhead Community Campus
- Support HSCP with care home resilience
- Support Aberdeenshire Council to prepare for the National Care Service and continue to support HSCP in their review of adult social care
- Support the Council's implementation of UNCRC (Rights of the Child) incorporation
- Support employees by providing health surveillance and wellbeing programmes
- Support the Housing service in delivery of Affordable Housing programme
- Support the Housing Service in delivery of Adaptation Grants
- Support the administration of Common Good Funds and trusts
- Provide legal advice in relation to The Promise, mental health, community care law and Charging Orders

Place Priorities

The **Place strategy** was agreed in June 2024 and sets out our commitment to work more closely with our partners to deliver the services that will have the greatest impact for our communities.

The framework is based on the thirteen "Place & Wellbeing Outcomes" grouped into five themes:

Movement
- active travel
- public transport
- traffic and parking

Resources
- services and support
- work and economy
- housing and community

Stewardship
- care and maintenance
- influence and control.

Spaces
- streets and spaces
- natural spaces
- play and recreation

Civic
- identity and belonging
- feeling safe

Movement

- Advice & support to communities in the delivery of travel infrastructure allowing communities to be actively involved in the investment in and construction of their community, public services and infrastructure
- Setting the framework to support Council services to deliver the Place based approaches within legal parameters but in a flexible arrangement
- Working directly with Trade Unions to support council services with their changing needs to deliver the Place Strategy
- Leading role in the provision of workSTYLE and flexible working opportunities

Spaces

- Supporting play and recreation through legal advice and via developer obligations funding community projects for sport
- Provision of the Licencing service and in particular the local byelaws
- Support communities by enabling Asset Transfer under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

Resources

- Supporting the creation of affordable housing and infrastructure including funding for community and health facilities
- Provision of Registration and Licencing services

Stewardship

- Maintaining the Common Good Register and Common Good Policies
- Maintaining a Council owned land and premises Title Deed Register

Civic

- Supporting Child and Adult Protection services, provision of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, and support to Area Committees and Community Councils

How we will work with communities

Everything we do will consider the impact on our places and will be informed by the voices of our communities. We will involve communities and service users in shaping our services, including how and where they are delivered. We will work with local people to actively shape the places they live and work in, through supporting volunteering and helping them to make the best use of the assets and resources in their area.

Legal and People will work with communities by:

- Active participation in the development of place plans, place teams and in our work with community councils

Climate change

Climate change and the drive to net zero will be at the heart of how we make decisions and deliver services to support the delivery of our strategic priorities in the long-term. Our decisions will be informed through the lens of climate change to support our communities to have a sustainable future.

Legal and People will support climate change by:

- Supporting the work of the sustainability committee
- Advising services on the interpretation of legislation
- Supporting workSTYLE

Legal & People support the delivery of the Council Plan through professional advice and support to Council Services and Elected Members.

*We will support the **Transformation Programme** and will continue to **Add Value**, for example:*

- *Review all L&P systems use and contracts in line with corporate **Enterprise Architecture Transformation Programme***
- *Continue to use **data, trends, and insights** to drive organisational decision making*
- *Develop a collaboration model to generate income and offset costs through sharing HR and Legal resources with other local authorities*
- *Lead the **development of the workforce digital skills** as part of the **Big Data, Digital and Technology Transformation Theme***
- *Lead the **streamlining of governance** and the **workforce aspects** of the **Organisational Design and Structure Transformation Theme***
- *Support all services to **maximise income through commercialisation** as part of the **Collaboration and Partnership Transformation Theme***
- *Support the Legal and People aspects of the **Transport Transformation Theme***
- *Support Estates colleagues in delivery of the **Asset Disinvestment Programme** as part of the **Buildings and Estates Transformation Theme***

Council priority	Service performance measure	Action	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
All	Percentage of customers giving at least a 4* rating in the L&P customer survey	At least 90% of customers will give a 4* rating or better in L&P customer survey. AskHR survey will separate payroll and HR ratings for 24/25	Continued customer satisfaction and positive working relationships. Continuous improvement.	LPMT	24/25
	Percentage of the L&P workforce who present themselves as thriving in the 87% survey.	Increase in the number of L&P workforce who are Thriving year on year	Increased attendance and greater levels of wellbeing. Improved engagement.	LPMT	24/25
	Percentage of L&P employees who report an increase in Digital Confidence	Superusers regularly support and advise users of CIVICA to increase awareness of system capabilities. Digital Learning promoted widely in L&P teams	More agile and responsive to transformation	LPMT	24/25
	Percentage of customers giving at least a 4* rating in L&D feedback	At least 95% of customers will give a 4* rating or better in L&D feedback forms.	Continued customer satisfaction and positive working relationships. Continuous improvement.	LPMT	24/25
	Increased learning opportunities for L&P workforce	Knowledge sharing - In house delivery of training sessions delivered service wide.	Broader transferable skills and opportunities for succession planning.	LPMT	24/25

Benchmarking

Legal & People undertake benchmarking when looking at policy reviews, an example being the Council's Whistleblowing Policy which is currently under review, looking at and examining examples of best practice from other authorities across Scotland. The review of the procedures for the Council's data protection impact assessments also involves looking at what other authorities are doing and how we can learn from them. Benchmarking is also key when carrying out fee reviews, such as for Licensing, Registration and Property & Conveyancing. In collaboration with the Digital Office, L&D facilitate the Digital Maturity Assessment which assesses Aberdeenshire's position across a range of digital themes, presenting scoring and insights in national benchmarking context.

Teams benchmark against the cost of external solicitors in several areas of the law, for example in permanence/adoption cases. We utilise our communities of interest, including SOLAR, to ascertain benchmarking information in a range of areas such as legal processes around Developer Obligations, permanence for looked after children, licensing and education placements and appeals. Through SOLAR we share information and best practice to ascertain how we compare to other local authorities and to improve service delivery. We chair or actively participate in the following SOLAR and SPDS working groups:

- Child Law Group
- Community Care Group
- Planning Law Group
- Monitoring Officers Group
- Property Group
- Education Law Group
- Data Protection and Human Rights Group
- Health & Social Care/National Care Service Group
- Licensing Group
- Procurement Group
- FOI and Data Protection Group
- Developer Obligations Legal Agent Forum – instigated by Aberdeenshire Council for better liaison with our local agents

We benchmark ourselves in HR with other local authorities when reviewing policies and procedures, as well as benefitting from others who seek to benchmark with us. For example, our sickness absence and equal pay gaps.

Another area where we are looking to benchmark ourselves involves exploring commercialisation of HR. We have formed a group based on the SPDS North Group (Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Highland, Moray, Western Isles, Orkney, and Shetland) to take this forward.

Going forward L&P continue to benchmark our FTE and Outsourcing against equivalent local authorities.

Self-Evaluation

From the HR PSIF Self Evaluation exercise undertaken in 2023, several actions and measures were identified and recorded in an Improvement Plan. Five key areas for improvement were identified, each containing actions, measures and outcomes and monitored via Pentana.

The Service continues to work towards delivering the identified improvement outcomes with the aim of achieving all by the end of 2024.

