



From mountain to sea

Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea –
the very best of Scotland.

Environment and Infrastructure Services Head of Service Business Plans 2024/25

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD.

ALAN WOOD.

We are committed to helping create and sustain the quality of life for the people of Aberdeenshire and to providing excellent services for all.

Here we articulate the scope and standard of work each Service under Environment and Infrastructure Services (E&IS) will deliver to achieve the Council's Strategic Priorities, along with clear programmes of work to deliver improvements against performance measures, and an overview of workforce planning priorities for the next 3 years. These plans will form the basis of bi-annual performance reporting to Infrastructure Services Committee as well as continual monitoring and benchmarking by the E&IS Directorate Management Team. Whilst Housing and Building Standards is part of the E&IS Directorate, the Head of Service Business Plan is reported to Communities Committee and is therefore not detailed below.

The Environment & Sustainability Business Plan indicates that, having initially focussed on continuity and stability, the Service is now looking to the range of strategies and action plans across the Service taking account of the overarching requirements of the Route Map to 2030. Underpinning these goals the Service values are safety, accountability, and respect.

The Planning & Economy Business Plan articulates the Service priorities, actions, performance indicators and key workforce planning to achieve its vision of a safe, connected, sustainable, inclusive, and economically prosperous place meeting the needs of our communities.

The Roads and Infrastructure Business Plan is guided by 5 Core Values – safety, pursuit of excellence, teamwork, citizen centric and accountability and these values are reflected in the Service priorities and performance indicators.

Aberdeenshire Council is navigating through financial challenges amidst rising costs and the expectation for continued quality local services. E&IS recognise the need to deliver these services within the resources available, to modernise where possible and seek efficiencies through transformational projects which streamline our working practices across all Services.

Working with our partners in Health and Social Care and the Third Sector, where needed we will support care experienced young people to transition to finding and managing their own home as adults, building upon the foundation laid by 'The Promise' that they will grow up loved, safe and respected.





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Environment and Sustainability Head of Service Business Plan 2024/25 Appendix 1

Vision Statement

For the 2024/25 Business Plan the Environment and Sustainability Service has focussed on establishing a set of Service Values that fit within the overall Council Plan. As a team we have developed the core values of: Safety, Accountability, and Respect.

Our values are the beliefs, philosophies and principles that drive our services. They also impact our employees' experience, improving recruitment and retention as well as the relationships we build within our communities, with our partners, stakeholders and customers.

Ultimately, our Service Values are at the heart of what we do and how we do it and help us differentiate our service. Our day-to-day decisions should align with our values.

Service Function and Purpose

The Environment and Sustainability Service was established following a review of the Head of Service responsibilities within Infrastructure Services in Spring 2021. The move of functions into the new Service was done in phases and included an initial reshape process that considered the makeup of teams. The full transfer was completed by Autumn of 2022 with the first full year of operations being 2023/24. During 2024/25 the teams will continue to look at the interrelationships across the functions that make up Environment and Sustainability and also the links into other parts of the Council and partner organisations.

Landscape Service Landscape Service consists of 209 FTE members of staff and covers a variety of different operational activities required to maintain cemeteries, parks & open spaces, country parks, grounds and infrastructure to meet the standards expected by local communities within Aberdeenshire. This includes over 6,425 acres of open space, more than 200 cemeteries, 37 beaches, 447 play parks and 901 acres of woodland. The team also arranges footway weed control in towns and villages, independent annual play equipment inspections, memorial stone stabilisation, arrangements for indigent burial or cremation and co-ordinates the rural roadside verge cutting contractors on behalf of colleagues in Roads & Infrastructure. In addition, Landscape Service provide the burial service, including interments, lair sales and headstone foundations for Aberdeenshire Council and several private burial grounds.

Natural Environment This team consist of 8.1 FTE members of staff and covers specialist work relating to the natural environment. This includes promoting and developing opportunities to increase biodiversity to tackle the biodiversity crises, managing the Pollinator Action Plan delivery, undertaking and co-ordinating ecological survey work, tree preservation and development, landscaping assessment and design and forestry management. The team works across the Council with strong internal links to Landscape Service, Planning & Economy, Outdoor Access & Countryside team and Sustainability & Climate Change team . The team hosts NESBReC | Biological records for the North East of Scotland and manages and delivers projects associated with the Nature Restoration Fund.

Outdoor Access and Countryside This team consists of 13.73 FTE posts, of which 1 FTE is currently vacant, along with 3 relief posts. The team has responsibility for staff that support the running of the Bennachie Visitor Centre; Environment Project officers who focus on maintaining and developing Aberdeenshire Council's core path network including sections of the coastal path, Deeside Way, and Formartine & Buchan Way; Outdoor Access officers who uphold access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003; and the Ranger Service who raise awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage including promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and responsible countryside visitor management; support nature connection in school pupils and young people; and take action on biodiversity loss and climate change through education and practical conservation activities, including volunteer opportunities. The team works closely with the Natural Environment, Landscape and Transport Strategy teams plus the delivery teams in Roads and Infrastructure and Education & Children's Service.

Passenger Transport Unit (PTU) This team consists of 35.8 FTE members of staff who oversee the provision of delivery and management of contracts and services to provide 35 timetabled supported/partly supported local bus services, 35 A2B dial-a-bus services Demand Responsive Transport (DRT), 50 adult Social Care transport services and around 775 home to school transport service. The officers within PTU also work closely with the Community Transport sector. In addition to the FTE above the operation of an in-house fleet of 76 minibuses has a complement of 71 driving staff that covers all of the services previously mentioned. The team also operates the Peterhead Transport Interchange and Ellon Park & Ride, provides and maintains 1,494 bus stops and 8,200 bus shelters plus stops and over 2,352 timetable displays at bus stops across Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City in partnership with First Aberdeen and Stagecoach, over 40 Real Time Information Display, maintains timetable information, and provides advice and support to small operators on ticketing.

The PTU also provide ticket machine systems for smaller bus operators. The team work closely with Nestrans and Aberdeen City Council on regional programmes, administer the GrassHOPPER multi-operator bus ticketing arrangement, provide the THInC travel advice service (for Health & Transport Action Plan partners) and are part of the public/private sector North East of Scotland Bus Alliance that is developing the Aberdeen Rapid Transport (ART) proposals.

Sustainability & Climate Change The team is made up of 4 FTE and is the corporate lead for Sustainability and Climate Change Legislation; Carbon Budget; Council's Route Map to 2030 and Beyond; Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report; Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Aberdeenshire Fairtrade Steering Group. The team provides leadership, advice, and support so that the Council can work together to ensure collective leadership in sustainability and climate change action.

Transportation Strategy This team consist of 14.8 FTE and covers the strategic transport work through our Local Transport Strategy (LTS) and links to Nestrans (the Regional Transport Partnership), City Regional Deal and Transport Scotland across a broad range of transport functions including Active Travel, Road Safety, EV Infrastructure, Trunk Road Projects, and Rail. The team is currently concluding a review of the structure to ensure that the remits roles and responsibilities meet the current and future demands on service delivery particularly given the national priorities around road safety, zero emission vehicles, active travel and reducing car use has led to an increase in Revenue and Capital funding for these areas. It is anticipated that the revised structure will be in place by 2024. Local project work across the same range of functions is also taken forward by this part of the Service and this involves working across multiple parts of the Service, Directorate and Council.

Transportation Strategy has three core teams Strategy Development, Transport Innovation and Road Safety Unit.

Strategy Development Team

The Strategy Development Team is already well established and has responsibility for developing initiatives and projects focused on sustainable, active, and inclusive travel in and around Aberdeenshire. Broadly speaking, workloads are split between Capital and Revenue funding streams where the former sees the team developing a wide range of infrastructure projects including shared use routes, cycle parking and E-bike schemes and the latter associated with softer interventions. These two approaches dovetail well together in terms of addressing issues associated with encouraging more active and sustainable travel.

Capital initiatives have to date seen the development of several masterplan documents (Integrated Travel towns) where a five-year plan of infrastructure and soft measures was developed and is now being delivered. This award-winning approach will be rolled out across other communities over the coming years and will be a cyclic part of the team's remit. This approach fits well with the Council's proposed Place Strategy. Included within Capital initiatives, the team is currently developing, on partnership basis, an ambitious programme of longer distance active travel routes which will link up communities with key service centers. This is a large, long-term project which again will see the delivery of key corridor routes over several years.

The team has been successfully managing the annual 'Smarter Choices Smarter Places' revenue grant to deliver a package of interventions ranging from a sustained and high-profile marketing campaign, development of television adverts, promotional events, community walk and cycle maps, bike training for adults and engagement with young people at academies. The team works with several partner organisations coordinating activities such as WoW (walk once a week) with Living Streets, Bothy Aberdeenshire with CyclingUK and i-bike with partners Sustrans and develops marking campaigns with GetAbout partners. A large proportion of the teamwork load has a focus on engagement with schools to support safer and active routes to schools. The team works collaboratively with colleagues in Education to develop and deliver initiatives designed to reduce school gate traffic and encourage active school trips. 'School traffic management zones' are likely to feature heavily going forward and will absorb a significant amount of staff resource.

The team has a great deal of success in attracting funding into the Council to support the actions required to deliver on the aims and objectives set out in the Councils Local Transport Strategy; this document is also developed by the team on a cyclic basis with the 2023 LTS currently in development and will require regular updating and monitoring during the document's lifespan. A series of 'daughter' documents are proposed following the publication of the 2023 LTS and will include a Strategic Cycle Route Masterplan, several ITT Masterplans and Active Travel Delivery Plans.

Key Strategic Documents are the National Transport Strategy, the Regional Transport Strategy, the Local Transport Strategy (currently being revised) and the various Integrated Travel Town Masterplans.

Road Safety Unit

The main objectives of the Road Safety Unit are to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities on the roads. The Road Safety Unit plays a critical role in promoting public safety by preventing accidents, raising awareness about safe road behaviors, improving infrastructure, and using data-driven approaches to address road safety issues. These efforts contribute to creating safer road environments, reducing injuries and fatalities and improving overall public safety on the roads.

Aberdeenshire Council have adopted the Safe System as detailed in the Aberdeenshire Road Safety Plan to 2030 and aligns with the strategic objectives of both 'Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030' and Local Government, and links into the guiding principles of the Local Transport Strategy. The Council's Road Safety Unit work together with our partner organisations to evaluate the potential risks and mitigate them by means of engineering and education measures undertaken to reduce their risk or likelihood.

Aberdeenshire Council has a Statutory Requirement under the '1988 Road Traffic Act – Section 39', to investigate, design and promote engineering and educational measures, giving road safety information and training resulting from road traffic collisions to prevent further injury. The Road Safety Unit, comprising of engineers and transport safety education practitioners fulfil this statutory requirement.

As part of the Statutory duty, Aberdeenshire Council must:

- Prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety.
- Carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles. In light of those studies, take such measures as appear to the authority to be appropriate to prevent such accidents, including the dissemination of information and advice relating to the use of roads, the giving of practical training to road users or any class or description of road users, the construction, improvement, maintenance or repair of roads for the maintenance of which they are responsible and other measures taken in the exercise of their powers for controlling, protecting or assisting the movement of traffic on roads, and in constructing new roads, must take such measures as appear to the authority to be appropriate to reduce the possibilities of such accidents when the roads come into use.

To meet these requirements the Road Safety Unit:

- Develops the Council's policies and practices in relation to road safety matters contributing to the development and delivery of road safety policy in a Local and National context.
- Selects and monitors road collision sites for remedial action.
- Supervises and carry out road collision studies, investigate innovative experimental measures for collision reduction using new technology. Undertakes safety auditing and road safety reviews for new schemes.
- Carries out risk assessments for existing road and path network.
- Supervises the collection, processing, and analysis of road collision statistics for the Council.
- Interfaces with, and provides specialist advice to all partners, as appropriate, for all road safety related issues.
- Operates, validates and administrates the Council's Road collision database.
- Analyses traffic and collision data, providing evidence-based engineering solutions, design schemes, prepare plans, commission work, design and evaluate innovative experimental measures for collision reduction overseeing remedial interventions.
- Arranges and attends site investigations, surveys and other related work.
- Prepares reports on the results of traffic surveys and consultation exercises as they arise.
- Analyses collisions and prepares reports to identify casualty classes and trends feeding into the delivery of in-house road safety education.

- Attends post-fatal investigations with Police Scotland providing assessment of existing infrastructure and any remedial measures required to mitigate reoccurrence.
- Education and awareness: The Road Safety Unit engage in educational campaigns to raise awareness about safe driving practices, pedestrian safety, cycle training and other road safety issues. They provide information and resources to the public, schools, and other stakeholders to promote safe road behaviours, educating the public about road safety can lead to improved driving behaviours and increased awareness of potential road hazards, contributing to public safety.

Transport Innovation Team

The Transport Innovation Team lead, manage and deliver Aberdeenshire's interaction with transportation innovation projects and studies arising from projects such as the Aberdeen City Region Deal (CRD), Development of major projects and funding bids including pan-regional projects involving Aberdeen City Council, Nestrans and other external partners including Transport Scotland, Network Rail and ScotRail and UK government agencies. The team also provide transport planning analysis, support and advice related to projects, studies, and appraisals both from the perspective of Aberdeenshire's requirements and situation and from best practice generated from the Teams' liaison activities.

As part of the Council's commitment to net zero and decarbonising the transport network, the Council has developed and continues to manage a network of public electric vehicle charging units. The network should now be self-funding with the income generated from the tariff calculated using a full cost recovery method. The Council are also involved in investigating other alternative fuel sources and the team will have a key role in investigating and developing the Council involvement in these alternative fuel sources, such as hydrogen.

The team directly lead, manage, and deliver the sourcing of external funding from European and domestic sources for emerging transport innovations in Road (both motorised and not motorised, rail, freight, maritime, aviation and other modes. In the post-Brexit scenario, the team developed equivalent best practice exchanges to those provided by Interreg Horizon and equivalent programmes by engagement with European bodies and groups such as NSC and the wider CPMR.

