

**FINANCE SERVICE
SERVICE PLAN
2007 – 2011**

update at June 2008

**SEIRBHEIS AN IONMHAIS
PLANA SEIRBHEIS
2007 – 2011**

ùrachadh san Ògmhios 2008

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The Council has a legal duty to consider for all plans, programmes and strategies, the relevance of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. Where environmental impact is likely, a prescribed process for assessing the impact, and taking steps to mitigate against any adverse environmental impact, and consulting with the public and statutory organisations must be followed. The full process, where required, can take up to six months to complete. The Council's draft Corporate Plan is currently under going this process, with completion expected by the end of June 2008. It is anticipated that the assessment of the Corporate Plan may reduce the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment of Service Plans. Should any change be required to the current draft Service Plan arising from this process, this will be reported to Members at a future date.

This Service Plan impacts on the whole of the Highland population and therefore all aspects of equalities have to be cross referenced against all duties which apply. This Service Plan has been screened for its impact on equalities groups, and does not require a full equalities impact assessment.

As the Service Plan is reviewed, and policy and strategy updated, Equalities Impact screenings will be undertaken where appropriate.

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Section 1 Background and Context

Earrann 1 Eachdraidh is Co-theacsa

1.1 Purpose of the Plan, Time Frame and how it will be monitored

1.1 Adhbhar a' Phlana, Frèam Ùine agus mar a thèid a sgrùdadh

This Service Plan is a strategic document which presents the Finance Service's improvement priorities for 2007 – 2011, the impact of these and how they will be evaluated. It is supported by a number of policies, business and operational plans to deliver the Administration's priorities.

Progress against the Service Plan is monitored via Quarterly Performance Reviews with the Chief Executive with progress ultimately being reported to the Resource Committee.

1.2 Main Functions and Structure

1.2 Prìomh Fheuman is Structair

1.2.1 Service Goals

1.2.1 Amasan Seirbheis

Finance Service Statement of Purpose

Aithris Adhbhair Seirbheis an Ionmhais

The following is the Finance Service agreed statement of purpose.

“We will deliver and demonstrate efficient and effective stewardship of the Council's funds by providing leadership and excellence in relation to financial issues”.

Finance Service Goals

Amasan Seirbheis an Ionmhais

The Service has agreed the following goals:

- Confident, developed and well motivated staff.
- Excellent financial resource management founded on first class systems, procedures and processes.
- Recognised excellence in service delivery to our customers.
- Culture of continuous improvement.

1.2.2 The Role of the Finance Service

1.2.2 Dleastanas Seirbheis an Ionmhais

Central to the role of the Finance Service is the statutory obligation imposed by the terms of Section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. Each local authority is bound to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and shall ensure that the Proper Officer has responsibility for the administration of those affairs. For The Highland Council, the Depute Chief Executive and Director of Finance is the Proper Officer and, as such, has this responsibility. In accordance with this duty, Financial Regulations are compiled and issued, which govern conduct of the Council in financial matters and has direct jurisdiction over all financial activities taking place in the Council.

In addition to providing corporate support to the Council and Joint Boards, the Service now manages Money Advice and Income Maximisation. It also administers the Pension Schemes for the Highland Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Northern Constabulary and Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service. It provides financial management support and advice to the Council which administers, as trustee, the Council's Pension Fund. The fund covers employees and pensioners of the Council and a number of other "Scheduled and Admitted Bodies" to the Fund.

The Service also bills and collects water and wastewater charges on behalf of Scottish Water and manages the Council's Consolidated Procurement Service.

1.2.3 Functions

1.2.3 Feuman

The Finance Service provides for delivery of the Service through the Director supported by six Sections:

- Accounting;
- Business and Technical Support;
- Corporate Finance;
- Exchequer;
- Internal Audit and Risk Management, and
- Procurement.

The structure of the Service is shown on Page 7 and a description of how it operates is given below.

Accounting

Cunntasachd

Five posts report directly to the Head of Accounting:

- 4 Service Finance Managers, and
- Payroll, Pensions and Creditors Manager.

Accounting support is delivered to each of the Council's Services through four Service Finance Teams each led by a Service Finance Manager. The Services supported by these teams are:

- Central Services (Chief Executive's, Corporate, Finance, Planning and Development);
- Education, Culture and Sport (ECS);
- Housing & Property and Social Work; and
- Transport, Environmental and Community Services (TECS).

These teams provide a full range of accounting support to Service Directors and their Management Teams at Headquarters and to Service staff in Areas. The Central Services Team prepares the end of year accounts for the Council and the Joint Boards and manages financial systems development.

The Payroll, Pensions and Creditors Team provides a Payroll, Pensions and Supplier Payment service for the Council and associated bodies. The Payroll Team make payments to around 13,000 employees on a weekly, fortnightly and monthly basis. The Pensions Team administer The Local Government Pension Scheme for the Highland Council, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar and around 30 other organisations and administer the pension schemes for the Police and Fire-fighters.

The Creditors Team are responsible for the payment of around 300,000 invoices each year for the Council and associated bodies and for the administration of the Construction Industry Tax Scheme.

Business and Technical Support **Taic Gnothachais is Teicneòlais**

The Business and Technical Support Manager is responsible for the following teams:

- Performance Management and Planning, and Technical Advice;
- Finance Systems Administration Team;
- Customer Services and Quality Control;
- Training and Development, and
- Office Services Team.

The Business and Technical Support Manager provides executive support to the Depute Chief Executive and Director of Finance and the Performance Team advises on technical issues relating to Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) to both the Depute Chief Executive and Director of Finance and the Council.

The Business and Technical Support Manager also provides support in the implementation of Council policies within the Finance Service including Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Energy Management.

The Performance and Business Intelligence Manager has the responsibility for the production of the Statutory Accounts Commission's Performance Indicators for the Council and supports the Business and Technical Support Manager on the production of the annual Service Plan.

The Finance Systems Administration Team provides systems administration for the Finance Service systems as follows:

- Oracle (Corporate Financial system);
- Revs and Bens (Local Tax collection and Benefits administration system);
- Axis (Cash Receipting system);
- Radius (Community Charge system);

- PECOS (E-Procurement system);
- ResourceLink (Payroll system); and
- Civica (ECDM)

The Customer Services Officer administers and analyses Complaints, Freedom of Information requests and Ombudsman enquiries received by the Finance Service. This post also identifies Customer Care training and development issues.