1. Develop better Performance Management understanding and processes throughout the Service at all levels.

2. Develop communication, information and understanding on Council Plan, Priorities and Strategies including HR Fit for the Future – "Golden Thread"

3. Ensure all teams understand what difference is being made in the role they have including HR Fit for the Future – "Golden Thread"

4. Develop and raise awareness of all areas of HR to ensure that everyone can share knowledge and develop skills across the Service to include:

   > clear understanding across teams of who partners and customers are and how we support them.

   > review operational need and capacity across all teams to ensure that the workload is shared across the Service to enable the pooling of resources and skills when required – cross working for teams.

   > develop opportunities to progress with improvements – developing skills and project management and service design.

5. Embedding clear leadership within the Service 'lead by example'. Having clear line management in place including employee support.

A key priority for L&P in 2023 was the further development of the customer satisfaction survey. In 2024/25, with the survey now being fully embedded into CIVICA legal case management and AskHR, there will be the opportunity for self-evaluation through the collection and analysis of the data.

Legal and People Budget for 2024/25

The budget is agreed annually by Full Council in February.

The table below represents the split within the L&P budget whereby Miscellaneous Licensing is included in a separate budget line due to the statutory requirement to ensure the income reflects the cost of delivering the service.

Legal and People		Miscellaneous Licensing	
Expenditure		Expenditure	
01.Staff Costs	7,761,000	01.Staff Costs	337,000
02.Premises Costs	38,000	02.Premises Costs	
03.Transport	30,000	03.Transport	71,000
04.Supplies & Services	564,000	04.Supplies & Services	200,000
05.Third Parties	5,000	05.Third Parties	
Income		Income	
09.Grants	-9,000	09.Grants	
10.Income	-590,000	10.Income	-682,000
Total	7,799,000	Total	-£74,000

Service Staffing Profile

Aberdeenshire Council have identified, at a corporate level, that all Business Plans must address the following workforce planning activities to support the Council in being fit and flexible for the future:

Wellbeing, Digital Skills, Diversity and Succession Planning, Establishment Control.

Services also identify actions relating to industry and service specific drivers based on their own internal and external environmental analysis to ensure they have the right people in the right place doing the right things at the right time for them to meet their overall service outcomes and priorities.

Workforce Planning requires a level of forecasting and should be in place for a rolling 3-year period as many workforce planning actions require time to come to fruition, e.g. natural turnover, skills development, succession planning. Also providing a transparent 3-year workforce plan allows for better transparency and levels of engagement with the workforce.

Key priorities and updates are provided below.

Measures of Success/ Progress Update

Provide a brief update on progress made during the reporting period.

The model for Strategic Workforce Planning:

To deliver against the workforce strategic outcomes outlined in the Target Operating Model 1.2, the following section breaks down our planned activities into five key areas of work, along with specific objectives and projected timeline. These are:

Right Structures	**Right People**	**Right Skills**	**Right Place**	**Right Support**
Setting up our council in a way that supports our cultural aspirations	Building our capacity through attracting, recruiting, moving talent	Building capability through awareness, desire, knowledge and ability	Working where and when is best for the work and the customer	Supporting employees to thrive, personally and professionally

Workforce Plan

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Wellbeing	**Issue/ Risk**	Overall, indicators are showing a levelling out of the improvements that were being seen in the wellbeing of the L&P workforce and some indicators beginning to suggest a reducing trend in wellbeing in this area. Engagement with wellbeing activities and measures remains high at 51-58%, however, that is a slight decline from the previous year which saw engagement at 60-70%. Slight decline in the percentage of employees with their wellbeing being rated as Thriving via 87% assessment in January 2024 from 46% in 2023 to 44%. The overall sickness absence trend for L&P is continuing on a downward trend, however, an increase towards the end of 2023 was starting to be seen and has continued into the beginning of 2024. Wellbeing Survey Employees were asked to rate their wellbeing through survey formats in 2022 and again using the same scale in 2023. Legal and People are seeing an increase in those rating their wellbeing in the lower end of the scale (Surviving, Struggling, In Crisis) and a reduction in those rating themselves at the top of the scale (Thriving and Excelling) in 2023 indicating a reduction in employee wellbeing. This is consistent with what is being seen across the organisation as a whole.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
		A consistent picture is coming through the 87% Wellbeing assessment in 2024 also with a reduction of those being rated as their wellbeing 'Thriving' from 46% in 2023 to 44% in 2024. Sickness Absence Stress remains the top reason for absence within Legal and People, however the number of days lost due to stress has reduced from 318 days (April 2022-March 2023), to 237 days (April 2023 – March 2024). The number of absences due to stress reduced by 1 from 10 to 9 which would suggest that the length of absences due to stress have been shorter in the last year than in the previous year. The data does suggest that although the overall wellbeing of the workforce in L&P is showing signs of being less well, the aim of steading absences due to stress has been achieved.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
		<u>Transformation</u> The resilience of the workforce in L&P will be a risk in the coming year given the change that is expected across the organisation via Transformation work and the direct impact on workloads within this service coupled with the environment of change. Attention to be given on an ongoing basis by LPMT of how the Transformation agenda is impacting on the workforce in the service.	
	Action(s)	Measure of employee wellbeing to continue on an at least an annual basis to track changes over time through a pulse survey.	
		LMPTX to improve information sharing about wellbeing activities and to actively promote engagement with these wellbeing resources and measures on a regular basis with their teams.	June 2024
		Continued focus on training and the provision of resources for managers to support employee wellbeing in a changing environment.	Ongoing
		87% Wellbeing Platform and App to be discussed and promoted to every team at least once by the Workplace Wellbeing Advisor and once by the Team Leader to ensure all employees in the service are aware of this support mechanism.	Ongoing
		PPP conversations to be carried out at least twice a year with all team members to provide a consistency to the supportive conversations being had by managers, to provide a framework for constructive feedback and allow for regular conversations on workload and commitments to be discussed. (January and August).	Twice Annually