Waste Services

This team consists of 398 members of staff (367.5 FTE equivalent) providing a recycling and waste collection, waste disposal and street cleansing service to households and businesses across Aberdeenshire.

The team operate a fleet of 56 household refuse collection vehicles, 6 trade collection vehicles, 4 glass collection vehicles, 16 litter patrol vehicles and 18 road sweepers, whilst also providing 15 Household Recycling Centres (HRC) and community locations for seasonal garden waste, glass and textiles. The team have an extensive presence across Aberdeenshire.

The Waste Service has seen significant changes brought forward on the back of our adopted Waste Strategy including the move to the 3 weekly/3 bin collection regime from April 2023, use of booking systems to manage HRC access/demand and the partnership with Aberdeen City and Moray Councils to deliver the Energy from Waste Plant.

Further changes will also be looked at as we refresh our strategic approach to reflect the future introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme, Extended Producer Responsibility, increased emphasis on re-use through the forthcoming Circular Economy Bill and the associated changes to the Household Recycling Charter Code of Practice.

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.

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.

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

Each Team within the Environment and Sustainability Service has considered the Council Strategic Priorities and set out how they support them in the works that they do.

These links are set out in our various Strategies, Committee Reports, Integrated Impact Assessments and Procurement Documentation. The Environment & Sustainability teams link to all of the Council Strategic Priorities, often as the key delivery team and the Statutory/Corporate lead.

Natural Environment priorities

- Improving people's physical and mental health and wellbeing through the protection, management, and enhancement of Aberdeenshire's natural environment for all.
- Support for our communities to use natural solutions to mitigate and adapt to tackling the nature emergency.
- Management and enhancement of Aberdeenshire's biodiversity through using natural solutions to mitigate and adapt to the two interlinked nature and climate emergencies.
- Deliver projects to maintain and enhance Aberdeenshire Council natural assets for biodiversity which it has responsibility for through maximising external funding opportunities wherever possible to deliver this.

Outdoor Access and Countryside priorities

- Deliver a programme of public, group and school sessions which promotes responsible countryside access and increases awareness, understanding and care of our natural and cultural heritage, promoting nature connection opportunities and enabling everyone to access the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing the outdoors; upholding access rights; and the maintenance and upgrading of the core path network which Aberdeenshire Council has responsibility for; all of which help to improve people's physical and mental health and wellbeing through making the outdoors more accessible.
- Increasing awareness, understanding and care of our natural heritage through engagement and support with our communities.

- Increasing awareness, understanding and care of our natural cultural heritage through the delivery of public, group, and school sessions; a Junior Ranger Award programme; and providing Ranger Service volunteer opportunities.
- Maintaining and upgrading the core path network which Aberdeenshire Council has responsibility for which supports and promotes sustainable and active travel; and enabling communities to take action on biodiversity loss and climate change through support for activities such as tree planting and wildflower planting.
- Maintaining and upgrading the core path network which Aberdeenshire Council has responsibility for, maximising external funding opportunities wherever possible to deliver this, which sustains a Council estate that is fit for purpose that meets the current and future needs of our communities along with promoting the safety of pedestrians and encouraging active travel in all of Aberdeenshire's communities.

Environment and Sustainability priorities

- Investigate innovative solutions to reduce material and product usage.
- Work on alternative fuel use for both the Council's vehicles and the region's transportation systems will be a key element of the Council's priority of reaching a 75% reduction in emissions by 2030 and Net Zero by 2045, and showing leadership to the wider community.
- Lead on the Carbon Budget and Route Map to 2030 and Beyond.

Transportation Strategy priorities

- Road Safety Education and encouragement.
- Deliver Supporting and developing active travel opportunities that aid mental health.
- Delivering Road Casualty Reduction programmes.
- Facilitating safe means of active travel.

- Contributing to the delivery of place planning and via the inclusive development of the LTS and ITT Masterplans.
- Continually delivering and developing opportunities for active travel as set out in the LTS and associated publications, which provide alternatives to private car use.
- Promote and develop active and low carbon travel opportunities.
- Deliver a road network supporting varied and sustainable modes of travel.
- Ensuring that smart and sustainable transport is built into network decision making.
- Reducing the impact on cost of collisions to the local community economy.
- Enabling community organisations and businesses to access project funding for transport elements.
- Support new and existing businesses to thrive, creating competitive advantage and by promoting an efficient sustainable freight system.
- Promote the safety of pedestrians and encourage active travel in all our communities supported via all interventions set out in the LTS and ITT documents.
- Mitigation of potential risk and improvements to the local roads network.

These show how the Environment and Sustainability Service works collaboratively to deliver the Council's Strategic Priorities.

The pillars and constituent priorities are embedded in the activities of Environment and Sustainability through the creation of safe, connected, sustainable, inclusive, and economically prosperous places. The Service has a broad range of functions that support these ambitions.

To deliver the vision for Aberdeenshire and the ambition of the Council Plan our priority activities in 2024-25 are as set out in the following table. The range and depth of the activities across Environment and Sustainability is of course significantly greater than this list. These are set out in other documents and systems.

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.

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.

Environment & Sustainability support to Place Agenda

For large parts of the functions within Environment & Sustainability, Place has been underpinning what we plan and deliver since the early 2000's.

Our teams will take those principles approach into each of the Place Plans as they come forward but just as importantly continue to reflect them in our strategic and action plans. The principle of achieving net zero, sustainability and biodiversity are of course at the very heart of place planning and mirror the work that every one of the Environment & Sustainability teams are engaged in every day. The work across our teams support all of the Place and Wellbeing outcomes but are core to the Movement, Spaces and Stewardship ones in particular.

We shall have officers linking into each of the programmes of work across each of the 17 Place Plans. That will allow the key data from the Strategic Assessment and Zone Summaries to inform which functions will require to be prioritised in each of those plans.

Examples within Environment & Sustainability include where age profiles flag the need for greater support in waste collection and additional/different passenger transport; the need to address the impacts of transport poverty on disadvantaged groups to allow access to employment, health and education; increased housing provision that requires additional waste collection and the wellbeing/health/economic benefits from how we provide and maintain outdoor access, biodiversity and public open spaces. Some functions have already used this data in prioritising services.

Service Performance Indicators 2024-2029

Key Priorities for the Service are set out below.

Service priority	Action	Sub Actions	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
Learning for life; Health and wellbeing; Climate Change; Infrastructure and public assets.	Continue to deliver on the Updated Waste Strategy as approved January 2024.	Embed the 3 Weekly 3 Stream Waste Collection and recycling system.	Full roll out embedded across all of Aberdeenshire.	Enhanced recycling rates, ongoing income streams from recycle and stable costs for residual waste.	Waste Manager	End of 2024 for the embedding of the new system
		Deliver the Trade Waste Improvement Project.	Complete baseline survey for customer satisfaction and Action Plan agreed.	Significantly improved Trade Waste offering that meets customers' needs and covers operating costs.		Ready to deliver Trade Waste changes by early 2025
		Ensure compliance with legislation and regulations	Waste MOWG fully briefed on legal requirements and options to manage them.	Fully compliant service delivery with no enforcement actions.		

Service priority	Action	SUB ACTIONS	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
Climate Change	Provide Corporate Leadership on the Route Map to 2030 and Beyond.	<p>Lead, monitor and report on progress on the Route Map to 2030 and Beyond action plan. This includes leading and supporting the Route Map Steering Group and annual Carbon Budgets.</p> <p>The Route Map will be going through an Internal Audit in the fourth quarter of 2024/25.</p>	Actions within the Route Map Action Plan completed in a timely manner.	The 11 recommendations within the Route Map were provided after a risk analysis on reaching our 75% reduction target by 2030 was completed. If actions are completed as anticipated, then the Council should be on a positive path to reaching this target.	Team Leader Sustainability and Climate Change	Progress is monitored via 6 monthly progress updates provided to Sustainability Committee (August 2024 & February 2025)

Service priority	Action	Sub Actions	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
Learning for life; Health and wellbeing; Climate Change; Infrastructure and public assets.	Adoption of the new Local Transport Strategy (LTS) and approval of associated Action Plans.	Complete the drafting of a new LTS for Aberdeenshire Council.	Actions developed through the MOWG and linked to Corporate Transformation Activity	Adopted LTS that links to National Transport Strategy (NTS) and Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). Action Plans to support the delivery of the LTS. Objectives in line with the Council Plan.	Transport Strategy Manager	New LTS in place by January 2025 with reports to the relevant Council Committees during 2024.
		Complete the consultation and adoption of the new LTS.				
		Put in place Actions Plans in support of the new LTS.				

Service priority	Action	Sub Actions	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
Infrastructure and public assets.	Strategic Assessment of Burial Provision.	Assemble base data on current burial provision.	Clarity for elected members on the options available which can ensure future burial provision across Aberdeenshire.	Strategic assessment to allow costed proposals to ensure future burial provision (or alternatives) within Aberdeenshire.	Landscape Services Manager	ISC report Autumn 2024. Input to Capital Plan Spring 2025.
		Carry out options appraisal to consider how to provide future capacity.				
		Report on options and any policy changes required to relevant Committees.				

Service priority	Action	Sub Actions	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
Learning for life; Health and wellbeing; Climate Change; Infrastructure and public assets.	Develop an Aberdeenshire Council Open Space Strategy.	Review current Councils Strategies relating to Open Space.	Baseline information to allow strategic work to proceed.	An aligned and clear strategic approach for the management and maintenance of Open Space Assets of Aberdeenshire Council.	Environment & Sustainability Management Team	January 2025 with reporting to the relevant Council Committees in the period through to then and beyond.
		Draft and consult on a Council wide Open Space Strategy which embeds actions across the Council to tackle better maintain our Open Spaces and tackle the nature and climate emergencies.	Programme put in place for the drafting and consultation with associated project boards.			
		Build in the inclusion of key activities and Action Plans within the overarching Strategy such as nature recovery, outdoor access, parks, Greenspace, biodiversity, NESBReC and Countryside Rangers.	Input to the drafting from a broad range of internal colleagues.			

Service priority	Action	Sub Actions	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
Learning for life; Health and wellbeing; Climate Change; Infrastructure and public assets	Increased use of digital systems and AI in all activities across the Service.	Develop and roll out new customer communication portals for key front line service areas.	Improved customer satisfaction.	More efficient approach to dealing with complaints, enquiries, and compliments.	Head of Service	Ongoing throughout year and linked to Corporate Transformation work on Digital and our PSIF.
		Identify future opportunities to utilise emerging technologies across all Environment & Sustainability teams.				

Benchmarking and Self-evaluation

Benchmarking

Across the Environment and Sustainability teams there are various approaches to Benchmarking and Performance that are used.

We provide information to LGBF and APSE Benchmarking as well as Professional Officer networks covering Access, Natural Environment, Passenger Transport, Waste, Roads, Parks/Open Spaces and Burials.

Our team submit Aberdeenshire Council's Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report annually ([Item 7](#))

We work with partners on the annual road casualty statistics and the current trend continues to see a reduction in the numbers but at a lesser rate than in previous periods.

The proportion of adults satisfied with refuse collection in 2023 was the 7th highest in Scotland and has increased by 12% since 2014.

The first-time collection rate of bins in Aberdeenshire is currently over 97%.

The LEAMS score for Aberdeenshire in 2022/23 was 95.3%. ([LEAMS | Keep Scotland Beautiful](#))

The proportion of adults satisfied with parks and open spaces in Aberdeenshire in 2020-23 is 90% with only 3 other Local Authorities higher.

Self Evaluation

The Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) published in October 2020 concluded that Aberdeenshire Council's approach to self-evaluation had been inconsistent and recommended that we should implement an effective council wide approach to self-evaluation, including robust arrangements for monitoring agreed actions. Audit Committee agreed that the Council should adopt and implement the Public Improvement Framework (PSIF) self-evaluation model at its meeting on 4 November 2021. PSIF provides a structured and evidence-based approach to identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The model also allows employees to reflect on strengths and areas for improvement as teams and individuals and involves and motivates them to drive forward improvement.

PSIF Guidance attached:

Within Aberdeenshire Council it is estimated that each service will undertake a self-evaluation exercise once every three years with the organisation itself completing an annual assessment. During September to November 2023 the Environment and Sustainability Service took part in their first self-assessment exercise using the PSIF model, facilitated through the process by the Environment & Infrastructure Services Continuous Improvement Team.

In summary this consisted of:

- An Initial Scoping Meeting introducing the PSIF model to the senior management team and agreeing who would take part in the Awareness session.
- The Awareness Session comprised senior management and team leaders, introducing them to the PSIF model, agreeing the dates the survey would be open and what would happen after the survey closed.
- Environment and Sustainability was given from 2 October 2023 to 31 October 2023 to complete the survey during which time staff were encouraged to participate; advising them this was their chance to reflect and give their views on the six main themes of:
 - Service Planning
 - Staff
 - Partnerships and Resources
 - Processes and Services

- Leadership
- Results

- The Environment and Sustainability service self-assessment used the Frontline Checklist: [2023 08 29 PSIF E&S Checklist.pdf](#). This contains 30 questions and allows participants to make comments at the end of each theme. The questionnaires were completed on Engage Aberdeenshire so that qualitative and quantitative data could be analysed and reported back to the service.
- The survey was sent out to 709 staff members. There were 200 responses, giving a 28.08% return. A large proportion of Environment & Sustainability staff are non-networked, however, paper copies were sent to all depots and collected anonymously to ensure equal representation throughout the service.
- Following analysis of feedback, Environment & Sustainability staff were invited to attend a consensus and improvement planning session. This consisted of a presentation advising of the results of the survey and agreeing an improvement action plan.

In summary, improvement actions included:

- Career Pathway Mapping
- Communication
- Inductions
- Job Description
- Management Presence

The Waste Management team have completed a review of the PSIF feedback from colleagues in the Waste team and produced an Action Plan with key actions to progress.

They are also working with SOCITM under the Corporate work on Digital to look at new customer response processes.

Line Managers within the Outdoor Access & Countryside Team have undertaken a review of the PSIF feedback from colleagues in the team and produced an Action Plan with key actions to progress that will help improve efficiency, performance and output of the team in the future.