The Finance Control Assistant provides Quality Assurance and Control, including Service Plan actions. They also provide assistance for the provision of Performance Management information.

The Training and Development Team provide specialist training to all relevant staff. In addition to identifying and developing innovative methods of delivery, they also identify and develop opportunities presented by close working with other Councils.

The Office Services Team provides administrative support to the Finance Service as a whole, including maintaining personnel and training records, providing administrative support for the recruitment process, booking travel and accommodation, ordering stationery and other materials, taking minutes of meetings, and typing support.

Corporate Finance

Ionmhas Corporra

Three posts report to the Head of Corporate Finance, these are:

- Finance Manager (Budget Strategy, Policy and Taxation);
- Finance Manager (Partnerships and Joint Ventures), and
- Principal Accountant (Treasury and Investment).

The Finance Manager (Budget Strategy, Policy and Taxation) and the staff reporting to that post are crucial to the financial strategy of the Council. The team supports the Budget Information Group and the Council in relation to the development of revenue and capital budgets, and is responsible for the development of corporate policy and advice in relation to financial matters. It also provides advice on taxation matters to the Council as well as ensuring that the Council's statutory duties in that respect are fulfilled. The team assists the Council in developing policy in relation to efficiency measures to meet national directives, and supports the monitoring and reporting of efficiency, primarily through the Council's Annual Efficiency Statements, and addresses related in-house budgetary issues.

The Finance Manager (Partnerships and Joint Ventures) and the staff reporting to that post provide financial management, guidance and support to a range of strategic partnership projects and joint venture initiatives being progressed by the Council.

The Principal Accountant (Treasury and Investment) and the staff reporting to that post provide treasury management services to the Council. They also administer the effective investment of the Council's Pension Fund monies and manage banking and leasing services provided to the Council.

Exchequer

Roinn an Ionmhais

Three Managers and a Business Support Officer report directly to the Head of Exchequer. These are:

- Policy and Development Manager;
- Income and Recovery Manager;
- Operations Manager; and
- Business Support Officer.

The Policy and Development Manager and the team reporting to that post provide policy guidance to the Operations Team and are responsible for ongoing development of Local Taxation and Benefits, and related systems. The Policy and Development Team also deals with prevention and detection of benefit fraud, administers Non-Domestic Rates and works with other Services, external partners and agencies to promote the take-up of all types of benefits and Money Advice services.

The Income and Recovery Manager and team provide corporate debt and income management services for the Council as a whole, as well as the statutory recovery and enforcement functions in relation to Local Taxation etc.

The Operations Manager manages the locally-based Exchequer staff whose primary role is to deliver Council Tax and Benefits services to the public. Commencing in November 2007, members of staff in 8 local offices are working on a “Virtual Team” basis, using digital technology to enhance efficiency and improve direct service delivery.

The aim is to pay the right benefit at the right time and to ensure that all those who may have an entitlement are identified and encouraged to apply.

The Business Support Officer works closely with the Head of Exchequer to ensure the adequacy of reconciliation functions, timeous submission of returns to central government, and claims for grants and subsidies. Performance on Council Tax and Benefits administration is closely monitored in order to ensure that Exchequer services are responsive to the needs and expectations of customers.

Internal Audit and Risk Management

In-Sgrùdadh agus Stiùireadh Cunnairt

The Internal Audit Team provides an Internal Audit service to the Council, the three Joint Boards and reports to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

As an independent appraisal function within the Council, the primary objective of Internal Audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of risk management and internal controls as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources. It also provides an advisory role, particularly with regard to systems under development.

The Insurance and Risk Management Team is responsible for Insurance Management and effectively managing the risk management process, throughout the Council, by:

- Arranging cover for all insurable perils, and the processing of insurance claims;
- Providing guidance and assistance to Services in identifying, analysing and controlling risks; and
- Providing Risk Management guidance and advice to The Council, and the Risk Management Working Group.

In addition the team provides an Insurance Management service to the three Joint Boards, Caledonian Community Leisure Ltd, Eden Court Theatre and various non-profit Community Schemes.

Corporate Procurement Unit **Aonad Solarachd Chorporra**

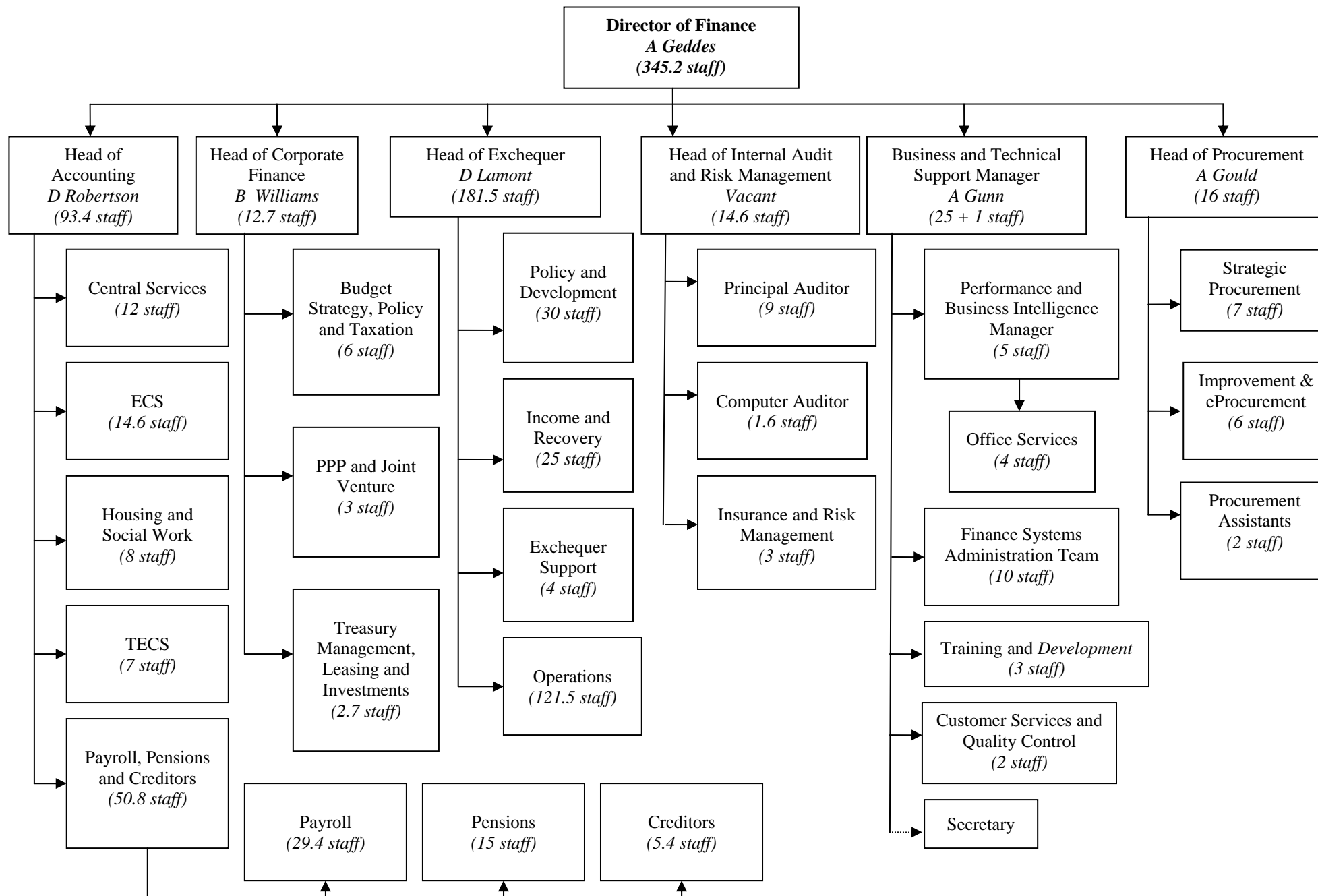
The Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) was established in 2002 and five staff there report to the Head of Procurement. The unit is currently recruiting to its full establishment of 16 staff as agreed at the Resource Committee on 21 March 2007. The function of the CPU is to provide:

- Corporate contracting for goods and services;
- Corporate governance of procurement standards and processes;
- Implementation of improved procurement tools including e-procurement, e-tendering, reverse auctions, the national information hub and the national advertising portal;
- Efficiency improvements in procurement/purchase to pay business processes;
- Development of the supply chain and supply base through close working with suppliers;
- Development and implementation of environmental and socio-economic standards in procurement;
- Management of risk in procurement projects;
- Cash savings through improved commercial working, closer contract management, changes to specifications, new means of securing requirements including “make or buy” decisions, aggregation of demand, and supplier rationalisation;
- Improved exploitation of corporate contracts through use of e-procurement tools; and
- Shared services and collaboration in procurement between the Highland Council and other public sector bodies.

All leading to:

- The provision of best value in procurement.

The remit of the Unit is now for all goods and service procurement with the exception of care commissioning.



1.3 Resources

1.3 Goireasan

1.3.1 2008/09 Budget

1.3.1 Buidseat 2008/09

Financial Year	Gross Revenue Budget (£m)
2008/09	11.769

Breakdown of 2008/09 Budget

By Section

	2008/09
Section	Gross Budget (£m)
Directorate	0.197
Procurement	0.769
Business and Technical Support	0.736
Accounting	2.135
Corporate Finance	0.580
Internal Audit and Risk Management	0.556
Payroll, Pensions and Creditors	1.484
Exchequer	5.312
Total	11.769

By Staff and Other Costs

	2008/09
Section	Gross Budget (£m)
Staff costs	10.172
Other costs	1.597
Total costs	11.769

1.3.2 Impact and Resourcing of ICT Enabled Developments

1.3.2 Buaidh is Maoineachadh Leasachaidhean Comasachaidh ICT

Note: No. * – This is the Finance Service Improvement Priority number from Pages 30 – 35

No. *	Finance Service Target	Impact Assessment	Funding source	Anticipated Costs		
				2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
4.5	Increase e-procurement including purchase cards, e-tendering, and e-auctions throughout the Council, leading to efficient and modernised procurement practices which will support the improved delivery of public services.	Supports greater efficiency in purchase to pay processes, improved relationships with suppliers, and delivery of corporate savings.	Service Budget	£84K	£84K	£84K
10.7	Design and implement E-Learning Council Tax Training System, and roll-out to relevant staff.	Improved levels of service delivery.	Service budget	£0.2k	£0.3k	£0.3k
10.23	Implement a document imaging and work flow process in Pensions.	Improve the allocation and monitoring of routine tasks and the document storage process.	Service Budget	£76k	£8k	£8k
10.30	Implement payment of Housing Benefit by BACS.	Increased efficiency in payment method and improved Customer Care.	Service Budget	£0	£0	£0
10.31	Investigate, and if appropriate, plan implementation of electronic banking facilities for income reconciliation.	Increased efficiency in the support work required including undertaking reconciliations.	Service Budget	£15k	£0	£0

No. *	Finance Service Target	Impact Assessment	Funding source	Anticipated Costs		
				2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
10.32	Implement phase 2 of move towards paperless Direct Debits.	Improved customer care and opportunity to further increase Direct Debit take-up. Affords opportunity to further improve collection levels and efficiency. Costs to be confirmed.	Service Budget	£tbc	£0	£0
10.36	Implement a solution to enable the collection and enforcement of levies relating to Business Improvement Districts (BID).	Collection and enforcement of BID Levy.	BID Levy	£68k	£33k	£33k
10.37	Implement Version 6 of Revenues and Benefits software July/August 2008.	Current version de-supported in December 2008. Costs to be confirmed.	Service Budget	£tbc	£0	£0
10.38	Implement Northgate Performance Management and QA module.	Enables productivity measurement and enhanced reporting for Council Tax, Benefits and Non Domestic Rates.	Service Budget	£30k	£7k	£7k
10.39	Implement Employment Support Allowance Software.	Compliance with legislation.	DWP	£36k	-	-
10.40	Investigate and, if appropriate, implement an electronic system to record and monitor risk.	Increase in effectiveness of Risk Management. Investigations to be completed by March 2009.	Service Budget	£80k	£0	£0

1.4 PfA, Statutory and Corporate Governance priorities

1.4 PfA, prìomhachasan Reachdail is Corporra Riaghlaidh

1.4.1 Programme for Administration (PfA)

1.4.1 Prògram Rianachd (PfA)

The Finance Service plays a key supporting role in respect of the whole PfA. The themes that the Finance Service leads and/or is a major contributor to are:

- Sustainable Communities.
- A Planned Culture of Enterprise and Growth.
- A Skilled and Confident Highlands.
- The Administration's Corporate Objectives.