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
		Back related problems are appearing in the top reasons for absences, whilst the number of instances is low, the length of absences and resulting days lost is higher and DSE is one of the primary known risks to employees within L&P. A renewed focus on DSE set ups in the office and at home to be undertaken.	September 2024
		Support information to be highlighted and provided to the whole service via L&P Team page allowing all employees to be aware of the range of support available to them.	6-monthly
	Progress/ Measure	Sickness Absences directly attributed to stress to start to see a reduction in days lost in 2024 and onwards (241 days lost to March 2024).	March 2025
		100% of managers have completed Mental Health at Work training. 36% of managers in Legal and People have currently completed this training.	March 2025
		100% of desk-based employees within L&P to have completed the DSE e-learning training and to have a DSE assessment undertaken.	September 2024
		Engagement in Wellbeing Assessments of the workforce is at least 70% of the service.	Ongoing
		Minimum of 44% of employees within the service have a wellbeing rating of Thriving when measured via 87% Wellbeing Assessment	January 2025
Skills	**Issue/ Risk**	L&P teams depend on both the Microsoft365 suite and a range of proprietary software solutions to support service delivery.	
		A 2021 Digital Training Needs Analysis suggested most L&P team members possess an average degree of digital competence, but with some reporting an overall lack of confidence, and with relatively few possessing advanced' abilities.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
		Overall, this suggests a good foundation for digital skills development, improving staff ability to confidently develop more effective/efficient business practices. Inconsistent digital confidence and ability among L&P teams across M365 and proprietary systems. Without appropriate training and support, some colleagues retain inefficient operational practices, potentially leading to a sense of disengagement in an increasingly digitise workplace.	
	Action(s)	Requirement for improved manager/team awareness of and engagement with digital tools available to support development of potentially time-saving digital solutions – including M365 Power Platform, RPA (Robotic Process Automation), API integration, Chatbot etc. Insufficient engagement in this area reduces likelihood of systems development/enhancement, which may minimise benefit realisation. Budget reductions require that digital tools are utilised to their full capacity, therefore the workforce need to be equipped with the skills to continually learn and develop their digital skills. Implementation of iCasework Legal Case Management system (Feb 2023) and Civica Committee Management (Nov 2023) included provision of induction training for all users. iCasework Superuser and Board groups convene monthly to share knowledge of outstanding issues, hints & tips, and to support consistent system use throughout the service. A subsequent iCasework feedback survey (Oct 2023) confirmed general desire for refresher training – now being delivered to all legal teams. 2024/25 development work will focus on improving existing functionality, creating new workflows, and explore integration with aligned business systems (e.g. Uniform) to improve transactional efficiency. This development will be enabled by systems support resource recruited to Business Support Admin.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
		Regular engagement with HR staff is key to ongoing AskHR and Cherwell system development. A function of this engagement - development of a new handbook to improve workflow between these systems - led to delivery of bespoke system training to HR Ops in October 2023.	
	Progress/ Measures	L&D broader focus on Digital Workforce development has led to a range of initiatives to improve workforce access to relevant digital learning and support, including: Digital Workforce SharePoint page (live); M365 skills hub (early release); M365 TNA app (development); reintroduction of trainer/partner-led digital skills webinars (live). Additionally, reintroduction of monthly Digital Champions meetings has led to increased engagement among this community – a key resource in supporting digital adoption within services. Formal expansion and skills development of this community anticipated from April '24.	
		Digital Skills development CPD session to present range of digital skills development options available to L&P colleagues.	April 2024
		M365 TNA to be issued to all L&P staff (as early adopters of new app)	May 2024
		Digital Skills development to be discussed in PPP conversations.	Ongoing
		Business System owners to ensure appropriate user/superuser groups in place to share best practice and consider opportunities for system enhancement / integration / automation.	Ongoing
		Managers to lead teams in seeking digital improvement opportunities, whether in-house M365 solutions / process automation / system integration. Digital improvement and skills to be discussed in team meetings, encouraging staff to suggest ideas, liaising with Digital Champion as appropriate.	Ongoing

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Diversity	**Issue/ Risk**	In 2022 Employees were given access to record and maintain their Equality and Diversity details through their Employee Self Service accounts, the categories were also amended to match both Talentlink and the recent Census to allow for improved reporting moving forward. There are however still significant gaps in the diversity data for L&P. The lack of equalities data available creates challenges in identifying the level of diversity in the service. This suggests a lack of engagement with the process and potentially a lack of confidence in the way the data will be used. The age and sex profile of L&P is however complete as this information in mandatory, where other diversity details are provided on a voluntary basis. 47% of the workforce are over the age of 50 (an increase of 1% from 2023), the majority of whom fall in the 50-59 age bracket. The percentage of employees over 60 had risen from 8.4% in March 2023 to 11.24% in March 2024. This may present an issue over the next 5-10 years as these individuals may opt to retire. There are still no employees under the age of 20 in L&P suggesting the service are not attracting young people into the workforce. The overall L&P workforce remains predominantly female with a similar proportion of male to female seen through the job banding, although this evens at management level. The mainly female workforce suggests there is opportunity and interest for both male and female employees to progress within the service. However, it should be noted that at managerial level there is a narrower divide between numbers of male and female employees. 48% male in managerial roles (an 8% increase from 2023) compared to 22% of those in practitioner roles being male (a 2% decrease from 2023), which may suggest that female employees are not progressing to management roles at the same rate as their male colleagues.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
	Action(s)	Improve quality of data available and reporting for meaningful use. Staff to be encouraged by their line managers and posts to L&P team to record and update their 'Sensitive Information' screen through their Employee Self Service accounts.	Ongoing – until significant rise in declaration
		Appropriate reports to be developed to improve the analysis of recruitment and employee data regarding diversity categories to support meaningful decision making.	December 2024 Reported through L&P Extended Management Team twice a year
		Develop talent pipelines and career pathways to support workforce development, and support employee progression in the organisation (See succession planning). Teams and individuals to consider Zig Zag opportunities.	Improvement by December 2024 monitored as above

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
		Develop the younger workforce through identifying potential opportunities to include Apprenticeship and entry level roles to teams Review recruitment practices to ensure there is no gender bias, including advert text and job profiles particularly for senior management roles.	Ongoing 2024 Reported through L&P Extended Management Team twice a year
	Progress/ Measures	Recognising that the provision of this information is voluntary, 100% return is not expected. However, the service should see improved data available across the service increased from the current rate. Monitor the diversity profile of the workforce through the Workforce Profile Dashboard and report data and insights to LPMT and LPMTX any progress.	
Succession Planning	**Issue/ Risk**	Good practice exists across L&P providing training and learning opportunities at all career levels, formal traineeships, paid and unpaid placements, foundation, modern and graduate apprentice opportunities. In addition, employees have access to opportunities such as young local authority of the year L&P will engagement with corporate initiatives due this year around future leader programmes, employee recognition programmes and other external recognition programmes such as SOLACE. Currently there is a vulnerability. around filling business critical and leadership roles. Additional vulnerability in some teams around age profile. Whilst there are established talent pipelines, more overt development of high potential talent is required.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
		Current vacancy management may result in limited opportunities and a limited application pool. Therefore, the risk L&P are unable to fill leadership and business critical positions. Age profile of L&P as above – Diversity issue risk 2. The Employee recognition survey found 57% of the responses rated between 1 and 3 when asked if they felt recognised for the work they did (1 star meaning not at all to 5 Priority Key Actions Target Date).	
	Action(s)	Identify growing talent to fill these roles in the future through corporate competency Framework. Provide clear development pathways/programmes, a wide range of activities and a dedicated succession plan programme nurturing internal talent. This would include apprenticeship schemes, youth pathways, zig zag, executive stretch, mentoring, coaching, secondments etc.	March 2025 March 2025
	Progress/ Measures	Monitor the % of leadership roles filled internally. Monitor the uptake of the various development opportunities.	Reported through L&P Management Team and L&P Extended Management Team twice a year.