Landscape Services also have key actions to progress. Improvements include increasing management presence and site visits to depots. They will also be working with SOCITM under the Corporate work on Digital to look at new customer response processes.

The Transportation Strategy team are currently undergoing a team structure review and reviewing all job profiles.

The Natural Environment team are looking at setting up KPIs and a new strategy. Focus sessions have also been set up for discussing improvement work and communication.

Financial Profile

The budget is agreed annually by Full Council in February. A full copy of the budget papers and information can be found on the following committee page: [Item 4](#).

As part of the Budget setting process all teams identified the pressures, they were anticipating in 2024/25 based on the current market conditions for each of their functional areas, where the funding associated with the Reshape process which put the Environment & Sustainability service in place had not pulled through from the previous service areas and other mainly staffing costs such as the use of Agency workers. This information was supplied to Finance colleagues and subject to scrutiny by senior officers. Those pressures were then included within information used in the setting of budgets and the impacts of them not being allocated were set out in Integrated Impact Assessments.

The pressure identified for the Sustainability Team (£60k) was allocated within the 2024/25 budget.

For all Environment & Sustainability budget lines the 2024/25 budgets do not include any allowance for the Local Government Pay Awards for 2024/25. For functions where the budgets are mainly staffing costs this will see either the non-filling of vacancies, reduced seasonal staff and/or potential redundancies in order to ensure that the allocated budget is met.

For other activities the reduced Revenue allocation will see reduced activity by teams. Managers are working through these impacts locally and will be flagging issues as relevant reports are considered by Committees. Examples could include extended periods between grass cutting/weeding, closures of HRC sites at weekends, non-running of waste collections routes, reduced operating hours of Transport to Health Information line, removal of support to local bus services and reduced litter collections.

The Capital Plan allocations relating to Council funding for the functions across Environment & Sustainability in 2024/25 are now at a zero level for some lines and for many at a minimal level. Impacts as identified in the IIA in the Budget papers identified that the level of corporate funding for maintenance of key operational sites is such that even a small number of failures of equipment could for example see HRC sites shut and a move to larger sites only, requiring individuals and businesses to travel further.

The allocations for Burial Grounds will allow only limited progress to be made with site development this year. Work will be brought forward to set out the priority locations and revise the policies as to where lairs can be offered. This will take priority over other Landscape Capital works. On Active Travel and Road Safety there is continued national funding being made available which our teams have been successful in bidding into. In addition there will be sums identified for Active Travel (but not ring fenced) within Scottish Government Capital awards to the Council.

Playpark Capital funding from Scottish Government will continue for the next 2 years.

It is unclear when Nature Restoration Funding for 2024/25 may be allocated by Scottish Government, but indicative levels have been included in the Capital Plan.

The priorities and future actions identified within this Business Plan endeavour to allow for the funding constraints set out in this section of the plan. However, the potential impact of funding constraints on the provision of operational depots and vehicles/plant is not built into this Plan. Both have the potential to significantly impact on what can be delivered by our teams.

Revenue budget 2024/25 net		Capital 2024/25	
Bereavement Service	-£100,400	Bereavement Service	£260,000
Parks and Open Spaces	£6,285,400	Parks and Open Spaces	£100,000
Grounds Maintenance	-£455,000		
Natural Environment	£347,000	Natural Environment & Outdoor Access and Countryside	£20,000
Outdoor Access and Countryside	£679,800	Public Transport	£360,000
Transportation	£7,690,200		
Sustainability and Climate Change	£255,400		
Waste Services	£25,402,000		

In addition to the Capital Budget the following have or may be provided with the following allocations:

Landscape Services: £3 million allocated from the Scottish Government Capital Allocation for Renewal of Playparks through 2023/24 to 2025/26. £1,090,000 is allocated for 2024/25. The Service is scoping up the process for the delivery of this programme and communities will be very much involved in the project decision making process.

Natural Environment Service: May be allocated £168,000 from the Scottish Government through the Natural Restoration Fund.

Outdoor Access and Countryside: Has a small part of the £1,900,000 allocated amount towards repairing and upgrading core paths and non-motorised bridges which Aberdeenshire Council has responsibility for under the IF2 Capital Budget Programme.

Public Transport: £230,000 Nestrans Capital allocation

Our People: Staffing and Workforce Planning 2024-2025

Service Staffing Profile

The Circular Economy Officer post which sat within the Sustainability and Climate Change team was removed through Voluntary Severance. The level of circular economy work picked up by the team going forward will be done when capacity allows. The Circular Economy Bill may see additional duties given to the Council in the future.

The PTU Manager post has been covered since January by the Transport Strategy Manager. This arrangement was temporary and is being reviewed.



Workforce Plan

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

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities			
Wellbeing	Issue/ Risk	Lack of sufficient welfare facilities at all depots eg Mintlaw and Stonehaven (Waste).	
	Action(s)	Work with Property to identify funding and implement interim improvements.	August 2024
	Progress/ Measure	Tenders prepared and about to be issued May 2024.	
Skills	Issue/ Risk	Improving frontline staff's digital skills eg better use of in cab technology and on-site tablets.	
	Action(s)	Retraining for staff and monitoring daily usage of the system	Q3 2024/25
	Progress/ Measures		
Skills	Issue/ Risk	Impact of non/incorrect application of HR Policies by line managers on how teams operate and the numbers of people operating to their potential.	
	Action(s)	Refresher training with teams on the key policies and procedures.	Q2 2024/25

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities			
	Progress/ Measures		
Diversity	Issue/ Risk	The frontline workforce is predominantly male and over 50. The balance and age profile is better in the office-based teams.	
	Action(s)	Develop talent pipelines and career pathways to support workforce development, and support employee progression in the organisation. 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 and encourage female colleagues to consider progression into leadership roles.	Q3 2024/25
	Progress/ Measures		
Succession Planning	Issue/ Risk	Recruitment into the Service and successful career progression for those already in post.	
	Action(s)	Develop a Career Grade Pathway for the Service to support the development and progression of Officers joining and existing within the Service. Providing increased access to and awareness of training opportunities, encouraging self-directed learning & use of digital solutions to access & share learning/training building upon the success of the Planning Learning and Development Directory.	Q4 2024/25
	Progress/ Measures		
Establishment Control (FTE, Agency, Overtime use)	Issue/Risk	Inadequate cover for sickness and leave built into the staffing budgets eg Waste operations rely on agency and overtime to provide a consistent service. Also impact of current contractual arrangements on the ability to provide cover during holiday periods.	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities			
	Action(s)	Review of Waste, Landscape and PTU drivers staffing complements and budget with Finance and consider gaps in budget. Input to the anticipated Corporate work on Terms and Conditions.	Q3 2024/25
	Progress/ Measures		
Service Specific Workforce Actions <i>Based on industry/ service specific drivers</i>			
Waste training of staff	Issue/Risk	Need to ensure all frontline waste staff receive the mandatory training for their role before starting it and are regularly refreshed eg manual handling and reverse assistant	
	Action(s)	Put a training plan in place to catch up with the back log and ensure training is delivered regularly going forward.	Q2 2024/25
	Progress		
Driver Training for Minibuses	Issue/Risk	Reduction in drivers with grandfather rights to drive minibuses will see a reduced pool of people to recruit from.	
	Action(s)	Need to put in place a training offering to new starts. Develop with HR & OD and consider across other LA and Public Sector organisations.	Q3 2024/25
	Progress		

Measure of Success/Progress Update

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:



The first 18-24 months of the new Service seen a decent progress with the creation of a new structure and the bonding of the new Management Team.

The recent PSIF exercise has identified areas for improvement on matters such as management visibility and training that will be taken forward by the Service Continuous Improvement Group.

The Waste teams have performed well and risen to the challenges of the biggest service changes in over a decade whilst coping with multiple adverse weather events and ongoing recruitment difficulties in some locations. The period from October 2023 to February 2024 seen a spike in customer complaints in some locations associated with the 3 weekly roll out but pan Aberdeenshire the level of collections has remained above 97%. Work with SOCITM (Society of IT Managers) through the Digital Transformation workstream will consider improvements to how such spikes can be better managed along with ongoing customer feedback processes. The delays to the opening of the Energy from Waste Plant impacted on the in-year budgets and on some operational matters but they have been well managed.

The PTU Manager moved to phased retirement at the end of 2023 and the role is being covered by the Transport Strategy Manager until June 2024. Consideration of the allocation of functions across Managers is underway prior to recruiting the vacancy. The teams in both units have performed well over the last year and collectively have 6 nominations in the Scottish Transport Awards 2024 including Transport Authority of the Year.

Landscape Services have had a difficult period with a combination of budget volatility and perfect/extended growing conditions seeing considerable levels of complaints during summer 2023. Recruitment continued to be difficult in some areas whilst two Avian Flu outbreaks put additional pressure on the teams as they prioritised that response. The work on Greenspace has been well received in communities. Work is

starting on a number of areas of change and improvement with the Landscape Manager and his team. In particular the approach taken on communications will be targeted.

The Sustainability and Climate change team has had a very positive and productive year in taking forward the Route Map to 2030 and working with regional and national partners. Strong work with elected members and on a cross Council basis has been core to that success. The recent announcements (April 2024) regarding the Scotland wide climate targets and any forthcoming changes will be considered through that same set of groups and processes.

The Outdoor Access and Countryside Team had a busy year with a wide range of activities through their Ranger team, at the Bennachie Visitor Centre, multiple access requests and delivering improvements to core paths such as the Formartine & Buchan way using externally sourced funding. Initial work with partners on a North East Coastal Path also began and continues to progress.

The Natural Environment Team has worked closely with teams all across Environment & Sustainability and continues to support Planning and Economy on planning applications. The work of NESBReC is a continued success with a potential for other partners wishing to link to them in the coming year.

All three of the last three teams above have been impacted by staffing budget pressures on the back of the reshape process and this will be an area to be looked at in 2024/25.

Concluding Summary

The functions delivered across Environment and Sustainability are extensive and diverse. They are front facing and immediate as well as supportive and long term. They all seek to improve the environment that we live and work within and provide health, wellbeing and economic benefits to individuals, families, communities and businesses.



From mountain to sea

Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea –
the very best of Scotland.

Planning and Economy Head of Service Business Plan 2024/25 Appendix 2

Vision Statement

To create safe, connected, sustainable, inclusive, and economically prosperous places that reflect the needs of our communities and safeguard our unique natural and historic environments.

In delivering this vision for Aberdeenshire we are guided by our values:

- *Humility*
 - *We understand our purpose and how our actions impact our communities, customers, partner Council Services and Organisations.*
- *Respect*
 - *We value the qualities, skills, experience and positive attributes of our people, communities, customers and partner Council Services and Organisations, appreciating their contributions to the delivery of our vision and the Council Plan.*
- *Excellence*
 - *We invest in our Service and our people to consistently deliver the highest quality of service possible to our communities and customers.*

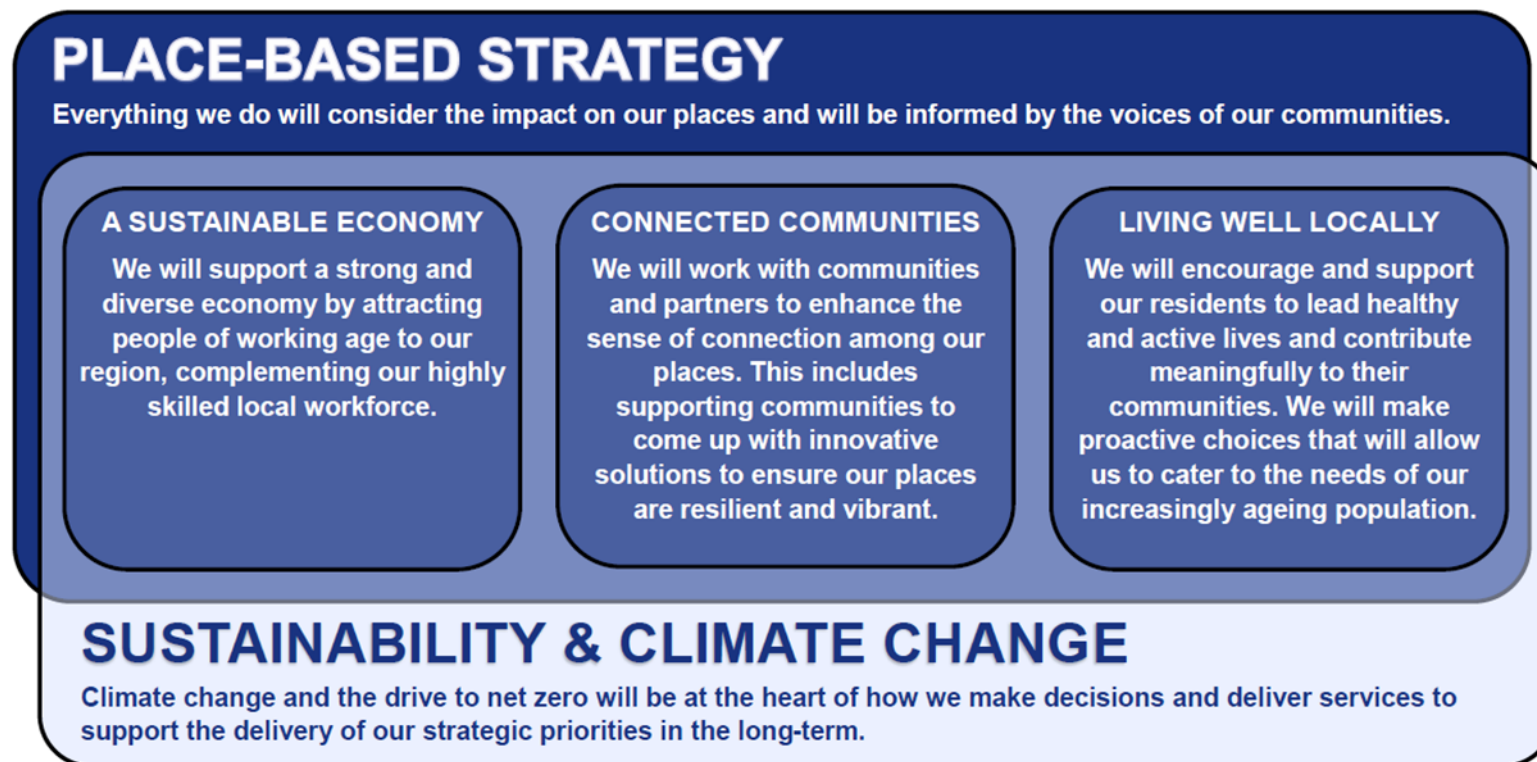
Service Function and Purpose

The Planning and Economy Service provides strategic and regulatory direction to the Council, communities, industry, and partner organisations regarding public health, investment, economic growth, place and development within Aberdeenshire. The Service continues to deliver a high-quality service to our customers and communities despite significant changes to our operating model over the last 5 years in response to public sector budgetary and resource constraints. Through transitioning to innovative and dynamic business operating models across the Service and investing in our people and our processes we have embedded a culture of continuous improvement that delivers year on year improvements in our performance. To deliver our vision the Planning and Economy Service comprises of the following constituent parts, each delivering prioritised activities aligned to the Council Plan.