1.4.2 The Scottish Government and Central Government

1.4.2 Riaghaltas na h-Alba is Àrd Riaghaltas

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 came into force on 1 April 2003 and is a major change in the environment in which Councils operate. The Act has three core elements:

- The duty to secure Best Value and Accountability in Local Government service provision.
- Duty of Community Planning to ensure long term commitment to effective partnership working with communities and between local authorities and other key bodies and organisations.
- The Power to Advance Well-Being to enable local authorities to work in a more innovative and creative way in responding to the needs of their communities.

The Act also contains other miscellaneous provisions including the repeal of the Section 94 borrowing consents for local authorities and the introduction of a prudential system of capital investment.

The Finance Service has a key role to play not only in determining that the Service itself is achieving Best Value but also through its Service Finance Teams in supporting other Services in doing so.

Finance also has an integral role with our customers in relation to new legislation. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) continues to reform the welfare benefits system, with Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit at the forefront. In 2008, for example, the new Local Housing Allowance was implemented throughout the Highlands for private sector tenancies. In tandem with Benefits Maximisation work the Service manages the Council's Money Advice functions.

On the Income and Recovery side, procedures have been changed to take account of the new Debt Arrangement Scheme and other changes arising from the Bankruptcy and Diligence etc. (Scotland) Act.

The Government's Shared Services Agenda is also gathering momentum in the North of Scotland, and a Scottish Government funded feasibility study into Shared Services for Revenues and Benefits has commenced.

The Councils involved are: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Highland, Moray, Orkney and the Western Isles. The feasibility study will:

- Assess existing systems and processes for all of the seven Councils.
- Develop a complete Best Practice model to establish simplified and standardised arrangements for all Councils.
- Evaluate alternative models for future Shared Service Delivery.
- Establish a business case for the preferred option.
- Draft a change programme for the new arrangements proposed, including infrastructure changes.
- Establish governance arrangements and options for future partnership arrangements to oversee any future joint working arrangements.

On receipt of the feasibility study each of the 7 Councils will require to decide the extent of their commitment to implementation.

Consideration will separately continue to be given to opportunities for the Finance Service to work in partnership with other public bodies wherever the opportunities present themselves.

The Depute Chief Executive and Director of Finance is a member of the 3-Year Settlement Group which consists of Directors of Finance from Councils together with COSLA and the Local Government Division of the Scottish Government. This Group is the key sounding board between the Scottish Government and Councils on funding matters. It deals, in particular, with the 3-year settlement, which was first introduced in 2000 for the 2001 – 2004 settlement to allow Councils to set budgets for future years and so plan services better. The current settlement is the 2008 – 2011 settlement. The Council is also one of six councils represented on the Data Issues Working Group which advises the 3-Year Settlement Group on technical matters.

The final report of the independent Local Government Finance Review Committee was published on 9 November 2006. Its remit was to review the different forms of local taxation, including the reform of the Council Tax, against criteria set by the Scottish Government; to identify the pros and cons of implementing any changes to the local taxation system in Scotland, including the practicalities of the implications for the rest of the local government finance system and any wider economic impact; and to make recommendations. The report's conclusions found favour neither with the former Scottish Executive, nor the new Scottish Government, whose aim is to abolish the Council Tax and adopt a system of Local Income Tax. As part of the Government's consultation process on local taxation, the Finance Service has already embarked on work to reflect the needs of the Highlands, and to seek the most favourable local outcome.

The Service is also playing a major part in ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for collecting the first Business Improvement District levy in Scotland (for Inverness).

A major focus from the Scottish Government is efficient government. The Scottish Government Spending Proposals 2008 – 2011 were published in November 2007 and integral to these proposals is the commitment to manage public sector resources more effectively.

The efficiency target set for Local Government is annual cash efficiency savings of 2% per annum over the 3 financial years, with these savings being left with Local Government for re-investment rather than top-sliced as was the case previously.

The Finance Service will be responding to these priorities in three ways (1) by developing more efficient ways of working within the Finance Service e.g. through shared services, (2) by supporting the Council in achieving corporate efficiency improvements e.g. the Corporate Procurement Unit, and (3) supporting the Council in the monitoring and reporting of efficiency savings, and in particular, the publication of an Annual Efficiency Statement.

A further major change brought about by the latest spending review, is the Concordat between Scottish and Local Government, and flowing from that the Single Outcome Agreement to be agreed between both parties. The introduction of the SOA will require the Council to ensure that its financial plans are aligned with both the Council's and the Government priorities. The SOA will set out how the Council will deliver on these priorities. The Council has already agreed, in the Programme for Administration, that there will be a comprehensive review of spending priorities by 2009. This review will lead to improvements in the alignment between financial plans and priorities.

The introduction of the SOA will also require the Council to ensure that it has comprehensive performance management arrangements in place to measure delivery against these priorities. It is anticipated that in time, the introduction of the SOA should lead to a rationalisation of external scrutiny and the array of performance information the Council is currently required to provide. This will allow the focus to be placed on those performance measures which relate to SOA priorities.

1.4.3 E-Government

1.4.3 Riaghaltas-D

Central Government has set the modernisation of public services as a priority. An integral part of this is E-Government, which required Councils to be able to transact electronically by the end of 2005. Delivering the E-Government agenda is a priority of the Council. The Finance Service is heavily involved in ensuring that the desired results, as defined by the Council's Digital Highland Programme, will be achieved.

The Professional Electronic Commerce On-line System (PECOS system) is a system for on-line purchasing which will make an enormous contribution to the implementation of the E-Government agenda. Since the last review of this document, use has expanded to a throughput in excess of £100m annually. In terms of the 16 Councils currently part of the eProcurementScotl@nd Service, Highland Council is still the biggest user in terms of value of throughput and achievement of its own targets.

Purchasing cards have also been introduced corporately, and in excess of 200 are now in circulation. Both of these not only improve corporate visibility of spending patterns, but improve accountability and the Council's ability to monitor contract compliance.