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Establishment Control (FTE, Agency, Overtime use)	**Issue/Risk**	Compared to March 2023 figures the FTE, Headcount and Jobholders have reduced in March 2024. Permanent contracts have remained on a steady downward trend in 2023. Fixed Term contracts continue in an upward trend from 2022 to date, with 32 fixed term contracts in place in March 2024. To date March (2024) fixed term contracts make up 20% of the overall occupancy rate. | Contract Status	Headcount	Jobholders	FTE	Avg. Service (Yrs)
---	---	---	---	---
Permanent	148	154	123.25	14.75
Fixed term	34	35	25.23	10.20
Relief	2	2	0.00	6.75
Total	**178**	**191**	**148.48**	**13.34**	 Relying on contracts of this type may impact on attraction and retention of talent in a market where job security remains an important factor, although may provide flexibility where budget pressures remain constrained. The main reason for leaving over the past 12 months has been an 'end to Fixed Term Contract', closely followed by 'transferring to a new job' and 'secondment'. Only 6 have indicated new job and 5 employees have retired.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			

The turnover rate for Legal & People (2023) was 14.95% *(please note this also includes internal transfers)* which is an increase of 9.21% in the 2022 turnover rate of 5.74%.

This increase is affected by 13 leavers with a reason of 'Transfer – New Job', which includes the changes to registrar posts.   As Legal & People is a smaller group any increase/decrease in the number of leavers will change the percentage to a greater extent.

The turnover for the whole council was 14.3% (2023) compared to 14.9% for (2022).

Overtime costs are very low with a total for 2023 of £1,081.18 which is a reduction from £9,786 from the previous year. There has been no spend on consultants in 2023 or the early part of 2024.

There is an anticipated continued reduction in staffing budgets each financial year.

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
		There are risks associated with the age profile as indicated within the Diversity priority detailed above and flexibility of skills/experience to fill required gaps within L&P and other critical posts across Services.	
	Action(s)	Use turnover and voluntary service to manage areas of reduced demand or that have reduced resource requirement due to new digital processes.	March 2024 – March 2025
		Retrain and move existing staff into new roles and careers to address areas of sustained and increasing demand in our own or other Service areas.	March 2024 – March 2025
		Provide opportunities to develop our young workforce by creation of Modern Apprenticeships, by providing at least two Foundation Apprenticeship places (per school year); taking advantage of any relevant government funding opportunities to fund fixed term placements or apprenticeships.	March 2024 – March 2025
		Digital transformation such as RPA and chatbot will further impact on establishment over the course of 24/25 and 25/26.	March 2024 – March 2025

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
	Progress/ Measures	FTE has decreased following the establishment of Vacancy Management and the Voluntary Severance Scheme in late 2023. Vacancy management will continue and FTE will be regularly monitored. Monitor FTE, turnover, agency, external consultants and overtime spend on a quarterly basis. Three Foundation Apprentices were supported in year 2023/24. Continue to monitor numbers of new opportunities (under 25s).	Reported through LPMT/XLPMT twice a year.

Concluding Summary

In working to deliver the refreshed Council priorities within this Legal & People Business Plan, we aim to always strike a balance between the everyday demands of our caseload and the Council's transformation agenda whilst reaching service excellence. As a business service that supports the key priorities and delivery of functions of every other part of the Council, we will be focussed on the expertise, professionalism, energy and motivation needed in our teams to deliver the innovation needed for transformation.

We will be giving special attention to the impact of our work on place. This won't always be a prominent factor given that we are providing support services of universal application across all the council area but, where it is, we will be working to embed the place strategy. We will be aiming to remain a trusted adviser and key partner in transformation in order that we can add value to our organisation. All of that means keeping our staff learning; keeping them well; and keeping them motivated and committed to high standards in what will be a challenging environment.

Karen Wiles

Head of Legal and People

PROPERTY & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

BUSINESS PLAN 2024 – 2029

Vision Statement

Aberdeenshire Council's Property and Facilities Management team strives to create spaces that serve the diverse needs of our community and workforce. Our commitment to excellence drives us to optimise resource utilisation, reduce environmental impact, and enhance the functionality of our facilities, whilst ensuring a sustainable approach to construction.

Taking an innovative and collaborative approach, we aim to set high standards in asset management, construction programmes and facilities management. Our aim is to ensure the council properties/assets are maintained to an appropriate standard, ensuring we have quality functional buildings within our evolving estate and aligned to the Council's Place Strategy and Place Planning.

Service Function and Purpose

Our Team – Serving Aberdeenshire From Mountain to Sea

Our Property & Facilities Management team is part of the Council's Business Services Directorate. The team supports the delivery of Aberdeenshire Council's priorities through the provision of a customer focused Property Management Service. With an extensive property portfolio including schools, libraries, sports facilities, care homes, administrative offices and a large commercial portfolio, the remit of the team is widespread.

…. *design, construct, develop and maintain.*

The Property and Facilities Management team exists to support the delivery of Council Services to meet the needs of our communities; including facilities management of our buildings; providing a design service delivering capital programmes across the Council's extensive range of property assets, and the provision and management of commercial units to both provide an income stream and stimulate economic activity in our region. We have grown considerably in recent years, to have a team in place delivering over £1 Billion of investment since 2010, with a reduction in operational property assets by 28% over the same period. The Council was commended in the 2021 Best Value for its approach to Estate

Rationalisation. The methodology has informed the approach to the wider Estate Modernisation agenda. The Service is cognisant of the need to move towards a smaller one public sector estate.

The Council is the largest construction client in the region, with public sector overall contributing more than half of the nation's annual £9bn expenditure on construction: with the construction sector providing 8% of Scotland's GDP; hence the importance of construction to the economy. The Council has 611 operational assets/features and around 450 commercial assets and 13,200 homes. The Council has the largest portfolio of

property assets in the North East with the use of those assets having a direct correlation to the quality of services being delivered; whilst the investment portfolio helps both stimulate economic activity and provides income generation to the Council.

The service is cognisant of current megatrends including digitalisation, sustainability and change in global dynamics; and headwinds such as skills and labour shortages, inflation, material costs and availability which have impacted market volatility and financial constraints. There is a need for the service to continually evolve to meet current and future challenges by aiming to develop a resource plan and a workforce that is highly motivated, highly skilled and high producing to meet the current and future needs of the service. This Business Plan sets out that vision.

The impact of the Service is wide ranging but can be segmented into three key areas functions, namely, Property Asset Management (including Estates), Facilities Management and Construction Programme Management.

Property Asset Management	Construction Programme Management	Facilities Management
Ensure that the Council's built estate has the right properties in the right place at the right time to support the Council's strategic requirements.	Ensuring the delivery of the Council's Capital Plan by effective and efficient delivery of construction projects.	Provision of modern local offices, depots, and public toilets, ensuring all Council facilities are maintained and cleaned to an appropriate standard.

Property Asset Management

Estates: This team of professionals manages the Council's operational and non-operational assets. In terms of non-operational properties, the team provides commercial and industrial properties which both support the local economy and generate an income for the Council, which can be invested in service delivery. The team further undertake asset valuations which are required for the Council's annual accounts. In terms of operational properties, the Asset Management team ensures that the Council's built estate has the right properties in the right place at the right time to support the Council's strategic requirements and aligned to Place Plans. Through an asset review process the team identifies investment requirements, and where relevant, disinvestment, through challenge of asset use to highlight underperforming assets. The team also manages data concerning property assets to inform the decision making process. As part of the asset review process, the team identifies properties that are surplus to the use of services, and the Council, which are then transferred to the non-operational portfolio for disposal, or demolition, as appropriate.