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.

The Planning and Economy Service supports all aspects of the Council's Strategic Priorities through the provision of strategic and regulatory direction to the Council, Elected Members, communities, industry, and partner organisations regarding public health, investment, economic growth, place and development within Aberdeenshire. The Planning and Economy Service priorities contribute to the delivery of the Council Plan, through the alignment of all Service Activities to the Strategic Priorities as demonstrated below:

A Sustainable Economy

- Delivery of Regional Economic Strategy and Aberdeenshire Local Economic Action Plan
- Delivery of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 and creation of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2028
- Assessment, determination and monitoring of Planning applications and Road Construction Consents.
- Assessment, determination and issue of Street naming and numbering requests within Aberdeenshire working closely with Royal Mail and other Council services.
- Resolving legacy road development issues where a developer has failed to complete new roads to the required standards for public adoption.
- Transport Planning and Auditing in connection with major developments and the Aberdeenshire Local Plan
- Delivery of the Historic Environment Strategy
- Strategic Development- consenting Renewable Energy Developments.
- Food Safety and Export Certification
- Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare
- Licensing including- Short term lets, caravan sites, public entertainment and events safety etc
- Consumer protection, weights and measures, fair trading, underage sales and product safety programmes
- Animal Health and Welfare including premises and animal activity licensing and farm inspections
- Expansion and delivery of Trusted Trader Scheme
- Attract Inward Investment to Aberdeenshire
- Support growth in Energy Transition Sector
- Support the delivery of Superfast and Gigabit digital connectivity.
- Support delivery of Aberdeen City Region Deal & Investment Zone
- Maximise external funding opportunities.
- Analyse, nurture, and grow the Place and Wellbeing Economy
- Deliver skills and employment support workstreams.
- Deliver Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Fund priorities.
- Provide key sector and industry support.

- Nurture entrepreneurship and enterprise activity.
- Deliver Business Gateway support.

Connected Communities

- Support the delivery of Superfast and Gigabit digital connectivity.
- Support delivery of Aberdeen City Region Deal.
- Support the creation and delivery of Aberdeenshire Place Strategy and Local Plan Plans
- Development and maintenance of the Facilities Monitor
- Delivery of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 and creation of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2028
- Assessment, determination and site inspection of Roads Construction Consents to ensure the successful completion of new public roads and footways enhancing accessibility and connecting communities.

Living Well Locally

- Delivery of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 and creation of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2028
- Assessment, determination and monitoring of Planning applications and Road Construction Consents.
- Master planning of sites allocated within the Development Plan
- Support the creation and delivery of Aberdeenshire Place Strategy and Local Plan Plans
- Development of Community Wealth Building and Community Benefit Strategies
- Implementation of NPF4
- Enforcement of breaches in Planning, Roads, Public Health and Environmental Protection legislation.
- Deliver skills and employment support workstreams.
- Deliver Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Fund priorities.

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.

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 Planning and Economy Service enables and facilitates place-based approaches through the delivery of our strategic activities in following ways:

<p>Corporate</p>	<p>The Head of Planning and Economy will co-sponsor the creation and delivery of the Banff and Macduff, Peterhead and Portlethen Place Plans.</p> <p>Influence national place policy and place-based funding development through roles as Junior Vice Convener of HoPS, SOLACE Planning Rep and a Member of the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Collaborative.</p> <p>The Planning and Economy Service has adapted to a place-based operating model with regulatory responsibilities discharged and strategic activities delivered by teams and officers operating across all 6 areas and 179 places within Aberdeenshire.</p>
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Planning

The Local Development Plan sets out a place-based spatial strategy for development in Aberdeenshire for the period 2023-2033.

Planning coordinates the delivery of place-based approaches across Aberdeenshire, working with partners across the public, private, third and community sectors, ensuring only the right development, in the right place at the right time is delivered to meet our community's needs.

Through the creation and delivery of the Housing Land Audit, Employment Land Audit, Town Centre Health Checks and Facilities Monitor the Planning Service identify and resolve barriers to delivery of the place-based spatial strategy unlocking investment into communities and the delivery of essential infrastructure and facilities.

Through the assessment and determination of planning applications, the Planning Service ensures the Local Development Plan is delivered by consenting the right development in the right place at the right time.

The Planning Service enables and facilitates the creation of Council led Place Plans and community led Local Place Plans.

The Historic Environment team work across Aberdeenshire's places engaging with communities, businesses and national bodies to deliver heritage led regeneration projects that transform our places-physically, economically and socially.

<p>Economic Development</p>	<p>Supporting the development and delivery of the place economy through delivery of data led interventions that arrest economic decline and strengthen the economies within our places.</p> <p>Development and implementation of an Aberdeenshire Community Wealth Building and Community Benefit strategies that will enable and facilitate delivery of the Place Policy.</p> <p>Management of place-based funding to deliver place-based interventions designed to create community capacity, resilience and capitalise on the opportunities that are unique to our places.</p> <p>Tailoring business and employment support and interventions to the needs of place economies and communities.</p> <p>Engagement with UK and Scottish Governments to negotiate investment into Aberdeenshire focusing on the strengths and areas for development within our places.</p>
<p>Roads Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling and facilitating connectivity between places through consenting of roads, paths and cycleways across Aberdeenshire. • Supports the creation and delivery of the place-based spatial strategy contained within the Local Development Plan.
<p>Protective Services</p>	<p>Service realignment to place-based operating model has ensured that the right resources and skill sets are located in close proximity to key areas of business.</p>

	<p>Officers are allocated work packages in the places they live to minimise travel but also ensure rapid response to breaches in legislation and unlawful activity.</p> <p>Supports the creation and delivery of the place-based spatial strategy within the Local Development Plan and a thriving place economy.</p>
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Service Performance Indicators 2024-2029

Key Priorities for the Service are set out below.

Service priority	Service performance measure	Baseline	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale – include key milestones where appropriate
Planning A Sustainable Economy Living Well Locally	Number of enforcement complaints resolved & number of enforcement notices serviced & complied with.	2023/2024	Complaints – 275 Resolved – 344 Notices served - 23	Taking appropriate action to prevent/resolve unauthorised development. Building on community confidence regarding unauthorised development.	Mairi Stewart	April – annual performance monitoring - Annual review through NIPF evidence.

Service and Council Plan Priority	Service Performance Measure	Baseline	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale –
Planning A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally	Number masterplans submitted in line with LDP allocations and number taken forward as planning applications.	2023/2024	8 Masterplans	Greater community involvement in both masterplan and major application process to meet needs of communities and enhance quality of development	Mairi Stewart	April – annual performance monitoring - Annual review through NIPF evidence.
Planning A Sustainable Economy	Availability of Marketable employment land.	243Ha of which 69 HA is immediately available	No improvement necessary as effective supply is being maintained	Effective and efficient delivery of allocated employment and business sites and development opportunities stimulating economic growth. Setting targets for determination of applications to ensure quick decisions within performance parameters.	Mairi Stewart and David MacLennan	May - Annual performance monitoring. Annual review through NIPF evidence. Monitoring of delivery of Local Development Plan

Service and Council Plan Priority	Service Performance Measure	Baseline	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale –
Planning A Sustainable Economy Living Well Locally	Housing Land Audit - RHMA	6.6 years 2023	5-year effective supply-measured annually	Continued delivery of the PIDT Strategy with full review in 2025. Supply and development of allocated sites within LDP of allocated sites. Maintain 5-year effective land supply for housing and employment land.	David MacLennan	Audit published Autumn 2024
	Housing Land Audit - AHMA	6.6 years 2023				

Service and Council Plan Priority	Action	Sub Action	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Planning A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally	Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2028	Adoption of LDP Scheme 2024	March 2024	Provision of an up-to-date development plan promoting sustainable economic development in appropriate locations and providing support/guidance to industry/residents and communities to develop. The development plan identifies sites and PIDT supports development industry to overcome	David MacLennan	May - Annual review of Development Plan Scheme at ISC
		Submission of Gate Check Report	January 2025			
		Publication of delivery programme	April 2025			
		Publication of housing and employment land audits.	November 2025			
		Open Space Audit	August 2024			
		Compliance with and use of the Six Qualities of	January 2025 as part of evidence report			

Service and Council Plan Priority	Action	Sub Action	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
		Successful Places – through monitoring of policy use		barriers to development. Monitoring of change in health and perceptions of town centres across Aberdeenshire and identification of areas for improvement		
		Undertake Town Centre Health Checks and Facilities Monitor	18 Published 2023/24 No. of town centre health checks published			

Service and Council Plan Priority	Action	Sub Action	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Support Communities with Local Place Plans	Provide guidance on the preparation of Local Place Plans by Community Bodies	Maintain up to date register and supporting information online.	Enhanced evidence base for LDP and engagement of	David MacLennan	Jan 2025 - Evidence Report. LDP 2028

Service and Council Plan Priority	Action	Sub Action	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
		Provide support to Communities	Update on Number of plans and associated plans developed each year. Community led so no target.	Communities		
Planning A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally	Deliver the Historic Environment Strategy	Undertake promotional and training activities	3 Undertaken 2023/24 (No. of promotional events/campaigns/training activities undertaken in relation to conservation area reviews.	People are more aware of benefits of Aberdeenshire's historic environment and issues relating to climate change and net zero impacts, mitigations, and adaptations.	David MacLennan	June 2024 ISC Committee Bulletin for Bi-Annual review of Historic Environment Strategy (Built Heritage Strategy)
		Undertake reviews of historic environment and conservation areas	3 Undertaken in 2023/24			

Service and Council Plan Priority	Action	Sub Action	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
		Maintain up to date registers	No. of Historic Environment Records updates- 1,155 new records added, 6,249 records updated			
		Secure funding for heritage led projects	£136k new funding secured in 2023/24 with overall spend of over £1m			
		Continue with improvements to Aberdeenshire's HAMP assets	26 HAMP projects undertaken in 2023/24 No. of buildings removed from the Buildings at Risk Register			

Service and Council Plan Priority	Action	Sub Action	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Planning A Sustainable Economy Living Well Locally	Comply with Customer Service Excellence (CSE)	Ensure a high level of customer care and engagement in delivery of the Development Management function	Implement Actions to achieve partial compliances set out in Improvement Plan	Retain CSE accreditation.	Mairi Stewart	May 2024 - Annual audit of CSE accreditation.

Service and Council Plan Priority	Action	Sub Action	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Protective Services A Sustainable Economy	Delivery of an effective and efficient Environmental Health Service which protects and	Delivery of Food Regulation Plan	31 March 2025	Delivery of a cost effective and responsive Trading Standards Service which responds to the needs of	Gordon Buchanan	March 2025
		Delivery of Health and Safety Regulation Plan	31 March 2025			
		Delivery of Environmen	31 March 2025			

Living Well Locally	promotes public health	tal Protection Regulation Plan		Aberdeenshir e Citizens in protecting community safety and promoting and supporting a fair-trading environment		
		Delivery of Licensing Plan	31 March 2025			
		Define Statutory Duties associated with the above sub plans	31 March 2025			
Protectiv e Services A Sustaina ble Economy Living Well Locally	Delivery of an effective and efficient Trading Standards Service which protects consumer safety and promotes and protects a fair-trading environment	Delivery of the investigatio ns and public safety plan	31 March 2025	Delivery of a cost effective and responsive Trading Standards Service which responds to the needs of Aberdeenshir e Citizens in protecting community safety and promoting and supporting a fair-trading environment.	Gordon Buchanan	March 2025
		Delivery of the inspections, projects, and licensing plan	31 March 2025			
		Delivery of the intervention and prevention plan.	31 March 2025			
		Define Statutory Duties associated	31 March 2025			

		with the above sub plans				
Protective Services	Delivery of an effective and efficient Animal Health and Welfare Service which protects and promotes animal health and welfare, protects public safety, protects the food chain and supports the agricultural and food production sectors.	Delivery of the feed hygiene plan	31 March 2025	Delivery of a cost effective and responsive Animal Health and Welfare Service which responds to the needs of Aberdeenshire Citizens in protecting and promoting animal health and welfare, protects public safety and supports agricultural and food production sectors.	Gordon Buchanan	March 2025
A Sustainable Economy		Delivery of the Animal Health and Welfare Plan	31 March 2025			
Living Well Locally		Delivery of the Animal Activities Licensing Plan	31 March 2025			
		Delivery of the Dog Control Plan	31 March 2025			
		Delivery of Statutory Duties associated with the	31 March 2025			

		above sub plans				
		Define Statutory Duties associated with the above sub plans	31 March 2025			
Protective Services A Sustainable Economy	Delivery of an effective and efficient Private Water Supply Service which	Delivery of Private Water Supplies Plan	31 March 2025	Delivery of a cost effective and responsive Private Water Supplies plan which responds to citizens	Gordon Buchanan	March 2025
Living Well Locally	protects and promotes public health and assists with providing sustainable potable water supplies for citizens across Aberdeenshire.	Define Statutory Duties associated with the above sub plans.	31 March 2025	needs and inquiries, ensures that the Council meets its statutory obligations and promotes and enables sustainable potable water supplies.		