Electronic tendering has also been more fully exploited, and is used in every tendering exercise managed by CPU. Not only does it save both paper and storage space, but it also improves governance, and sometimes crucially, gives bidders additional time to work on their submissions. Greater visibility of contract opportunities are being pursued via the electronic national advertising portal, and benchmarking and best practice via the national electronic information hub.

1.4.4 Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission

1.4.4 Audit Scotland agus Coimisean nan Cunntasan

Audit Scotland undertook the Highland Council's first audit of Best Value and Community Planning in summer 2005. The outcomes from their Final Report submitted in 2006 formed an Improvement Action Plan. The Finance Service has successfully completed all their actions, including updating the Risk Register. As part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement, managers are working towards developing our own additional performance indicators as an integral part of the management process.

The Inverness office of Audit Scotland, as our External Auditors, performs the External Audit of our annual accounts. The annual audit for 2006/07 accounts was completed on 30 September 2007.

1.4.5 Other Bodies

1.4.5 Buidhnean Eile

Guidance on the way the Service and its officers undertake our roles comes from a variety of professional bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV). It is essential that we have regard to and act upon what they produce. There is a current requirement from CIPFA via the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) to attach a statement of internal control to the Financial Accounts.

1.4.6 The Council, the Elected Members and Committees

1.4.6 A' Chomhairle, Buill Thaghte agus Comataidhean

Following the May 2007 elections, the Highland Council became a political organisation driven by an Administration.

Although one of the key roles undertaken by Finance continues to be financial support and governance for the Council, the Finance Service has also completed its own restructuring, including the Exchequer Section.

There are, perhaps inevitably, changes to the information requirements and an example of this is data at Ward level.

1.4.7 Digital Highland

1.4.7 Gàidhealtachd Dhidseatach

Digital Highland maps the way forward for the delivery of key Council services through the use of technology. This demonstrates the critical contribution IT can provide our organisation.

The Service has successfully implemented the new Oracle corporate financial system, the "payroll module" of the Resourcelink system and has also implemented the Electronic Content Document Management (ECDM) project for Council Tax and Benefits.

More details of the ICT Enabled Developments specific to the Finance Service can be found as Item 1.3.2.

1.5 Review of Performance and Progress

1.5 Sgrùdadh air Coileanadh is Adhartas

1.5.1 Service Improvement Priorities (SIP) 2007/08 – Review of Performance as at 31 March 2008.

1.5.1 Prìomhachasan Leasachaidh Seirbheis (SIP) 2007/08 –Sgrùdadh Coileanadh mar aig 31 Màrt 2008.

Sustainable Communities (PfA 2)

Coimhearsnachdan Seasmhach (PfA 2)

Assist colleagues in the Housing Service with the financial and investment plan inputs to the development of a new Standard Delivery Plan.

- New Standard Delivery Plan approved by Housing & Social Work Committee in September 2007.

Implement action plan developed by Corporate Benefit Matters Working Group.

- The Policy and Development Manager is developing a new Action Plan for future service delivery (with Money Advice). This will build on measures already completed in earlier plan. There have been difficulties in attracting a suitable applicant for a vacancy in the Income Maximisation Team.

Work in partnership with the Service Point Network and Service Centre to further improve migrated services to the Service Point Network and Service Centre.

- Activities, which are the subject of the SLA, have been reviewed, to ensure a joint understanding of performance standards that can be monitored on an ongoing basis. CRM/ECDM system interface in course of development.

Investigate rationalisation of the number of sites that receive and process payments.

- This action (completed) led to joint working with BIT Team on a larger project to rationalise and improve payment methods (in consultation with Head of E-Government). Council-wide project.

A Planned Culture of Enterprise and Growth (PfA 4)

Cultar Dealbhte de dh'Iomairt is Fàs (PfA 4)

Seek inclusion within the Licensing (Scotland) Bill of a provision to allow Licensing Boards to suspend, withdraw or refuse licences, where there is an established pattern of Non-Domestic Rates arrears.

- Action now completed.

Participation in National Shared Services with North of Scotland Local Authorities (NOSLA) partners.

- Highland Council to play a key role in successful Project achieving efficiencies for all Councils concerned. Consultants now appointed and work ongoing.

Implementation of Data Image Processing and Workflow Management in a

customer relationship management environment.

- Project completed within budget for Council Tax, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and Non- Domestic Rates.

Collaborate with partner agencies to make the Highlands and Islands Public Sector more accessible to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and minority/third sector businesses.

- The timetable will require revision, with the date subject to completion of consolidated Procurement section staffing. Aim to deliver another round of “selling to the Council” roadshows in 2008/09.

Implement the Council’s Sustainable Procurement Policy, and assist partner agencies to do the same. Agree shared procurement plans, specifications and evaluation criteria that make full use of new legal rights.

- Will be implemented once the new service has been established and collaborative arrangements agreed with other organisations.

Develop procurement service web presence including updated buyer profile to ensure maximum access to Council business for all potential providers / suppliers / contractors.

- Progressing, but later than anticipated as resources are not yet available. Considerable progress has already been made.

Increase e-procurement including purchase cards, e-tendering, and e-auctions throughout the Council, leading to efficient and modernised procurement practices which will support the improved delivery of public services.

- Being taken forward in conjunction with Services.

Develop the long term procurement plans based on both Corporate and Service specific expert knowledge.

- Implement fully the next phase of strategic sourcing, in accordance with Efficient Government requirements, allowing direct contract savings and resources to be channelled into public service delivery.

Develop project management disciplines within procurement projects to maximise delivery of benefits/savings.

- These three items are dependent on both the establishment of the consolidated procurement section and national and sectoral commodity plans. Not yet delivered.

A Skilled and Confident Highlands (Pfa 5) Gàidhealtachd Sgileil is Mhisneachail (Pfa 5)

Assist, where appropriate, in the provision of training to Members on all Council financial matters.

- Training, where appropriate, provided during 2007/08.

The Administration's Corporate Objectives for The Highland Council (Pfa 10)
Amasan Corporra na Rianachd dha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd (Pfa 10)

Implement Performance Management Framework for the Service, developing relevant Performance Measures for the Sections.

- Consideration to be given to roll out of CIPFA Finance Management FM Model.

Continue to extend range of Finance Service information available on the intranet and internet.

- Increased availability and access to information continues and improved presentation.