Construction Programme Delivery

The professional teams involved in this workstream design and deliver the building assets required by Council Services. These include facilities for all Council Services, comprising schools, care homes, sports centres, housing, depots and the like. The Construction Programme delivery team has three separate, but related, professional disciplines i.e., Architecture, Engineering and Quantity Surveying, comprising:

Architecture: The Architecture team include expertise across several disciplines including Architects, Technologists, Project Managers, Contract Leaders, Clerk of Works, CDM Advisors, BIM specialists and Technical Officers. The team assists client services through the full project delivery process from inception to completion and handover – all RIBA Stages are covered and managed across P&FM's aligned Gateway Project Stages. Despite the significant resource available, the large programme of work managed by the team requires that some design services be outsourced to private practices, including some specialised design input such as acoustic engineering, fire engineering, etc.

The Architecture team acts as Lead Consultant and Principal Designer on all their project work irrespective of scale. In addition, all outsourced Architecture, Structural Engineering, Clerk of Works and Landscape Architecture design service work is managed by the Architecture team.

Engineering: The team includes mechanical and electrical building services engineers and the energy management team. Building services engineers provide technical solutions for new buildings, extensions, refurbishments and upgrades in schools, offices, leisure centres, care homes and depots and for housing stock improvements. The works include design, calculations, drawings, specifications, bills of quantities, cost control, feasibility studies, option appraisals, risk assessments, value engineering and project management. The team collaborates with other Council Services, design teams, external consultants, contractors and utility suppliers.

The energy management team monitors and targets energy costs, consumption and emissions, validates and verifies energy invoices, manages fuel procurement contracts and manages building management systems.   The team works with all Services to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

Quantity Surveying: The Quantity Surveying team carries out cost planning capturing the whole life cost of proposed construction projects from inception to completion. The team contributes to option appraisal processes and business case evaluation to establish best value solutions. The team manages the tendering process and deals with the commercial and contractual aspects of construction projects including monitoring budgets, construction procurement, risk and value management. The team further provides insurance replacement values for the Council's extensive property portfolio.

Facilities Management

The Facilities Management Team helps meet the public's demands and expectations through the provision of modern local offices and ensures the Council wider built environment has effective and efficient facilities management arrangements in place. Around 48,000 response and planned preventative maintenance tasks are completed each year.

Hard Facilities Management- Response, Planned Preventative and Lifecycle Component Replacement. This element includes the management of the repair, maintenance and improvement of the buildings which Council services are delivered from, including education, leisure, office accommodation, depots and operational buildings. The Team includes a range of professional disciplines including Building Surveyors, Building Services Officers, Property Inspectors, Asbestos Surveyors, Contract Leaders and Technical Officers, each with a focus on customer need, quality and cost management. The team manages minor works programmes and utilises an innovative approach to the delivery of reactive and planned preventative maintenance activities using an integrated provider model.

Soft Facilities Management- The main corporate office sites throughout Aberdeenshire are supported by a team of facilities staff that provide reception and caretaking related activities, such as general and minor maintenance tasks, mail room duties, health & safety checks, building security and cleaning. The building cleaning team manages the provision of building cleaning for operational establishments including offices, sheltered housing sites and libraries and applies British Cleaning Institute Standards to provide a consistent approach to service delivery and one in which efficiency is key factor. The Service also includes the operation of Public Convenience sites. It manages substantive posts and relief staff and includes a mobile reactive team to clean Council Housing stock void properties, bus shelters and remove graffiti. It can also deploy trained staff to implement infection control procedures to sites to assist in the management of community health and wellbeing.

Service Priorities

Service Priorities and how they support the Council Plan

The Council Plan was agreed in June 2024 and sets out the Council Strategic Priorities

Aberdeenshire Council works with and for our communities. We will provide essential local services and additional help to those who need it most.

A sustainable economy

We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.

- Support new and existing businesses to thrive and provide fair work opportunities
- Secure inward investment to sustain economic growth
- Contribute to the creation of a skilled and resilient workforce by developing the skills our children and young people need for learning, life and work now and in the future
- Equip residents to meet key challenges and transitions in their lives through lifelong learning
- Attract and retain people of working age to the region.

Connected communities

We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.

- Support communities to articulate the challenges facing them and how we can achieve better outcomes together
- Collaborate with partners and communities to attract investment to enhance travel and transport connections between our towns and villages
- Encourage and promote active travel – supporting healthier, more sustainable and environmentally friendly travel options
- Improve digital connectivity by securing investment for better infrastructure for homes and businesses

Living well locally

We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.

- Help people to lead independent lives through prevention and early intervention, providing care and support to those most in need
- Facilitate the provision of affordable housing
- Work with and support opportunities for residents to be healthy and active
- Improve the life chances of people at risk of falling into poverty, or already living in poverty
- Promote greater participation by communities so we are working to shared and collective ambitions in our places
- Ensure children and young people have a greater say in matters that will affect them now and in the future

How we will work with communities

- Everything we do will consider the impact on our places and will be informed by the voices of our communities. We will involve communities and service users in shaping our services, including how and where they are delivered. We will work with local people to actively shape the places they live and work in, through supporting volunteering and helping them to make the best use of the assets and resources in their area.

Climate change

- Climate change and the drive to net zero will be at the heart of how we make decisions and deliver services to support the delivery of our strategic priorities in the long-term. Our decisions will be informed through the lens of climate change to support our communities to have a sustainable future.

Property & Facilities Management Service Priorities

The Service continually delivers on key projects and programmes. The main priorities for the year ahead, recognising the Council priorities, are as follows:

- *__Supporting a sustainable economy, living well locally and Climate Change:__*

- **Deliver on the Building and Estates Transformation Programme including:**
  - Update the Corporate Asset Management plan with new Strategic Asset Plan aligned to the Place Strategy
  - Report on a renewed Depot Strategy
  - Continue to deliver the Office Space Strategy
  - Continue to deliver the Office Rationalisation Project
  - Asset Disinvestment including Operation Oyne
  - Ensuring the implementation of Service Annual Estate Plans
  - Implementation of Responsible Premises Officer Guidance
  - Develop and Implement the Heating Policy
  - Undertake renewables feasibility and business cases
  - Provide an overarching report on asset condition and investment requirements
  - Analyse building energy data to inform decision making and strategy, and report on outcomes of transformations
  - Decommissioning of assets and associated utilities (billing and assets) and associated building systems

- **Delivery of Construction Programmes across the Council's Capital Plans including:**
  - New Builds
  - Free School Meals
  - Lifecycle Maintenance and Health and Safety
  - Design and construction of new build housing programme
  - Develop and delivery of the Housing Improvement Programme 2
  - Development and delivery of Consultancy Design Services Framework

- **_Supporting a sustainable economy and Climate Change:_**

- **Continue to develop the estate requirements of the Net Zero Route Map targets**
  - Ensure all ongoing projects delivered meet current net zero criteria within available budgets
  - Assessment of Fabric First in relation to Carbon Reduction Opportunities