Service and Council Plan Priority	Action	Sub Action	Target	Anticipated Outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale –
Economic Development A Sustainable Economy Connected Communities Living Well Locally	Development and delivery of Place Policy and Strategy	Compile draft Place Strategy following consultation	Report to full Council Sept 2024	Approval of Place Strategy	Economic Development Service Manager/ Team Manager Place Economy	June 2024 - ISC Full Council September 2024
Economic Development A Sustainable Economy	Transfer of Business Gateway in-house	Complete TUPE process and continue service	March 2025	Business Gateway service transferred in-house ensuring continued delivery of Business Gateway.	Economic Development Service Manager/ Business Gateway Manager	Complete

Benchmarking and Self-evaluation

BENCHMARKING

Due to the wide remit of the Planning and Economy Service benchmarking with other Local Authorities is undertaken through a variety of mechanisms.

Officers from Economic Development participate in the Scottish Local Authority Economic Development (SLAED) workgroups (Performance, People, Business, Tourism, Funding, Rural) to share knowledge and experiences and encourage roll-out of best practice in relation to business support. The groups provide a forum for members to raise any issues or questions within a closed and supportive network, and a shared approach to problem solving. This approach reduces duplication of activity, strengthens complementarity, and adds value to the positive interventions and outcomes that benefit the communities, businesses, and individuals in Aberdeenshire. The performance of the Economic Development Service is reported to SLAED quarterly and incorporated into the annual Indicators Improvement Report. The indicators framework is a series of performance measures relating to local economic development.

The report sets out a range of data and information which is primarily based on returns submitted by the 32 Local Authorities. The purpose of the SLAED Indicators Framework is to assist Local Authorities to:

- evidence and publicise the contribution that they make to Scotland's economy through their economic development activities.
- provide a basis for collating consistent data which can be used to better understand impact.
- identify potential areas for improvement that are then incorporated into the Service's continuous improvement plan.

The Planning Service benchmarks with other Local authorities through the National Planning Improvement Framework. In 2022/23 the planning performance was benchmarked using the PPF however from 2024 onwards new legislation has transferred us to the NPIF as they key source of national benchmarking for planning authorities. As part of this annual process the Council reviews its own performance and identifies areas for improvement including peer assessment and sharing of best practice amongst all Local Authorities in Scotland overseen by an independent improvement champion. The Scottish Government feedback Local Authority RAG comparison report 2022-23 demonstrates how the performance of the Planning Service compares with the performance of the other 31 Planning Authorities in Scotland. In 2022-23 the time taken to complete legal agreements impacted on the time taken to determine planning applications leading to an increase in the number of legacy planning applications (applications that take longer than 12 months to be determined). This resulted in a drop in performance when compared to the figures recorded for 2021-22.

However, the Government recognised the improvement actions delivered by the Service to reduce the time taken to complete legal agreements and reduce the number of legacy applications. This led to both indicators being scored amber rather than red. Overall, the Planning Service's performance is improving with 12 out of 14 indicators scored green by the Government in 2022-23.

Protective Services complete APSE returns for both Environmental Health and Trading Standards through which the service is compared against other authorities in the same benchmarking family. This gives a general comparison of how the delivery of certain service areas compares with other authorities. It should be noted however that the range and nature of Services delivered from within Environmental Health and Trading Standards varies considerably from authority to authority. Annual returns are provided to both Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and Drinking Water Quality Regulator (DWQR) in relation to food, feed, and private water supplies. Food services are subject to periodic audit from FSS and private water supplies are subject to audit from DWQR. Feedback from these audits is used to review and improve service delivery. Continuous improvement plans have recently been introduced within the Environmental Health Service as part of the recent realignment. The purpose is to deliver services more effectively and create capacity to respond to new duties such as export health certification for food export and short term lets licensing. A realignment of Trading Standards and Animal Health and Welfare is currently ongoing in order to streamline Service delivery, create pathways for career progression and create capacity for the delivery of new duties introduced by legislative change in animal health and welfare licensing.

As a consultee in the planning process, the Roads Development team benchmarks in a similar way to the Planning Service with the team's performance reflected in the published performance figures. With regard to Roads Construction consent, performance is measured by the time taken to process and issue the consent from the point when the application can be validated. No benchmarking against other Scottish local authorities is currently taking place although ongoing discussions with the Highland Council over sharing best practice could potentially be expanded to look at a performance comparison. Property addressing, street naming and numbering is a process which involves consultation with Royal Mail. Performance measuring is therefore limited to the time taken to initially process the applications and then to issue the addresses on receiving a response from Royal Mail. No benchmarking against other Scottish local authorities is currently taking place for these activities.

In addition to individual Service benchmarking and performance monitoring exercises the Council participates in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework. The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) is a high-level benchmarking tool designed to help senior management teams and elected members ask questions about key council services. It brings together a wide range of information about how all Scottish councils perform in delivering services to local communities. The LGBF helps Scottish councils to work together to improve their use of performance information, understand the differences in performance and share good practice across a range of services they provide for communities.

The Local Government Benchmarking Framework report 2024 identified 5 indicators within the remit of the Planning and Economy Service that fell below the Scottish average. The table below identifies the indicators and the improvement activities that will be delivered throughout 2024-25 to improve the performance in these areas.

SECON1: % Unemployed people accessing jobs via Council funded / operated employability programmes - The current percentage rate is 15.5%. This is a figure that is prone to fluctuation due to the rural nature of Aberdeenshire, the type of client being mainly the hardest to reach and the furthest from the labour market which in turn requires more and longer assistance. Aberdeenshire currently has 3,185 unemployed people seeking employment and, a rate of 2,1% this is expected to increase with new DWP legacy benefit migration which will place more people from disability benefits into the labour market. The Employment CONNECT (LEP) is in advanced preparations to mitigate this.

SECON03: Average time taken to deliver a commercial planning application decision - The average times taken to determine an application for commercial development increased and exceeded the target in 2022-23. Since that time, a recruitment strategy has proven successful, with key posts within the Development Management teams now filled. This was part of Development Management's Continuous Improvement Framework which has identified various ongoing areas of improvement to facilitate and improve on the whole decision-making process for development. The improvements delivered during 2022-23 have improved planning performance with the average time taken to determine commercial planning applications having reduced and the target for the number of such applications to be determined in the statutory 8-week period having been exceeded for 2023-24.

SECON06: Investment in Economic Development and Tourism (per 1,000 population) - Aberdeenshire Council continues to work with key stakeholders to encourage investment in the region. This includes supporting new business start-ups and the growth of indigenous businesses. The work of Invest Aberdeen remains at the heart of inward investment support, and we are currently developing an investment prospectus for Aberdeenshire to further promote the area, its skilled workforce and rich supply chain across our 6 key sectors to investors. The approval and implementation of the North East of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy as well as the creation of a North East of Scotland Investment Zone with tax sites in Aberdeenshire will further strengthen, prioritise and grow investment in the Aberdeenshire economy over the next 10 years.

SECON08: Proportion of Properties Receiving Superfast Broadband - 86% of premises in Aberdeenshire have access to superfast (30Mbps) broadband, putting Aberdeenshire in rank 26th out of 32 LA's in Scotland. This has been an improvement from 27th last year. Rurality and historic infrastructure variances are some reasons for Aberdeenshire's low ranking in this measure. Aberdeenshire continues to benefit from Reaching 100% rollout, with 4,600 premises benefitting from connection upgrades to full-fibre, and a further 11,180 in scope by 2028. The Digital Engagement team continue to work with owners of premises, with 861 Scottish Broadband Vouchers having been used to improve individual connections. This represents 13% of eligible households and

is the highest uptake of the scheme in Scotland. Project Gigabit is expected to launch a procurement Lot including the majority of Aberdeenshire in April 2024, which will bring further public investment into improving digital connectivity in the region. Continued work with telecoms industry operators and external stakeholders, as well as targeted community engagement, will continue to bring improvements to hard-to-reach areas through the work of the Digital Engagement Team.

SECON10: Immediately available employment land as a % of total land allocated for employment purposes in the local development plan - Within Aberdeenshire there is 243ha of marketable employment land of which 69ha is classed as immediately available. Previously the Strategic Development Plan committed the Council to maintain a minimum of 60ha of immediately available employment land. NPF4 requires to maintain a sufficient supply of immediately available employment land. Given the level of immediately available employment exceeds the previous minimum requirement with the growth in supply outmatching the development of the immediately available employment land no action is currently required to increase the supply of immediately available employment land.

SELF EVALUATION

Between November 2022 and January 2023 the Planning teams, within the Planning and Economy Service, participated in their first self-assessment exercise using the PSIF model. The exercise was facilitated by the E&IS Continuous Improvement Team.

In summary the self-assessment exercise consisted of:

- An Initial Scoping Meeting introducing the PSIF model to the senior management team and identifying participants for the Awareness session.
- The Awareness Session involved the Planning management team and introduced them to the PSIF model, the timeline for completion of the survey and what would happen after the survey closed.
- The Planning Service completed the survey during a 4-week period between November and December 2022. During which time staff were encouraged to participate; advising them of the opportunity to reflect and give their views on the six main themes of:
 - Service Planning
 - Staff
 - Partnerships and Resources
 - Processes and Services
 - Leadership
 - Results

The Planning service self-assessment used the Corporate Checklist. This contains 37 questions and allows participants to make comments at the end of each theme.

- The questionnaires were completed on Engage Aberdeenshire so that qualitative and quantitative data could be analysed and reported back to the service.
- The survey was sent out to 139 staff members. There were 55 responses, giving a 39.6% return.
- Following analysis of feedback, Planning staff were invited to attend a consensus and improvement planning session with the Planning management team.
- The consensus and improvement planning session consisted of a presentation advising of the results of the survey and agreement of an improvement action plan.

The table below illustrates the agreed improvement themes and the actions identified and delivered.

Improvement Theme	Actions Identified and Delivered
Staff recruitment and retention framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed links with RGU & Aberdeen University to encourage students into the Planning profession from a broader degree skills base. • Updated the recruitment package and additional information. • Undated the interview process. • Implemented a work experience programme. • Developed induction and mentoring programme. • Implemented exit interviews. • Planning staff workshops & training focussing on building the new team and staff led service improvements.
Streamlining processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed report of handling templates and simplified into different categories allowing the levels of information required to be dependent on the application. • Developing standing advice in partnership with consultees for the pre application process to encourage self-service. • Signposting customers to self-serve and utilise the planning portal for updates on applications. • Created a Building Standards and Development Management Uniform working group to maximise the digital potential of the service.
Recertification of the continuous improvement management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service Excellence (CSE) February 2024.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of compliance pluses from 3 to 4 due to customer journey analysis and developing customer focussed service improvements, learning from feedback and complaints and benchmarking with similar organisations. The number of partial compliances reduced from 4 to 3 with further work to include customer satisfaction targets, consistency & communication and developing Personal Performance Plans.
Creation of a Development Management Continuous Improvement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Development Management continuous improvement project plan which incorporates staff and customer feedback and is monitored and updated by the Continuous Improvement DM Officer

In addition to bench marking activities and self evaluation, the Planning and Economy Service will introduce annual socioeconomic evaluations of Service activities to understand the value and impact of the Service on our communities and economy.

Financial Profile

The Council budget is agreed annually by Full Council in February. A full copy of the budget papers and information can be found on the following committee page: [Item 4.](#)

The Planning and Economy Service has a progressive, commercialised, and sustainable operating model. Full cost recovery models for income generating activities account for more than 35% of the operating costs of the Service. Combined with continuous improvement strategies the full cost recovery models enable the Service to return a balanced or underspent budget position at year end. The drive to continuously improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of Service delivery ensure that the fees and charges levied for income generating activities remain commercially viable for our customers. The budget is split across the four constituent parts of the Planning and Economy Service as follows:

Budget Line	Gross Budget	Income Budget	Net Budget
Development Management	£4,621,200	-£3,635,200	£986,000
Policy and PIDT	£1,059,600	£0	£1,059,600
Historic Environment	£874,800	-£84,300	£790,500
Roads Development	£840,600	-£261,100	£579,500
Economic Development	3,705,100	-£2,400	£3,702,700
Trading Standards	£979,700	-£170,600	£809,100
Animal Welfare	£369,200	-£84,100	£285,100
Public Analyst	£274,000	£0	£274,000
Environmental Health	£3,352,100	-£1,375,600	£1,976,500
Planning & Economy Totals	£16,135,915	-£5,613,300	£10,522,615

Our People: Staffing and Workforce Planning 2024-2029

The Planning and Economy Service is split into 4 constituent parts

- Planning
- Economic Development
- Roads Development
- Protective Services

Currently, there are 5 Services Managers within the Planning and Economy Service leading 23 teams comprising of a combined 255 FTE. As part of the Service's continuous improvement and workforce planning strategy 35 FTE are temporary positions externally funded to deliver essential employability and economic development support to our communities. A further 5 temporary FTE posts have been created and occupied to provide maternity cover within the Service. The structure of the Planning and Economy Service is illustrated here.