Address all outstanding actions from MORI staff survey.

- All actions have been and/or continue to be addressed from 2005 MORI Staff Survey.
- Very good response rate from Finance Service staff to 2007 MORI Staff Survey.
- All staff wishing to attend Corporate Area Events have been booked on their first choice date.
- Finance Service Strategy, which will include presentation of Survey results at the Finance Service level, being designed.

Issue quarterly staff Newsletter to all Finance Service staff.

- Newsletters continue to be issued on time.
- Following staff feedback, more concise format of Newsletter implemented.

Implement the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) National Performance Management Framework.

- Action completed on time including ability to report automatically on relevant Management Information to DWP.

Continue to improve the quality and promptness of responses to Complaints and Freedom of Information requests.

- Improvements evident including quality of responses.

Update existing E-Learning Fraud Awareness Training System by providing the personalised product on a hosted basis, and roll-out to relevant staff.

- Personalisation complete and roll-out ongoing to Service Point staff. Close working continues between Business and Technical Support and Chief Executive's staff. Action complete.

Investigate, and implement where appropriate, the design and roll-out of an E-Learning Training System on Verification Standards for Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit, to all relevant staff.

- Development of innovative product completed.
- Business and Technical Support Manager and Customer Services Manager discussed and agreed roll-out.
- Roll-out completed on time, with over 100 staff undertaking course.

Restructuring of Finance Service managed effectively, involving staff and Unions wherever appropriate.

- Service Restructuring almost completed within Exchequer. Appropriate consultation being undertaken throughout the process.

Liaise with COSLA and the Scottish Government with the aim of positively influencing national budgetary settlements and endeavour to influence the outcome of the Review of Local Government Finance in Scotland, to reflect the needs of Highland Council.

- Consultation on Private Sector Housing Grant (PSHG) and Tobacco Sales Enforcement distributions are in progress.

Reporting expenditure at Ward and Corporate level.

- This work was considered a lower priority as the budget process took precedence.

Develop ICT Business Continuity Plans in accordance with the requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Assess the state of Business Continuity Planning within the Finance Service.

- Work continues to develop these plans.

Influence the implementation of the payroll process improvements resulting from the further developments of Resourcelink.

- New steering group established for 6 months to deliver a narrower range of outcomes.

Review the format and distribution of Member Financial Monitoring Reports.

- Review completed with decision to retain the current format.

Review the nature of the support and services provided to Services on the back of the introduction of Detailed Transaction Reporting (DTR).

- Review complete, but the result is that a more detailed investigation is required. This will form part of 2008/09 Service Improvement Priorities.

Increase electronic communication with HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) including notification of starters and leavers on Payroll system.

- Completed in November 2007.

Rationalise the number of payrolls following the introduction of Job Evaluation.

- To be progressed.

Review current data storage processes for Pensions Section.

Document imaging under way in the live system/task management training underway.

Increase the electronic availability of standard Pensions forms.

- Complete, all forms now available on the intranet.

Introduce the new Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) for sub contractors.

- Completed.

Review invoice processing procedure.

- Finance reviewing this area of work but given scale of activities / processes involved, the target date may require to be reviewed.

Introduce weekly payment runs for Housing Benefit claimants.

- Completed successful project. Implemented August 2007.

Monitor and report agreed efficiency measures for the Council to meet national directives and address in-house budgetary issues in this regard.

- Continuous monitoring of efficiency savings with a target of reporting to Council in February each year as part of the annual Revenue Budget Report.

Implement 3 year revenue budgeting within the Council.

- Budget development process, timetable and work plan for 2008/09. Development of 2009/10 and 2010/11 budgets to be progressed.

Produce rolling five-year capital programmes.

- The Administration agreed the programme review would begin in March 2008, and it will be approved during 2008/09.

Investigate recommending options to integrate more closely the Council's service planning and budgeting frameworks (including assisting Property colleagues on the development of asset management plans).

- Discussions on-going with colleagues in Housing and Property Services to develop asset management planning and improve links between service plans and resource allocation.

Further develop the content and format of the Council's 2007/08 Budget Book.

- Completed.

Commission a summary Asset/Liability study for the Council's Pension Fund. Thereafter appraise Investment Management Mandates.

- Asset/Liability study presented at to Investment Advisory Group (IAG) in February 2008.
- High level investment strategy to be considered by IAG in May 2008.

Implement payment of Housing Benefit by BACS.

- Testing ongoing.

Investigate and, if appropriate, plan implementation of Electronic banking.

- Investigations to be progressed.

Investigate and, if appropriate, plan implementation of Northgate Fraud Module.

- System developed by Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) Performance Development Team meeting all current business needs.

Take lead role in designing single application form for Council entitlements and limiting the number of assessments undertaken.

- Work now included as important item in Benefits action plan for 2008/2009.

Implement paperless Direct Debits.

- Development continues.

Implement DWP's Local Housing Allowance.

- Complete.

Examine Cipfa/ IRRV Best Practice recommendations for collecting additional tax revenue and produce Highland action plan (in fulfilment of CP 10.41/ Pfa reference 10.9).

- Actions implemented, including wider variety of payment options in 2007/2008, leading to a twelfth successive year of continuous improvement in "in-year" collection of Council Tax. Will carry out further collections review in 2008/2009.

Assess opportunities and risks of implementing First Debtors for overpaid Housing Benefit.

- Decision deferred to await outcome of implementation of Version 6 of Revs and Bens during 2008/09.

Investigate options for automating elements of cheque production for local taxation and benefits.

- Complete.

Link audit planning process to Risk Management process undertaken by Services.

- Completed as far as possible. Review of Risk Management included within Audit Plan for 2008/09 which will determine the extent to which reliance can be placed on the Service Risks.

Review the methodology adopted for the Audit Planning Process.

- Reviewed in respect of 2008/09 Audit Plan. Numbers of risk factors reduced in order to simplify process.

Complete the Tactical Audit plan agreed by Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

- Report to Audit & Scrutiny on 12 June 2008 will detail the extent to which the Tactical Plan was completed.

Assess the operations of the insurance fund.

- Action completed.

Review Financial Regulations.

- Regulations agreed by Council 6 September 2007.

Address the efficiency of Operational Risk Management throughout the Council.

- Audit review scheduled for 2008/09.