- **_Supporting a sustainable economy, connected communities, living well locally, how we will work with communities and Climate Change:_**

- **Delivery of Facilities Management Services including:**
  - Ensure buildings are compliant and maintained in accordance with statutory requirements, including Management of Legionella
  - Development and delivery of Minor Works Framework and DPS
  - Procure and manage utility contracts for operational properties, set service budgets, manage payment and analyse of utility bills to ensure accurate picture of energy costs, consumption and emissions

- **Delivery of Asset Management Services including:**
  - Manage the Industrial Asset Investment Portfolio to maximise rental income
  - Supporting Public Sector Hub e.g. NHS, Police Scotland and GVJB in Woodhill House

- **Supporting the wider Corporate needs:**
  - CONTEST Lead including Protect Duty
  - Support and planning for Operation Unicorn and Storm/Weather Warnings

The place strategy was agreed in June 2024 and sets out our commitment to work more closely with our partners to deliver the services that will have the greatest impact for our communities.

Services are expected to demonstrate how they are adapting and changing their working approaches to give a strong emphasis to Place and actively contribute to the development and delivery of Place Plans.

Please set out how you will ensure your services and teams are supporting the Place agenda, as well as stating how Service Priorities will link with the Place Strategy and Place Plans with reference to the strategic assessment 2024/25, Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and Intermediate Zone summaries.

Service Priorities	Linkages to Place Plans
Deliver on the Building and Estates Transformation Programme	Movement, Resources, Stewardship, Spaces, Civic
Continue to develop the estate requirements of the Net Zero Route Map targets	Resources, Stewardship
Delivery of Construction Programmes across the Council's Capital Plans	Movement, Resources, Stewardship, Spaces, Civic
Delivery of Facilities Management Services including	Movement, Resources, Stewardship, Spaces, Civic
Delivery of Asset Management Services	Resources, Stewardship, Civic
Supporting the wider Corporate needs	Movement, Resources, Stewardship, Spaces, Civic

Service Performance Indicators 2024-2029

Key priorities for the Property & Facilities Management Service are set out below:

Council priority	Service performance measure	Action	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
All	Percentage of capital plan being expended	Deliver an ambitious, yet affordable, capital programme	70% Target 85%	Allan Whyte, Head of Property & Facilities Management	Quarterly monitoring. Reported at end of financial year.
All	Percentage of key projects delivered on time	Deliver Property related construction projects	80% Target 80%	Neil Reid, Architecture Manager	Monthly monitoring
All	Percentage of key projects delivered within approved budget	Deliver Property related construction projects	90% Target 90%	Craig Reid, Quantity Surveying Manager	Monthly monitoring
All	Client satisfaction	Deliver Property related construction projects	60% Target 60%	Neil Reid, Architecture Manager	Monthly monitoring
All	No of vacant operational assets/ no of operation assets in use	Create and sustain a Council estate that is fit for purpose to provide modern public services that meet the current and future needs of our communities	Reduce holding costs of vacant assets by 25% Target of realising 100% of budgeted capital receipts. Reduce holding costs of vacant assets by 25% Target of realising 100% of budgeted capital receipts.	Andy Moir, Principal Asset Management Officer	Quarterly monitoring

Council priority	Service performance measure	Action	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Climate Change	Energy usage - kWh per M² gross internal building area of Council operational buildings	Reach a 75% reduction in emissions by 2030 and Net Zero by 2045	205 Target 205	Iain Wylie, Engineering Services Manager	Reported Annually
Climate Change	CO2 Emissions - Kg per M² gross internal area of Council operational buildings.	Reach a 75% reduction in emissions by 2030 and Net Zero by 2045	40 Target 40	Iain Wylie, Engineering Services Manager	Reported Annually
Climate Change	Quantity of Biomass energy consumed in Council properties	Reach a 75% reduction in emissions by 2030 and Net Zero by 2045	9,537,452 kW hours (2020/21 result) 9,537,452 kW hours (2020/21 result)	Iain Wylie, Engineering Services Manager	Reported Annually
Sustainable Economy	Supporting new and existing businesses to thrive, creating competitive advantage and providing fair work opportunities	Percentage of commercial and industrial properties occupied at the end of the period	90% Target 90%	Dave MacLeod, Estates Manager	Quarterly monitoring
All	Sickness absence rate in Property & Facilities Management	Percentage of time lost due to sickness		All	Quarterly monitoring
Sustainable Economy Climate Change	**Hard FM KPI's**	Hard FM	98% Target 90%	Emma Plunkett, Facilities Manager	Monthly monitoring Contract term 2022-2027

Council priority	Service performance measure	Action	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Living Well Locally	**Housing Programme KPI's** **There are number of KPI's associated with the Housing Improvement Programme all of which are reported to Communities Committee.**	Housing Improvement Programme	94% Target 92%	Pearl Strachan, Project Manager	Quarterly monitoring Contract term ends 2024

Benchmarking & Self-Evaluation

National Indicator	Year	Scottish Average	Aberdeen shire	Status*	Long Trend	Short Trend	National Ranking	Quartile Position	Owner	Proposed action for 2019/20 figures (to be updated for 2020/21 figures)
SCORPAM01: Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use %	2019/20	82.47%	74.96%	Red	Improving	Improving	29	Four	Head of Property & FM	This indicator is part of the Estate Modernisation priority and actions from that will lead to improvement in this area. Our target in this area is to improve our performance by 1% each year.
	2020/21	82.31%	77.4%	Red	TBC	Improving	25	Four		
	2021/22	85.30%	77.87%				27	Four		
SCORPAM02: Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition %	2019/20	88.62%	87.56%	Green	Improving	Improving	21	Three	Head of Property & FM	This indicator is part of the Estate Modernisation priority and actions from that will lead to improvement in this area. Current performance is very close to the Scottish average and we anticipate that the focus on our Estate will continue to lead to improvements in our performance and ranking.
	2020/21	89.20%	90.82%	Green	TBC	Improving	16	Two		
	2021/22	90.12%	91.59%				17	Three		

APSE Building Cleaning 2022-23 Performance

Performance	Key Performance Indicator
Performance for 2022/23 is better than the family group average	• Investment per square metre for all areas cleaned (excluding CEC) (LA only) • Investment per square metre for all areas cleaned (excluding CEC) (All work) • Staff absence (front line staff), Staff absence (Scotland only) – front line employees only • Investment per FTE front-line employee (All work) • Front line staff cost per square metre cleaned (excluding outdoor areas) (LA only) • Front line staff cost per square metre cleaned (excluding outdoor areas) (All work) • Leavers as a percentage of total operational staff • Staff absence excluding long term (front line staff) • Staff absence (excluding long term) (Scotland only) - front line employees only
Performance for 2022/23 is within 25% of the family group average	• Total square metres cleaned per FTE employee (excluding outdoor areas) (LA only) • Total square metres cleaned per FTE employee (excluding outdoor areas) (All work) • Number of paid staff hours per measured square metre cleaned (LA only) • Number of paid staff hours per measured square metre cleaned (All work) • Starters as a percentage of total operational staff
Performance for 2022/23 is not as good as the family group average range above	• Ratio of square metres to annual scheduled hours (all offices) (LA only) • Ratio of square metres to annual scheduled hours (all offices) (All work) • Ratio of square metres to annual scheduled hours (libraries) (LA only) • Quality assurance and consultation process • Proportion of unpaid staff absence to paid staff hours • Human resources and people management
Financial Performance for 2022/23 is above the family group average	• All staff costs as a percentage of total investment (All work) • All staff costs as a percentage of total investment (LA only)
Financial Performance for 2022/23 is below the family group average	• Cleaning materials investment as a percentage of total investment • Cleaning equipment investment as a percentage of total investment • Materials and equipment investment as a percentage of total investment • Front line staff costs as a percentage of total investment (All work) • Other costs as a percentage of total investment (All work) • Additional works/variation orders as a percentage of scheduled work

The Property & Facilities Management Service undertook the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) during May 2024.