Workforce Plan

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

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Wellbeing	Issue/ Risk	Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 absence across the Service has reduced to 1.65%. However, a total of 1100 calendar days were lost due to long term illness and 765 to short term illness.	March 2025
	Action(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All managers to familiarise themselves with the Council's absence management procedures and support available to employees by completing the Absence Management module on Aldo. • Head of Service to engage all employees to highlight the impact on unnecessary absence on Service delivery. • 87% Wellbeing Platform and App to be discussed and promoted to every team by the Team Leader to 	March 2025

		<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPP conversations to continue being 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, performance and development needs to be discussed. 	
	Progress/ Measure	<p>Measures of progress to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An improved level of awareness of support resources throughout the whole service, measured through Wellbeing Assessments. • A reduction in the number of days lost due to absence. 	Quarterly Monitoring
Skills	Issue/ Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining, enhancing, and modernising digital work systems, upskilling staff and Uniform system - rolling out to stakeholders to encourage more efficient and collaborative ways of working. 	On-going

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness and understanding regarding available tools to support development of capacity creating digital solutions – including M365 Power Platform, RPA, Padlet, PowerBi, AI etc. 	
Action(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rolling out use of digital technology to allow virtual working and more efficient working on site and better and quicker cross working and communication internally and externally. Rolling out of digital technology to support and improve efficiencies relating to engagement and consultation activities, particularly in relation to managing submissions made. Encouraging new skills in digital technology to meet challenges of statutory timescales and use of alternative methods of working remotely and on site. Maintenance and development of the Planning and Economy Development and Training platform. Development of Service Digital Skills Action Plan. 	On-going with Annual Review/ Monitoring in March 2025
Progress/ Measures	Measures of progress to include:	Annual Review/ Monitorin

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out of digital tablets for site work for planning officers. • Greater use of App's to digitise manual work processes such as surveying, premises inspections etc. • Expanded use of Uniform and Power Platform across the Planning & Economy service. • Reduced timescales for deciding planning, roads and licensing applications, issuing food export certificates, investigating and resolving complaints and responding to Service Requests. 	g in March 2025
Diversity	Issue/ Risk	The age profile of the Planning and Economy workforce is skewed, with 7% of employees under the age of 30, 50% aged between 30 and 50 and 43% of the workforce over 50. The Service Leadership Team is male dominated with only 20% female representation. At Team Manager level 28% of managers are female.	March 2025
	Action(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop talent pipelines and career pathways to support workforce development, and support employee progression in the organisation. • 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, 	March 2025

		including advert text and job profiles particularly for senior management roles and encourage female colleagues to consider progression into leadership roles.	
	Progress/ Measures	Monitor the diversity and recruitment metrics of the workforce through the Workforce Profile Dashboard	Annual Review/ Monitoring in March 2025
Succession Planning	Issue/ Risk	Recruitment into the Service and successful career progression for those already in post.	On-going
	Action(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Career Grade Pathway for Planning, Protective Services and Economic Development to support the development and progression of Officers joining and existing within the Service. Providing increased access to and awareness of training opportunities, encouraging self-directed learning & use of digital solutions to access & share learning/training building upon the success of the Planning Learning and Development Directory. Enhancing recruitment opportunities and experience for potential future workforce through collaboration with Dundee, Aberdeen, and Robert Gordon Universities- summer internships, modern and graduate apprenticeships etc. 	Annual Review/ Monitoring in March 2025

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build upon and action the Development Management Recruitment Strategy, to attract and retain staff. • Restructuring of teams and management structure allowing for opportunities for advancement/collaborative work/ cross-service learning, development, and experience. • Skills audit to identify skills resources and skills deficit. • Identify training needs and career progression aspirations and create corresponding development plans for staff through PPP process. 	
	Progress/ Measures	<p>Measures of progress to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring progress of PPP Development Plans. • Number of Officers successfully progressing through the Service hierarchy. • Monitoring recruitment activity and pathways undertaken to secure employment and career progression within the Service. 	<p>Annual Review/ Monitoring in March 2025</p>
Establishment Control (FTE, Agency, Overtime use)	Issue/Risk	<p>Reducing staffing levels due to failure to compete with salaries paid by neighbouring Council's and private sector for professionally qualified officers and managers. Officers and managers leave the Service with there being a chronic undersupply of qualifier planners, EHO's and civil engineers meaning recruitment can be a futile exercise.</p>	<p>On-going</p>

	Action(s)	Same as Succession Planning	Annual Review/ Monitoring in March 2025
	Progress/ Measures	Same as Succession Planning	Annual Review/ Monitoring in March 2025

Measure of Success/Progress Update

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 absence across the Service increased peaking at 3.8% in comparison to 2.6% in the previous 12 months. A total of 1,771 calendar days were lost due to long term illness and 897 calendar days to short term illness. Stress was reported as the main reason for absence accounting for 688 lost days.

61% of the Planning and Economy workforce who responded to the 87% Wellbeing Assessment in 2023 reported that their manager did not provide them with constructive feedback on their work. 66% felt that their work commitments were out of control and 56% reported that they often leave work feeling exhausted. These figures clearly articulated the reasons behind the high level of absence due to Stress.

Through the improvement actions detailed in the 2023-24 Business Plan there has been a marked improvement in absence levels over the last 12 months. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 absence across the Service has reduced to 1.65%. A total of 1100 calendar days were lost due to long term illness and 765 to short term. During this period recovery from surgery and cancer treatment were reported as the main reasons for absence accounting for 502 days. Stress accounted for 132 days of absence between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

The roll out of digital technology across the Service is progressing. The ambition of this investment is to allow virtual working and more efficient working on site and better and quicker cross working and communication internally and externally. Success to date has taken the form of enhanced performance across all aspects of the Planning and Economy Service. Examples include increased numbers of planning, roads and licensing applications determined, issuing food export certificates, investigating, and resolving complaints and responding to Service Requests during 2023/24 than in previous years. The investments in digital technologies while only partially complete have created capacity that has allowed for the introduction of new duties through legislative change such as dangerous dogs legislation, the Aberdeenshire trusted trader scheme and Short-term let legislation.

In terms of Diversity, Succession Planning and Establishment Control the Service has maintained its commitment to investing in our existing workforce. PPP's identify the training and development needs of team members and proportionate budgets have been ringfenced across the Service to ensure funding for learning and development is available. Success has taken the form of strengthened relationships between the region's higher and further education institutions. This is evidenced by the recent recruitment of graduates from RGU and University of Aberdeen to a variety of vacant positions across the Service as well as two of our authorised officers completing our in-house training programme and becoming qualified Environmental Health Officers. The successful completion of the EHO course has allowed the individuals to progress from the position of authorised officer to environmental health officer. This has created an opportunity for another 2 authorised officers within the Service to undertake the

EHO training programme and advance their careers with Aberdeenshire Council. An excellent example of the Service's successful succession planning process is the recent appointment of the new Environmental Health North Team Manager. The newly appointed Team Manager joined the Council in 2011 as a Student Environmental Health Officer and has progressed to the positions of Environmental Health Officer, Senior Environmental Health Officer and now Environmental Health Team Manager over the last 13 years.

Concluding Summary

The Planning & Economy Service works collaboratively to deliver the Council's Strategic Priorities. The strategic priorities are embedded in the prioritised activities of the Planning and Economy Service through the creation of safe, connected, sustainable, inclusive, and economically prosperous places. Through successive budget setting processes over a 5-year period there are no activities that are undertaken by the Planning and Economy Service that do not contribute to delivery of the Council Plan.



From mountain to sea

Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea –
the very best of Scotland.

Roads and Infrastructure Head of Service Business Plan 2024/25 Appendix 3

Vision Statement

Through the pursuit of excellence, we will develop and maintain infrastructure and deliver services which positively enhance opportunities for every resident, visitor, and employee, so that Aberdeenshire can be considered the "Very Best of Scotland".

In short, our Vision means we are working toward

“Making “things” better – every day”.

Service Function and Purpose

Roads and Infrastructure Service was established following a review of Head of Service responsibilities within the Infrastructure Service in Spring 2021.

The Service is responsible for managing a wide range of physical assets as well as dispensing a number of statutory duties as assigned under the scheme of delegation.

The Service consists of the following Teams:

Roads

The purpose of the Roads Team is to apply Asset Management philosophies to manage and maintain the road network for the benefit of all users. The road network extends to over 5,500kms of A, B, C and U class roads and around 1,500 kms of footways. The network also includes some 48,000 street lights, as well as other associated infrastructure such as over 76,000 road drainage gullies and 44 signal controlled crossing.

The Roads Team dispenses the statutory duties associated with the Council's role as Roads Authority and Traffic Authority.

The key activities carried out include:

Road Safety Inspections	Road Management	Street Lighting Maintenance
Winter Maintenance Operations	Emergency Response Operations	Highways Internal Contractor
Road Improvement Schemes – Design and Construction	Traffic Management	New Roads and Street Works Act statutory duties

Structures

The purpose of the Structures Team is to apply Asset Management philosophies to manage and maintain the road network for the benefit of all users. The bridge network includes some 1,400 road bridges of various sizes and ages.

The Structures Team dispenses the statutory duties associated with the Council's role as Bridge Authority.

Key activities carried out include

Bridge Management and Maintenance	Structural Condition Inspections	Retaining Wall Management and Maintenance
Structural Design and Site Supervision	Structural Projects Contract Management	Structural Technical Approvals
Abnormal load routing approvals	Public Utility Work Coordination at bridges	

Projects

The purpose of the Projects Team is to deliver manage the design and construction of infrastructure improvements. This includes undertaking works on behalf of other sections within Roads and Infrastructure and for other internal “Clients” from across the Council. The Projects Team dispenses the statutory duties associated with the Council’s role as a Harbour Authority, Coast Protection Authority and a Flood Protection Authority.

Key activities include:

Design and Management of Major Capital Projects	Flood Management Act Duties	Harbour Management and Maintenance
Coast Protection Act Duties	Contractual Processes and Procedures	Engineering Design and Delivery

Quality and Resources

The purpose of the Q&R Team is to promote and enable a positive approach to safety, quality, training and performance across the Service. This includes the management of the Service Quality Assurance system and the associated training. The Team also manages an effective and efficient quarry and sign shop operation.

Key activities include:

Development of Health and Safety Procedures and Training	Performance Management	Financial Monitoring
Quality Management System	Quarry Services	Sign Design and Manufacturing

Roads Policy and Asset Management

The purpose of the Roads Policy and Asset Management Team is to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to support the Service in managing the assets under its stewardship. The Team also manages Off-Street Car Parks.

Key activities include:

Policy Development	Asset Management	Address and Street Gazetteers
Car Parking Management	Street Lighting Management	Roads Construction Consent Technical Standards

Fleet Services

The purpose of Fleet Services is to provision appropriate plant and vehicles to meet the needs of Services across the Council. To achieve this Fleet Services procures vehicles and plant, maintains that equipment to appropriate standards. The Team is also responsible for dispensing the duty associated with the Council's Fleet Operator License.

Key activities include:

Fleet Operators Licence Holder	Driver Compliance and Training	Vehicle Replacement Programme
Plant and Equipment Replacement Programme	Vehicles Maintenance Service, including MOT Testing	Taxi and Private Hire Testing

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.

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.

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.

Safety

- The main Value of the Service is “Safety”. Safety continues to be our first consideration in everything that we do. As such it is a priority of the Service to ensure that our practices are routinely assessed and reviewed to ensure that they are as safe as possible. This includes on site auditing of our performance and identifying trends. This allows to identify opportunities for revisions to Safe Systems of Work and training opportunities

Income

- As set out above the Service operates a number of functions that generates income, whether that be internally from other Service area or external income from sale of goods and service to the public.
- The R&I budget is set with an expectation that certain income levels will be achieved. It is therefore important that these are monitored closely, and appropriate steps take to achieve income levels wherever possible

Infrastructure Maintenance

- The Service is tasked with the management of many of Aberdeenshire infrastructure assets. Each year works programmes are submitted to relevant Committee for approval, covering asset groups such as Roads, Bridges, Harbour, Flooding and Fleet Replacement. It is a priority of the Service to deliver these works programmes.
- In addition to the planned work included in these programmes of work the Service also carries out reactive works related to asset safety. It is a priority that such reactive work is prioritised and actioned in an appropriate timescale. It is simply not possible for our infrastructure to be defect free, so it is vitally important that finite resources are allocated to issues that present the highest level of risk.
- Inspection programmes are an essential element of infrastructure asset management. It is a priority of the Service to ensure that inspection programmes are carried out in line with best practice. Inspection information feeds in to the development of future planned maintenance works, as well as informing reactive repair schedules

Vehicles

- The Service is tasked with the management of an extensive array of plant and vehicles, used by numerous Services across the Council. Planned inspection and maintenance operations are undertaken in Fleet Workshops to ensure that all plant and vehicles are fit for use and meet require standards.
- In addition to the planned work the Vehicle Maintenance Service also carries out reactive repairs to plant and vehicles. This includes an “out of hours” on call service to ensure vehicle down time can be minimised, mitigating operational impacts on Services.
- Each year vehicle replacement schedules are submitted to relevant Committee for approval. It is a priority of the Service to deliver these schedules.
- Competency and training are essential elements of operating any significant corporate Fleet. It is a priority of the Service to ensure that training programmes are in place to ensure compliance with best practice.

New Legislation/Initiatives

- The legislative environment in which Roads and Infrastructure operates routinely changes, either through new legislation or impacted on by new national initiatives.
- This year the Service will be prioritising the delivery of three aspects related to traffic management, namely:
 - Implementation of 20mph Urban Speed Limit Programme
 - Implementation of Pavement Parking Legislation
 - Decriminalised Parking in Aberdeenshire
- The drive towards Zero Emission Fleet is a continued priority for the Service. This is a considerable challenge as the cost of conversion is considerable and at present adequate funds have not been identified. The main priority of the Service will be to explore opportunities with vehicle supplier, and others, to be part of demonstration projects and real work testing to ensure we are a well informed client. As decisions have to be made this upskilling with be essential.

Innovation

- Changing technology continues to present potential opportunities to change the way that the Service delivers its functions. Identifying and assessing these opportunities continues to be a priority for the Service. Changes in the ability to manage “big data” and the exposure of that data to AI interpretation is of particular interest to the Service. This year we will continue with trials of differing technology associated with the inspection and surveying of road conditions and the opportunities that may present with regard to scheme identification and prioritisation.
- The Service will also continue to prioritise involvement in national initiatives related to this area. It is our experience that involvement in national trials, or national bodies, provides added value compared to undertaking such work in isolation

Roads Winter Maintenance Policy Review

- Delivery of Roads Winter Maintenance activities on the road network is a significant role for the Service. This year a in depths review of the current Policy and Operational Manual will be undertaken

R&I Service review

- As set out above, the Service operates in an ever changing landscape. It is therefore essential that the Service has the right personnel, with the right skills, deployed in the most efficient and effective manner. To ensure that we are ready to meet today’s challenges and have the flexibility to adapt to the future, the Service is currently undertaking a formal Service Review. It will be a priority of the Service to conclude that review this Financial Year.