Review the progress for identifying and monitoring the Council's risks.

- Improved process will be in place during 2008/09.

Pursue the establishment of a Scotland Excel regional office hosted by Highland Council to ensure a high profile for the Council in the development of the national procurement agenda.

- Recruitment of 3 staff to a Scotland Excel Regional Centre is expected to be complete by mid Summer 2008.

Produce key procurement performance indicators (KPI) as part of the McClelland Implementation Project.

- National BPIs (Best Practice Indicators) have now been approved at ministerial level, and reporting will commence during 2008/09.

1.5.2 Progress against Accounts Commission Statutory Performance Indicators

1.5.2 Adhartas an aghaidh Comharran Coileanaidh Coimisean nan Cunntasan

Our performance in each of these Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) over the past 4 years is shown below. Information in respect of 2007/08 performance will not be available until September 2008. The rankings will not be available until January 2009 . SPI monitoring during the year is undertaken by reporting to both the Resources Committee and the Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPR) with the Chief Executive. The QPR contains a range of performance management information including SPIs.

Finance Service Statutory Performance Indicators

Comharran Coileanaidh Reachdail Seirbheis an Ionmhais

Measure	Rank in 06/07		SPI Measurement				Better ✓ or worse * since 06/07. Performance compared to 04/05		
	1-32	✓ 1-8 * 25-32	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	5-9%	10-14%	>15%
Benefits Administration									
Administration costs - the overall gross administration cost (£) per Council Tax or Housing Benefit application	30	*	-	-	-	68.60			
New claims - the average time (days) taken to process new claims	14		-	-	32.8	28.7			
% HB overpayments written of as % of total overpayment debt outstanding			-	-	1.9	1.6			
Corporate Management									
Litigation claims – number of claims per 10,000 popn	2	✓	12.4	13.9	10.8	10.6	✓		
Council Tax – the gross cost of collecting Council Tax per dwelling (£)	29	*	-	17.68	17.61	18.28			
Council Tax – the percentage of Council Tax income for the year that was collected in the year	14		93.5	94.1	95.1	95.4			
Invoice payment – the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days	19		89.0	90.0	88.8	83.8	*		

1.5.3 Progress against other Performance Measures

1.5.3 Adhartas an aghaidh Modhan Coileanaidh eile

The CIPFA Directors of Finance Best Value Working Group has pulled together performance indicators for all Scottish Councils and the latest year for which these are available is 2006/07. These indicators provide a wider picture of the services provided by Finance and the Highland Council takes part in collecting and returning these indicators. The indicators are then shared amongst the Scottish Councils and are valuable management information for internal use. Not all Councils are able to return all of these indicators and they are not audited by the External Auditor which makes definitive comparisons between Councils difficult.

The Internal Audit and Risk Management Team issues a customer satisfaction questionnaire to each Client Manager at the end of each audit review. This seeks feedback with respect to different aspects of the audit including the approach to and the conduct of the audit; the format, style and content of the audit report and the customer care shown.

In 2007/2008 the average ranking was 83% compared to 85% in 2006/07. Despite this slight decline, a system has now been established to ensure that any negative comments are investigated and actioned.

1.6. Above the Line Risks

1.6. Cunnartan Àrda

The following are the risks identified by the Service as being categorised as 'Above the Line'. Risks are defined as being above or below the tolerance line. The above the line risks require to be managed and will be reviewed periodically by the Management Team, to identify need for further action required to reduce the level of risk. Part of this review will include assessing whether the risks are still relevant and also identifying any new scenarios.

Updates are as at 31 March 2008.

Corporate Risk:

Owner: Head of Procurement

Risk No.	1	Likelihood	B II	SIP ref	4.8
Changes to the Corporate approach to procurement have not been implemented, resulting in no clear commissioning strategy. Corporate risk.					
Update: The formation of the consolidated procurement service during 2008/09 should mitigate this risk down to acceptable levels. Progress to be monitored through QPRs for 2008/09 and onwards.					

Service Risks:

Owner: Head of Exchequer

Risk No.	2	Likelihood	C II	SIP ref	2.2
Money Advice Team within Exchequer fails to deliver improved customer service and increased benefits maximisation.					
Update: Staff recruitment difficulties in this specialist area of work, and co-location of teams depends upon accommodation issue.					

Owner: Head of Exchequer

Risk No.	3	Likelihood	D II	SIP ref	10.9
Exchequer re-structure adversely affects staff morale and thereby impacts on productivity, customer service and collection rates for local taxation.					
Update: Main risks have passed now that restructuring is substantially complete. Although there is a transitional dip in some Benefits Processing this was anticipated and management are reviewing on a daily basis.					

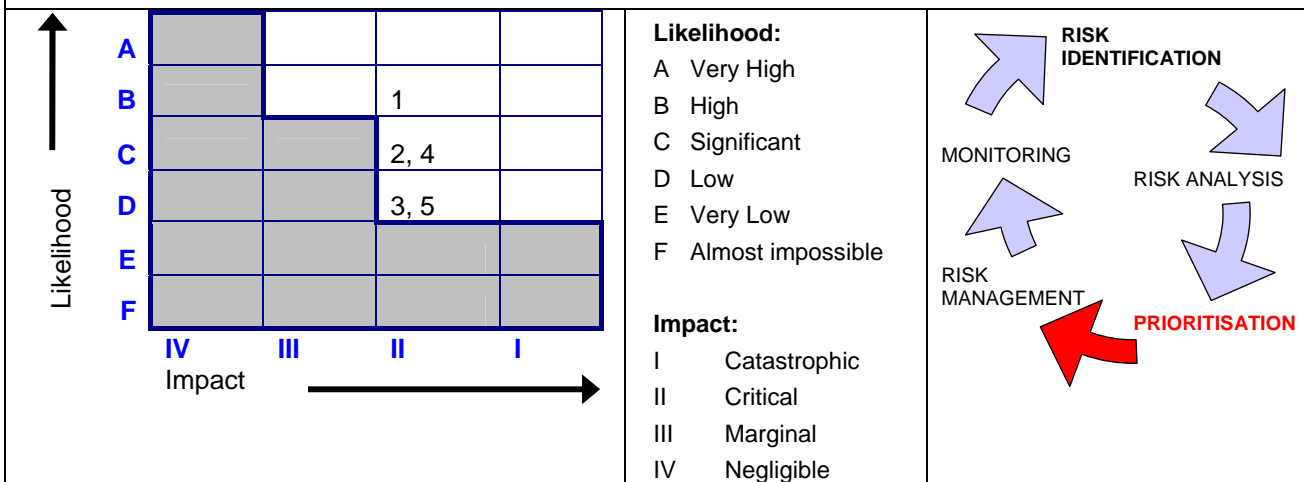
Owner: Depute Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Risk No.	4	Likelihood	C II	SIP ref	10.1
Staff need to be involved in goal setting and informed and updated. The Service does not have a fully worked up performance management framework.					
Update: Consideration to be given to roll out of CIPFA Finance Management FM Model.					