Strengths

- Healthy work/life balance
- Team working
- Equality, diversity & inclusion
- Strong and approachable leadership
- Cyber security awareness

Key Themes

Communication	Resources	Measuring Success
More Structured Comms	Pooling of Resources	Gathering Feedback
Digital Skills Training	Information Sharing	Lessons Learned
SharePoint	Access to Information	Driving Change
Career Development	More Collaboration	Measuring Performance
Induction	Asset management	Benchmarking

Potential Areas for Improvement

- Training
- Information management
- Resource & asset management
- Induction
- What success looks like

Potential Areas for Improvement

Digital Skills Training	Asset Register / Management	Lessons Learned	Resource Register / Management
Feedback Driven Change	Structured Feedback Procedure	Communication Plan	Induction Process Review
Information Management	Career Development	SharePoint Knowledge	Success Measurement

Property & Facilities Management Budget for 2024/25

The budget is agreed annually by Full Council in February.

The Property & Facilities Management Service undertakes significant financial activity across both revenue and capital budgets, the details of which are noted below.

Revenue Budget

The following provides details of the revenue budgets allocated to the Service.

2024/25 Budget	Expenditure £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
Woodhill House	2,541	(919)	1,622
Office Accommodation	1,832	(148)	1,684
Building Cleaning	2,910	(2,910)	-
Public Conveniences	647	-	647
Operational Buildings	2,119	(2,119)	-
Estates	2,734	(5,468)	(2,734)
Property Construction Services	6,536	(7,172)	(636)
Building Repairs & Maintenance	9,667	(109)	9,558
Total	**28,986**	**(18,845)**	**10,141**

2024/25 Budget

Chart data (Expenditure £'000, Income £'000, Net £'000):

Category	Expenditure £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
Woodhill House	£2,541	-£919	£1,622
Office Accommodation	£1,832	-£148	£1,684
Building Cleaning	£2,910	-£2,910	£0
Public Conveniences	£647	£0	£647
Operational Buildings	£2,119	-£2,119	£0
Estates	£2,734	-£5,468	-£2,734
Property Construction Services	£6,536	-£7,172	-£636
Building Repairs & Maintenance	£9,667	-£109	£9,558

2024/25 Budget
Expenditure £'000

Pie chart values: £2,541, £1,832, £2,910, £647, £2,119, £2,734, £6,536, £9,667

- Woodhill House
- Office Accommodation
- Building Cleaning
- Public Conveniences
- Operational Buildings
- Estates
- Property Construction Services
- Building Repairs & Maintenance

2024/25 Budget Income £'000

- Woodhill House
- Office Accommodation
- Building Cleaning
- Public Conveniences
- Operational Buildings
- Estates
- Property Construction Services
- Building Repairs & Maintenance
- Total

-£919 -£148 -£2,910 £0 -£2,119 -£5,468 -£18,845 £7,372 -£109

2024/25 Budget Net £'000

- Woodhill House
- Office Accommodation
- Building Cleaning
- Public Conveniences
- Operational Buildings
- Estates
- Property Construction Services
- Building Repairs & Maintenance

£1,622 £1,684 £0 £647 -£2,734 £0 £9,558 -£636

2024/25 Business Services Capital Budget (Non HRA)

Capital Plan Line	Budget £'000
Carbon Reduction - Council Wide Objectives	354
Depots	1,297
Development of Industrial Portfolio & Factory Units	666
Fraserburgh Lighthouse Museum	326
Health & Safety - Council Wide Objectives	600
Information Communications Technology	1,450
Lifecycle Maintenance - Council Wide Objectives	3,144
Council Offices	10,590
	18,427

2024/25 HRA Capital Programme (Design and Contract Management role)

	Budget £'000
Stock Improvements	600
New Builds	23,486
Other Expenditure	443
Total Capital Expenditure	**24,529**

The Service provide Construction Professional Services for Capital Plan programmes on behalf of Client Services including the project such as the Peterhead Community Campus and the Infrastructure programmes. In addition, the Energy Management Team is responsible for the management of the Council's utility contracts.

Service Staffing Profile

Organisational Chart

Head of Property & Facilities Management — Allan Whyte

Personal Assistant — Viv Reith

- Facilities Manager — Emma Plunkett
  - Hard FM (Response, Statutory Compliance and Lifecyle Component)
  - Soft FM (Facilities, Cleaning, Public Toilets)
- Architecture Manager — Neil Reid
  - Architecture, BIM & Clerk of Works
  - Project Management
- Quantity Surveying Manager — Craig Reid
  - Quantity Surveying (Valuation for Insurance Purposes)
  - Capital Plan Programme Management
- Engineering Services Manager — Iain Wylie
  - Mechanical & Electrical Engineering
  - Energy Management
- Estates Manager — Dave MacLeod
  - Asset Management
  - Estate Management (inc. Acquisition and Disposals)

The Service Management team have collaborated with colleagues in HR to develop the workforce plan for the service and it is aligned to the future needs with the aim of our workforce being optimised i.e., meeting the future demands, skill requirements and wellbeing.

Staffing Nos.			
Team	FTE *	Head Count	No. Vacancies (FTE)
Directorate	2	2	0
Engineering	18	17	2
Quantity Surveying **	9	13	6.5
Architecture	59	43	16
Estates	17	21	4
Facilities Management	106 (63 Cleaners)	649 (340 Reliefs)	24 (16 Cleaners)
Total	**211**	**745**	**52.5**

* Full Time Equivalents as established posts
** Headcount includes for 4 secondees and vacancies reduced accordingly

Key priorities and updates are provided below.

- **Service Training Plan**
  - o The Service has developed a P&FM portal for accessing ALDO identifying training needs for each individual post within Service.
- **Independent Professional Support**
  - o The Service has developed a framework for external professional support to supplement internal resources in response to needs as required; this includes the use of secondees where deemed appropriate.
- **Future Skills Gap Analysis & Professional Development**
  - o Finding gaps between where we are now and where we need to be in the future for P&FM related functions including building information modelling, carbon reduction and net zero, digital skills.
  - o Allocation of Service Champions for digital, net zero, building information modelling, governance.