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.

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](#).

R&I Support For Place Agenda

Many of the functions undertaken by R&I are delivered on a consistent basis across the Shire. For example the provision of plant and vehicles is a function that is provided to all Services of the Council irrespective of their location. The need is set by the operating Service, and Fleet Services ensures that the plant and vehicles are procured in line with Policy and maintained in line with national standards.

That being said, there are some functional areas where the principles of place are considered by the Service. For example, the Harbour Service facilities Harbour Advisory Committees, giving a voice to local harbour users that directly influences the development of the harbour infrastructure and the services on offer.

In a similar vein the operational of Snow and Flood Warden Schemes provide an opportunity for communities to get directly involved in delivering a level of service that builds on the core service level delivered across the Shire.

There are areas where work is progressing to build a greater role for Place Agenda. The implementation of the National 20mph programme included a phase of network assessment. While the criteria for the assessment was predominately set at the national level there the role of specific roads to the local community was considered, providing a degree of flexibility.

In a similar fashion on the development of the Pavement Parking implementation has provided an opportunity for communities to highlight “hotspot” areas that would benefit from additional levels of enforcement. This approach has allowed the Team to direct limited finite resources in an intelligence led manner.

Work is currently underway to review the road network hierarchy. An essential element of that review is to consider factors that can be included in the assessment that ensures that the local importance of a road/street is reflected alongside other strategic network considerations. This is proving difficult to achieve, as many “unique” features turn out be common to many locations and as such do not help to differentiate.

The functions covered by R&I are generally related to the management and maintenance of physical assets within communities so much of what we do relates to the Space, Stewardship and Civic outcomes. However, as many of the asset groups are related to transport, in its widest definition, our activities also relate to the Movement and Resources outcomes.

We shall have officers linking into each of the programmes of work across each of the 17 place plans. That will allow the key data from the Strategic Assessment and Zone Summaries to inform which functions will require to be prioritised in each of those plans.

Service Performance Indicators 2024-2029

Service priority	Service performance measure	Baseline	Target	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Economy – Infrastructure and public assets	Roads Safety Inspections	2022/23	100	Natalie Wood	Ongoing
Economy – Infrastructure and public assets	Bridge Inspections	2022/23	100	Donald MacPherson	Ongoing
Economy – Infrastructure and public assets	Vehicle Safety Inspections	2022/23	100	Paul Gray	Ongoing
Economy – Infrastructure and public assets	24hr Defect “Make Safe”	2022/23	100	Phil Leiper	Ongoing
Economy – Infrastructure and public assets	Queries responded to within prescribed time limits	2022/23	90	Bill Lennox	Ongoing

Service priority	Action	Sub Action	Target	Anticipated outcome	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Economy – Infrastructure and public assets	Develop revised Defect Repair indicators	In development TBC	TBC	Revised suite of performance indicators related to defect repairs	Bill Lennox	To start
Economy – Infrastructure and public assets	Develop revised Planned Work indicators	In development TBC	TBC	Revised suite of performance indicators related to Planned work	Bill Lennox	To start

Benchmarking and Self-evaluation

BENCHMARKING

The Service uses a number of Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicators to compare performance with other Councils, such as:

ENV04a: Cost of Roads Per KM

ENV04b: Percentage of A Class roads considered for maintenance treatment

ENV04c: Percentage of B Class roads considered for maintenance treatment

ENV04d: Percentage of C Class roads considered for maintenance treatment

ENV04e: Percentage of Unclassified roads considered for maintenance treatment

The Service is also an active Member of the APSE Performance Networks which allows colleagues to engage directly with APSE and other Council on detailed operational benchmarking. APSE covers a range of sectors relevant to the Service and produces summary “State of the Nation” reports that are reviewed by the Service.

The Service is also an active member of SCOTS and provides detailed performance information to the Society. Selected elements of this information are shared with APSE and the LGBF.

The Scottish Roadworks Commissioner produces quarterly and annual performance review for each local authority whereby we can see our own performance and those of similar Roads Authorities. This includes the number of recorded and completed works including any noticing failures.

SELF EVALUATION

The Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) published in October 2020 concluded that Aberdeenshire Council’s approach to self-evaluation had been inconsistent and recommended that we should implement an effective council wide approach to self-evaluation, including robust arrangements for monitoring agreed actions. Audit Committee agreed that the Council should adopt and implement the Public Improvement Framework (PSIF) self-evaluation model at its

meeting on 4 November 2021. PSIF provides a structured and evidence-based approach to identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The model also allows employees to reflect on strengths and areas for improvement as teams and individuals and involves and motivates them to drive forward improvement. PSIF Guidance attached: [PSIF Framework Guidance 2020 \(1\) \(2\).pdf \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Within Aberdeenshire Council it is estimated that each service will undertake a self-evaluation exercise once every three years with the organisation itself completing an annual assessment. The Roads and Infrastructure Service self-evaluation exercise is scheduled for Autumn 2024. In summary this will consist of:

- An Initial Scoping Meeting introducing the PSIF model to the senior management team and agreeing who will take part in the Awareness session.
- The Awareness Session will comprise senior management and team leaders, introducing them to the PSIF model, agreeing the dates the survey will be open and what will happen after the survey closes.
- The survey will consist of six main themes, during which time staff will be encouraged to participate, advising them this is their chance to reflect and give their views. The six themes are:
 - Service Planning
 - Staff
 - Partnerships and Resources
 - Processes and Services
 - Leadership
 - Results
- Following analysis of feedback, staff will be invited to attend a consensus and improvement planning session. This will consist of a presentation advising of the results of the survey and agreeing an improvement action plan.

While the Service has not yet been scheduled to undertake the PSIF evaluation, the Service does routinely collection information that informs Management Team on performance and areas for improvement. Communication has been identified as such an area and work is currently underway to deliver improvements.

Financial Profile

The Budget Profile for 2024/2025 is as per below.

The budget is agreed annually by Full Council in February. A full copy of the budget papers and information can be found on the following committee page: Item 4

The Roads and Infrastructure Service is tasked with managing a wide range of physical assets, including road, bridges, harbour, maintenance plant and vehicles. To deliver these functions the budget is allocated to a number of thematic areas set out below. Teams within the Roads and Infrastructure provide services to a number of “clients” across the Council. This generates internal income for the Service. In addition, a number of Service areas provide services to the public, generating external income for the Service.

The split of the budget, including income, is set out in the table below.

	Gross Budget	Income	Net
50.Roads Administration & Management	£4,830,700	-£6,006,600	-£1,175,900
51.Flood Management	£640,600	-£9,900	£630,500
52.Harbours	£1,483,800	-£603,300	£835,500
53.Roads Maintenance - Expenditure & Income	£15,173,300	-£1,192,600	£13,980,700
54.Winter Maintenance - Expenditure	£8,177,800	-£2,200	£8,175,600
55.Other Recoverable Works - Roads	£187,900	-£187,900	£0
56.Highways	£31,977,500	-£32,004,600	-£27,100
57.Quarries	£6,972,600	-£8,004,100	-£1,031,500
68.Car Parks	£854,500	-£833,400	£21,100
69.Internal Transport	£7,324,400	-£7,324,400	£0
70.Vehicle Maintenance Services	£6,986,500	-£6,674,400	£311,800
72. Expenditure to be funded from borrowing	£0	-£7,000,000	-£7,000,000
	£77,564,400	-£62,843,700	£14,720,700

<u>Capital Plan</u>	£
AWPR De-trunking fund	100,000
Bridges and Structures	1,100,000
Drainage	250,000
Harbours, Coast Protection and Flooding	400,000
Quarries	298,000
Roads Resurfacing and Reconstruction	6,000,000
Stonehaven Flood Protection Scheme	850,000
Street Lighting	250,000
Vehicles	5,683,000
Infrastructure Investment Fund 1 – Bridges and Inf Projects	3,000,000
Infrastructure Investment Fund 2	1,015,000
	18,946,000

Our People: Staffing and Workforce Planning 2024-2025

Service Staffing Profile

The Roads and Infrastructure Service is split into 6 discrete functional Teams

- Roads Maintenance and Management
- Structures
- Roads Quality and Resources
- Roads Policy and Asset Management
- Projects
- Fleet

Under the current structure 8 Service Managers lead teams associated with the above functions. However, the Service is currently undertaking a Service Review to ensure that it is ready to meet the challenges ahead.

In total the staffing Service is 484.95 FTE.

The work pattern of office base staff is based on a 36.25 hour working week.

The work pattern of depot and workshop-based staff is based on a 37-hour working week.

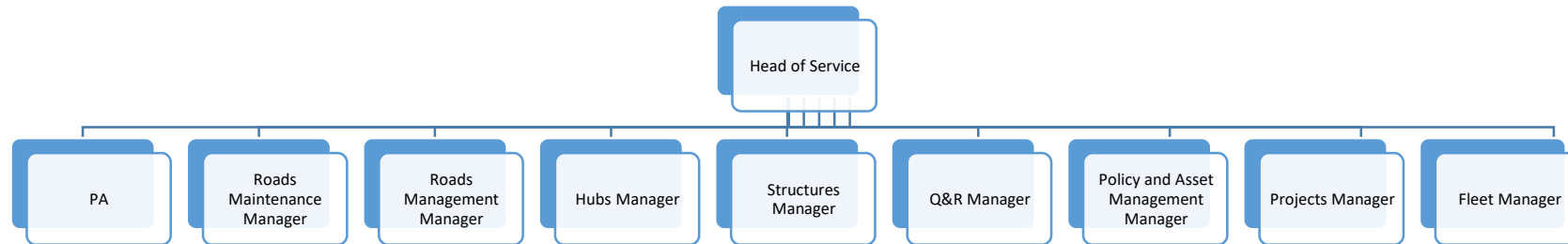
The breakdown of staffing numbers across the Service Units is set out below.

Roads Maintenance and Management	Structures	Roads Quality and Resources	Roads Policy and Asset Management	Projects	Fleet
FTE: 268.5	FTE: 40	FTE: 41	FTE: 19	FTE: 40.4	FTE: 74
Vacancies: 39	Vacancies: 4	Vacancies: 2	Vacancies: 5	Vacancies: 5	Vacancies: 2

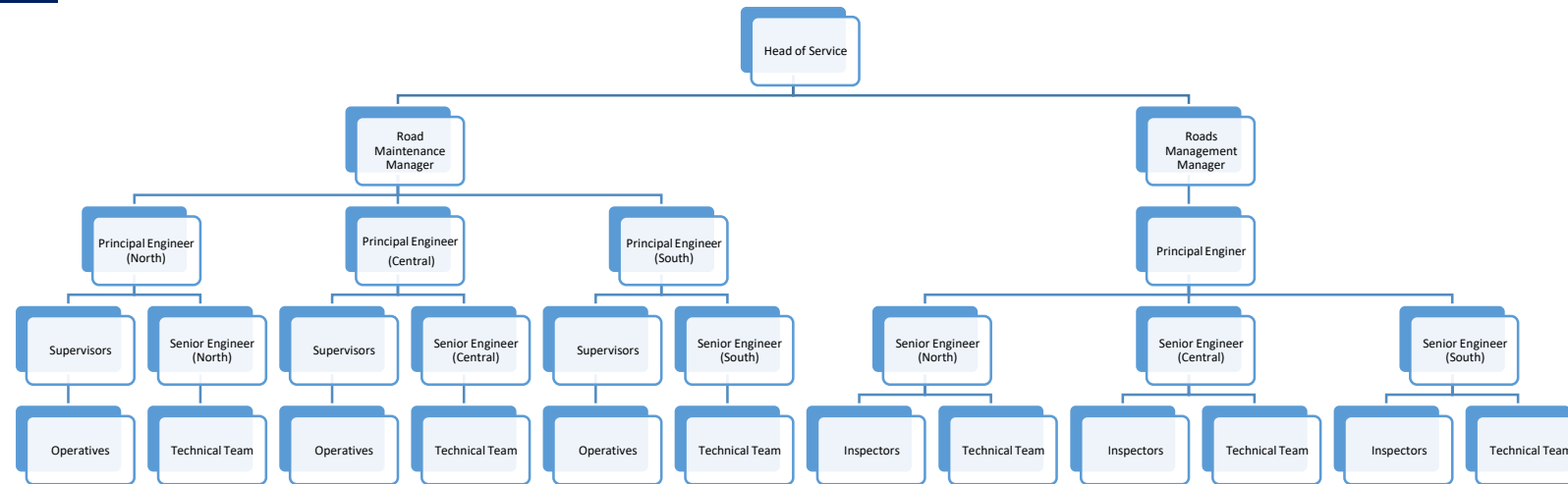
Due to recruitment and retention pressures the Service is currently operating under a “transitional” structure. This structure was put in place to address the immediate pressure areas resulting from several vacancies in key roles, and difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified personnel to fill the vacancies.

The “transitional” structure has resulted in a change of role for some individuals and several vacant posts being redesigned to assist with recruitment.

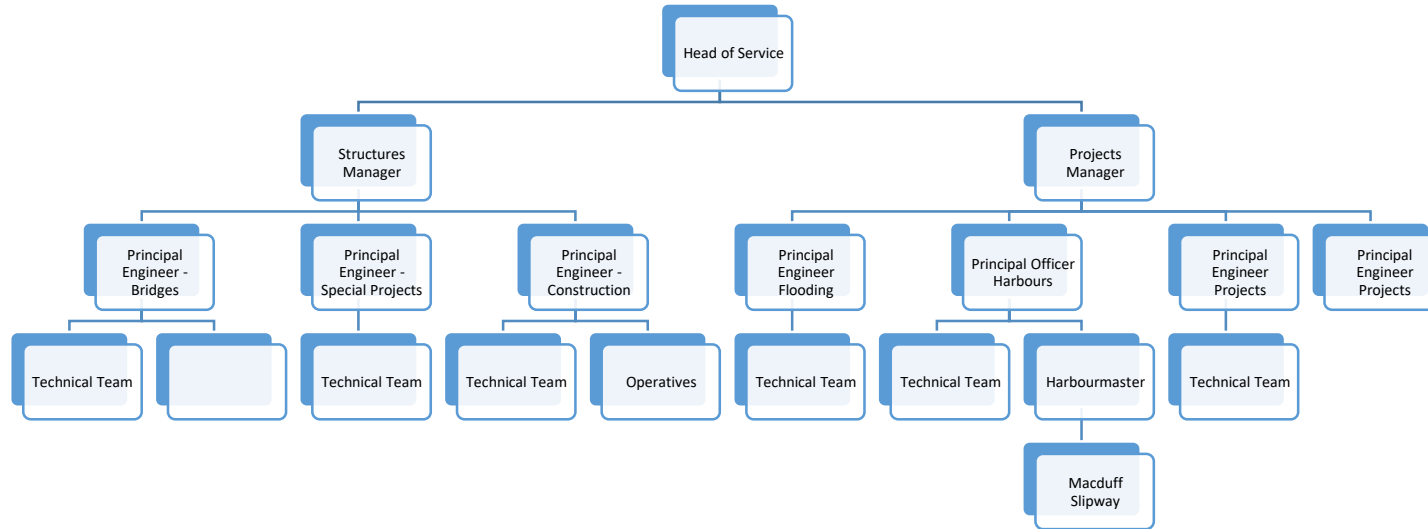
The charts below set out the current “transitional” structure.



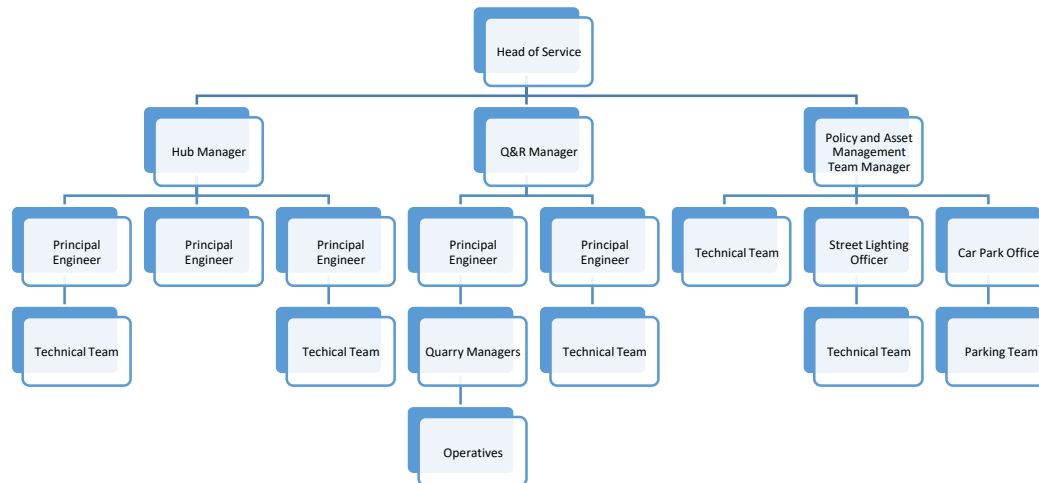
Road Management and Maintenance



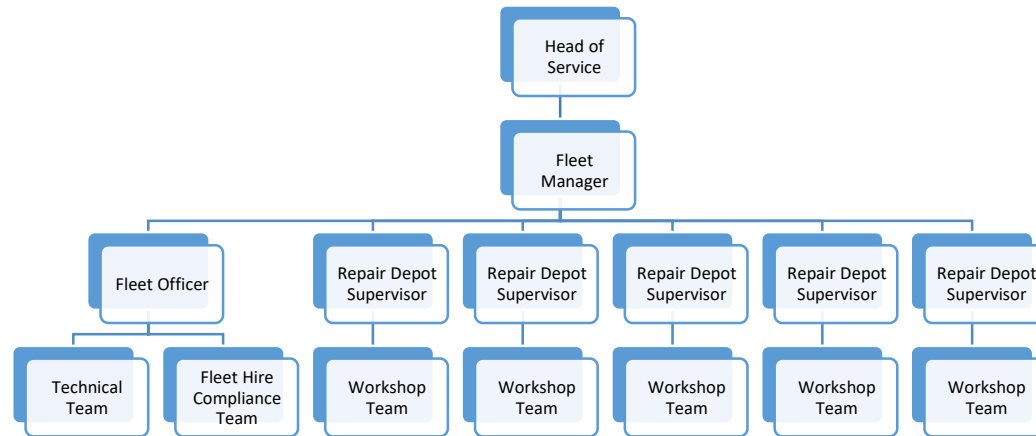
Projects and Structures



Q&R, Policy and Asset Management, Hubs



Fleet



Workforce Plan

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

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities <i>All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:</i>			
Wellbeing	Issue/ Risk	<p>57% workforce, who responded to the survey in Sept 2022 self- identify as struggling or surviving. The top three reason were: 1 Works Pressures 2 Work/Life Balance 3 Mental Health Condition</p> <p>The top reasons identified that related to work where focused on understaffing resulting in a higher workload and difficulty in “finishing the day” when working from home.</p> <p>60% of respondents in the struggling and surviving category considered that they were receiving adequate support.</p>	
	Action(s)	<p>Promote Wellbeing Newsletter</p> <p>Promote the 87% app for self awareness</p> <p>Service Review</p>	
	Progress/ Measure	<p>Promote Wellbeing Newsletter</p> <p>Promote the 87% app</p> <p>Service Review - Consultation Phase</p> <p>Service Review - Implementation Phase</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Summer 2024</p> <p>Autumn 2024</p>
Skills	Issue/ Risk	<p>Appropriate skills across the Service to respond to the changing operational landscape. While the main focus of this is on the need to improve digital skills across the whole Team, there is also a need to ensure current training matrices are appropriate following the Service review.</p>	
	Action(s)	<p>Review of Training Matrices</p>	<p>Autumn 2024</p> <p>Autumn 2024</p>

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities <i>All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:</i>			
		<p>Improve digital connectivity and equipment at Depots</p> <p>Encouraging new skills in digital technologies to improve effectiveness and efficiency, particularly related to programming and site work</p>	Ongoing
	Progress/ Measures	<p>Revised Training Matrices</p> <p>ICT infrastructure at Depots</p>	<p>Autumn 2024</p> <p>Autumn 2024</p>
Diversity	Issue/ Risk	<p>The profile of staff across the whole of Roads and Infrastructure indicates that the 34% of personnel are in the 30-50 age bracket, with 32% being in the 50-60 bracket. However, 23% are over 60, while only 11% being under 30. This does present a risk in terms of service continuity.</p> <p>The data also indicates that Service is male dominated with 86% of post being held by males.</p> <p>The Service Management Team is also dominated with male postholders, with 2 roles held by females.</p>	
	Action(s)	Review following completing of Service Review	Winter 2024
	Progress/ Measures		
Succession Planning	Issue/ Risk	<p>Over the last 36 months there have been significant levels of staffing turn over, across all levels of the Service. This has negatively impacted on the experience profile across the team.</p> <p>While there is no formal succession planning and the use apprentices and the Career Grade Scheme, and associated Training Scheme, does provide a framework to “grown our own”.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to fully review the structure of the Service. This will take into account the current recruitment and retention issues as well as the need for a more formal approach to succession planning.</p>	
	Action(s)	Continue recruitment of Apprentices in Fleet	

Priority	Key Actions		Target Date
Corporate Workforce Planning Priorities <i>All Services to identify actions for the following corporate Workforce Planning Priorities:</i>			
		Expand use of C Grade Road Worker post	
	Progress/ Measures	Number of Apprenticeship roles Number of C Grade Road Worker posts	Ongoing Ongoing
Establishment Control (FTE, Agency, Overtime use)	Issue/Risk	<p>There are ongoing risks in the resilience across all teams in Roads and Infrastructure. Recruitment and retention is an ongoing issue.</p> <p>By all measures the workforce has continued on a generally downward trend since a peak in 2019. While having recovered slightly from a minimum level in mid 2022, the Service continues to operate with significant vacancy levels of around 20%.</p> <p>The need to resource “out of hours” rotas is a particular point of weakness, as these duties are not contractually enforceable and are therefore carried out by team members who volunteer to fill these roles. The one exception to this is duties associated with Winter Maintenance drivers, with the requirement built into job descriptions.</p> <p>The Service Review will provide an opportunity for Job Profiles to be reviewed and consideration be given to different working profiles to address this issue.</p>	
	Action(s)	Review of Job Profiles as part of Service Review	
	Progress/ Measures	Revised Job Profiles	Autumn 2024

Measure of Success/Progress Update

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:



As always it has been a very busy period for the service. While not an exhaustive list some highlights are provided in the following paragraphs.

Managing a wide range of Aberdeenshire's physical infrastructure assets in a major role for the Service, and as such forms a significant part of the activities undertaken over the last year.

To set that into some sense of scale the Service has delivered over 460 discrete road maintenance projects, with a combined value of around £24m. New bridges at Millcroft King Edward and the new Jubilee Bridge at Gairnshiel have been completed at a combined value of over £6.75m. While the construction of the Jubilee Bridge was carried out by an external contractor, the Service's Craighash Quarry was able to secure a contract with them to supply over 31,000 tonnes of material to the project.

Major construction works were also completed at Banff Harbour involving restoring the Grade A listed structure, originally designed by Thomas Telford back in the early 1800's.

The Stonehaven Flood Protection Scheme was completed. This comprises the construction of 2km of flood walls, the installation of two higher capacity culverts, and alterations to five bridges, including the refurbishment and reinstatement of the listed White Bridge. This scheme has been a high priority for many years and the successful completion provides enhanced level of flood protection to many residential and commercial properties in Stonehaven that have long suffered the devastating impacts of flooding.

The Service also has the responsibility for managing the Council's fleet of vehicles and associated pieces of plant. It is essential that vehicles and plant are available to the Services that require them to undertake their activities. Effective and efficient management of the

condition of that fleet is therefore critically important. For the calendar year 2023 Fleet Services prepared and presented our HGV's for 172 tests (MOT), achieving a 97.09% pass rate compared to a national average of 93.82%. While that is important for the Services relying on those vehicles it also ensured that our OCRS (Operator Compliance Risk Score) for both Traffic and Roadworthiness is in the Green band.

In addition to maintain the existing fleet, the Service is responsible for delivery of the vehicle replacement programme. This programme is prioritised and aligned to available budgets. This past year 323 new assets (vehicles and plant) to Services across the Council.

As set out above Safety is the main priority of the Service. That focus extends to everything that we do and takes many forms. One example of our commitment to improving Safety is in relation to Driver Licensing. The Service introduced a new Driver Licence checking system, with 1,467 drivers now enrolled on the system automated checks are carried out depending on type of vehicle driven and frequency employee must drive. Our aspiration is to utilise the system to enhance our compliance and management of Council employees who drive on Council business to include fitness to drive declarations, Grey Fleet and Pool car drivers.

Ensuring that our road network is safe for users is obviously a high priority for the Services. The Road Inspection Policy is a critical element of our safe system approach. The road inspection policy had its 5-year review completed and approved. This allowed the service to review the current policy and also engage with stakeholders on how the policy was performing. The risk-based approach methodology, in line with code of practice, is still the preferred approach, however it is recognised that the service needs to build in other local factors into this methodology. An elected member workshop was held in early 2024 which has begun this process and will feed into the network hierarchy review project. That work will continue this coming year.

Innovation is important to the Service, and it can take many forms, in terms of scale, use of technology and changes to working practices.

At one end of that scale is a review of Pothole Maintenance Techniques. This is focused on reviewing existing techniques and identifying opportunities to optimise the repair taking account of overall road condition and potential traffic uses. While this does not sound revolutionary, the historic approach has been to carry out full structural repairs at the majority of sites. While there is no doubt that this provides the most robust repair, it is clear that in some cases this is over engineered. As the Service continues to exploit opportunities to drive efficiencies, that approach is no longer viable.

At the other end of the scale the Service has recently started a trail of video and AI based road inspections. The aspiration is to learn how this technology can better assist the service with road deterioration modelling and prioritisation of projects across Aberdeenshire in a consistent manner. Further trials of automated inspections are to continue into the new financial year.

Somewhere in the middle is work undertaken by the Quarry Team. Through an innovative project with UNDO, a nature-based carbon removal company, approx. 34,000 tonnes of basalt dust has been sold from Balmedie and Pitcaple quarry last year. The dust is spread on farmland, increasing the surface area of the rock and giving it immediate contact with carbon dioxide produced by plant roots and soil microbes. With the right conditions it is estimated that for every four tonnes of basalt dust spread, one tonne of carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere. Historically, this dust has been a problematic byproduct of the quarrying process and this project has turned it into a valuable product.

Road and Infrastructure Teams are very much on the front line of service delivery. This is no more so the case then during period of stormy weather. In what has been one of the wettest and wildest years on record, the Team has been frequently called upon to support communities during these challenging times. With a considerable number of named storms, this winter has been a significant challenge. Substantial damage has been done to the infrastructure assets that the Service is responsible for, so very visible, such as the partial loss of the road at Marykirk, and some that will only become evident in the coming months such as road surface damage due to frost or undermining of bridge piers due to river scour.

Concluding Summary

The activities delivered by Roads and Infrastructure are complex and diverse. In the main they relate to the management and maintenance of public assets in heavily regulated sectors. The roads asset groups provide facilities to our communities on a 24/7 basis and are relied upon by all cross sections of communities.

Our role as Flood Authority puts us in a privileged position to influence the development of the National Flood Risk Plan and co author the Local Flood Plans to ensure that they protect, assist and enhance our communities as much as is practicable within operational and financial constraints.

Our Harbours are key assets in our coastal towns, ranging from sites of key employment through to historic locations that are key to a towns sense of being.

Our Fleet Service activities is somewhat different in that it provides internal infrastructure, in the form of plant and vehicles, to Services across the Council, allowing them to deliver their core services to communities and Service Users.