- **Reassessment of roles and structure to align with current and developing priorities**
    - Review current roles to align to Council Priority on Infrastructure and Public Sector Assets.
    - Review management and team structure giving consideration to succession planning and service priorities.
    - Increasing opportunities for young people; continuing to develop the graduate apprenticeship roles, student placements, supporting further education and use of interns.
    - In the medium term, look to establish an internal civil and structural engineering resource.
    - Create a multi-skilled operative role to support asset management functions.
- **Wellbeing**
    - Create formalised approach for gathering information, analysis and subsequent actions building on the 87% assessment.

Aberdeenshire Council have identified, at a corporate level, that all Business Plans must address the following workforce planning activities to support the Council in being fit and flexible for the future: Wellbeing, Digital Skills, Diversity and Succession Planning, Establishment Control. Services also identify actions relating to industry and service specific drivers based on their own internal and external environmental analysis to ensure they have the right people in the right place doing the right things at the right time for them to meet their overall service outcomes and priorities.

Workforce Planning requires a level of forecasting and should be in place for a rolling 3-year period as many workforce planning actions require time to come to fruition, e.g. natural turnover, skills development, succession planning. Also providing a transparent 3-year workforce plan allows for better transparency and levels of engagement with the workforce.

Measures of Success/ Progress Update

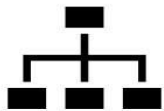Reduction in vacancies

Increase in staff retention

Reduction in sickness absence

Increased client satisfaction through effective delivery of projects and programmes

Increased number of staff being promoted to management roles within the Council or wider public sector

The model for Strategic Workforce Planning:

To deliver against the workforce strategic outcomes outlined in the Target Operating Model 1.2, the following section breaks down our planned activities into five key areas of work, along with specific objectives and projected timeline. These are:

Right Structures	**Right People**	**Right Skills**	**Right Place**	**Right Support**
Setting up our council in a way that supports our cultural aspirations	Building our capacity through attracting, recruiting, moving talent	Building capability through awareness, desire, knowledge and ability	Working where and when is best for the work and the customer	Supporting employees to thrive, personally and professionally

Workforce Plan

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Wellbeing	**Issue/ Risk**	In the recent 87% wellbeing data survey there were 95 respondents from Property & Facilities Management 42% self-identified as thriving, 39% doing well, 19% could improve. Below are the Q3 (Oct-Dec 2022) sickness absence figures for P&FM. An increase of 1.66% across the service with the biggest increase being Building Cleaning. This may be due to the fact that there are fewer employees. Absence rates across P&FM for the period 01/10/2022 to 31/12/2022 were: - 0.00% - Admin/Clerical 6.59% - Building Cleaning (including Public Toilets) 3.26% - Facilities and Halls 0.00% - Facilities and Halls/Admin-Clerical 1.64% - Professional/Technical Overall days 1,903 for 424 job holders = 4.88%	
	Action(s)	Support the continued use of corporate wellbeing tools, approachable and visible management, coaching and mentoring, identification of themes from annual appraisal.	
	Progress/ Measure	Continue to analyse percentage of workforce identifying as thriving or excelling. Reduce mental health related absences. Monitored at P&FM Management Team by quarterly analysis and insights from workforce, Power-Bi and 87% wellbeing data.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
Skills	**Issue/ Risk**	Ensure that all staff are fully trained and efficient in the use of the Service's software and processes across all disciplines. Sufficient resource must be available to evolve the P&FM SharePoint Common Data Environment (CDE), delivering Building Information Modelling (BIM) compliant projects and automated processes. Ensure that the ALDO P&FM Training Portal is maintained and current.	
	Action(s)	Support the continued development of an integrated digital environment that includes BIM compliant live project delivery, searchable and controlled archive data across all properties, and managed Service and Corporate information for the wider P&FM team. Maintain the P&FM training plan and portal to ensure all core activities are included by role, and targeted specialist training is available as new software is introduced or BIM processes evolve.	
	Progress/ Measures	The P&FM Service SharePoint site has been developed to deliver a BIM compliant CDE for live and archived project work, and the P&FM area of the site is also live. All network files have been transferred into this new site (but require relocating to property-specific locations) and permission structures developed to permit P&FM staff, Client Services, and external design teams / contractors' access to relevant data in a fully controlled and secure manner.	
Diversity	**Issue/ Risk**	1. P&FM have a significantly female workforce; however, this is largely down to a large number of cleaners. In higher up grades, (practitioner and managerial roles), there is a more equitable split of male and female employees. 2. In terms of the age profile, there is a small number of the workforce under the age of 20. Increasing the opportunities for developing the young workforce to ensure there is suitable talent in the pipeline could be an action. This will also link to "Succession Planning." 3. Like most services, there is a considerable number of employees who have either not provided the equality and diversity information or have selected 'prefer not to say.' It is not mandatory for employees to complete this information; however, an action could be to encourage employees to record their details through Employee Self Service. HR are also going to promote the completion of these details over the coming months.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
	Action(s)	Review advert text and job profiles to ensure they use gender neutral language. Increase opportunities for the younger workforce - age; grow your won; increase opportunities for young people - student placements, apprenticeships., interns.	
	Progress/ Measures	Continue to monitor the diversity of the team.	
Succession Planning	**Issue/ Risk**	Ensure that there is capacity and capability linked to future roles for personnel to meet the future service needs.	
	Action(s)	Analysis of workforce to be undertaken, identify high performing individuals. Recruitment planning. Training Plan.	
	Progress/ Measures	Training plan for all posts has been implemented and key priorities identified above. Monitor the percentage of roles filled internally.	
Establishment Control (FTE, Agency, Overtime use)	**Issue/Risk**	Lack of personnel to fill all functions and delivery on key priorities	
	Action(s)	Recruitment and succession planning. Independent professional support to be appointed when required. Monitor turnover rates. Liaising with higher education sector on availability and number of entrants for undergraduate courses. Procurement Strategy, i.e., internal resource/external resource and use of design and build arrangements.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities *All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:*			
	Progress/ Measures	Consultancy Framework in place Monitor turnover	
	Issue/Risk	Ensure that the Service undertakes corporate workforce planning priorities.	
	Action(s)	Key priorities identified above, namely: • **Service Training Plan** • **Independent Professional Support** • **Future Skills Gap Analysis & Professional Development** • **Reassessment of roles and structure to align with current and developing priorities** • **Wellbeing**	
	Progress/ Measures	Reduction in vacancies Increase in staff retention Reduction in sickness absence Increased client satisfaction through effective delivery of projects and programmes Increased number of staff being promoted to management roles within the Council or wider public sector	

Concluding Summary

As this Business Plan demonstrates Property & Facilities Management will undertake key activity during the 2024/25 financial year. This will include delivering on the Building and Estates Transformation Programme with particular focus on asset disinvestment aligned to the Council's Place Strategy. The P&FM Service will also work collaboratively across all Services in the delivery of Construction Programmes, with a recognition to align Service resource requirements with the approved Capital Plans. The Service will furthermore continue to develop estate requirements of the Net Zero route map targets.