Owner: Head of Exchequer

Risk No.	5	Likelihood	D II	SIP ref	10.33
<p>Due to the volume, pace and technical nature of change, there may be inadequate resources available within the strategic teams to provide timely and comprehensive direction to operational staff. Software supplier is often late in delivering software which complies with new legislation.</p> <p>Update: Change management and all Exchequer software implementations to date have been successful, but there is awareness of continuing need to support Operational Staff.</p>					

Highland Council – Finance Service – Risk Profile as at March 2008



Section 2 Objectives and Actions

Earrann 2 Amasan is Gnìomhan

2.1 PfA Commitments being led by the Finance Service

2.1 Dealasan PfA gan stùireadh le Seirbheis an Ionmhais

PfA Commitments being led by the Finance Service

PfA 4. A Planned Culture of Enterprise and Growth			
Fin ID:	Finance 1		
Objective:	We will take action to pursue initiatives that support the use of local produce, products and services.		
Reference:	PfA 4.10/4.13; CP 4.12, SOA 1.1		
Lead Officer:	Head of Procurement	Risk No.	Corporate Risk - 1
Resource:	Service Budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More local suppliers tender for Council goods and services. 		
Date Equalities Screening conducted:	03/05/08	Equalities Impact Assessment conducted:	N/A
By (Initials):	AJG	Date Published:	N/A
Enabling actions			Review Date
4.10.1	Recording and reporting on the percentages of bids received from target organisations.		October 2008
4.10.2	Work with Enterprise network to hold category specific meetings with target organisations' Supplier surveys.		October 2008
4.10.3	Adoption of fully corporate approach to procurement, and of national, sectoral, and local joint working on procurement.		October 2008
4.10.4	Financial Assistance and business advice.		October 2008

PfA 7: Gaelic Language			
Fin ID.	Finance 2		
Objective:	We will implement the Gaelic Language Plan based on the principle of equal respect for Gaelic and English, and review the plan and progress in implementing it annually		
Reference:	PfA 7		
Lead Officer:	Operations Manager	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service Budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise the profile of Gaelic in relation to Finance Services. ▪ Raising Awareness of Gaelic. ▪ Implement Gaelic Language Plan. 		
Date Equalities Screening conducted:	Screening to be undertaken in 2008.	Equalities Impact Assessment conducted:	N/A
By (initials):	AB	Date Published:	N/A
Enabling actions			Review Date
10.1	Review implementation of Gaelic Language Plan in Finance.		December 2008

PfA 10. The Administration's Corporate Objectives for the Highland Council			
Fin ID.	Finance 3		
Objective:	We will continue to pursue best value for our residents and service users, seeking efficiencies in the way we work and we will undertake a comprehensive review of the Council's spending priorities by 2009.		
Reference:	PfA 10.6; CP10.30/10.32/10.33; SOA 15.3		
Lead Officer:	Heads of Corporate Finance (10.6.1 & 2) & Accounting (10.6.3)	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service Budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget aligned to spending priorities. ▪ Customers feel that the Council offer Value for Money. ▪ The Council scores well against the qualities valued by customers. ▪ Efficiency Targets met. ▪ Positive report from Best Value Audits. ▪ Have clear framework of financial accountability. ▪ Year end spend positions consistent with original estimates. ▪ Unqualified Audit report. 		
Date Equalities Screening conducted:	01/05/08	Equalities Impact Assessment conducted:	N/A
By (Initials):	BW	Date Published:	N/A
Enabling actions		Review Date	
10.6.1	Service Plans and Budgets aligned.	April 2009	
10.6.2	Efficiency Programme deliveries by Services collated and Annual Efficiency statement signed off.	Annually, by 30 June	
10.6.3	Effective financial stewardship confirmed in the audit of the Council's accounts annually.	Annually, by 30 September	

PfA 10. The Administration's Corporate Objectives for the Highland Council			
Fin ID.	Finance 4		
Objective:	Ability of the Council to collect additional tax revenue		
Reference	PfA 10.9; CP 10.41		
Lead Officer:	Head of Exchequer	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collection performance for Council Tax to exceed outturn for 2007/08. 		
Date Equalities Screening conducted:	01/05/2008	Equalities Impact Assessment conducted:	N/A
By (Initials):	DL	Date Published:	N/A
Enabling actions		Review Date	
10.9.1	Examine and implement where opportunities arise the Cipfa/ IRRV Best Practice recommendations for collecting additional tax revenue.	March 2009	

PfA 10. The Administration's Corporate Objectives for the Highland Council			
Fin ID.	Finance 6		
Objective:	We will encourage a safe working culture		
Reference	PfA 10		
Lead Officer:	Business & Technical Support Manager	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of reportable accidents/incidents. 		
Enabling actions		Review Date	
10.1	Ensure lone worker policy is adhered to.	March 2009	

PfA 10. The Administration's Corporate Objectives for the Highland Council			
Fin ID.	Finance 7		
Objective:	We will develop flexible and motivated staff		
Reference	PfA 10		
Lead Officer:	Business & Technical Support Manager	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue staff to increase number of staff having PDPs and assess training needs. 		
Enabling actions		Review Date	
10.1	Annual review of staff training needs as part of the PDP process.	May 2009	
10.2	All managers to conduct PDPs annually for all staff.	March 2009	

Corporate Plan Measures for the Highland Council			
Fin ID.	Finance 8		
Objective:	Corporate risk register reviewed quarterly and management actions in place		
Reference:	CP 10.29		
Lead Officer:	Interim Head of Internal Audit & Risk Management	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service Budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of appropriate electronic risk monitoring system. 		
Date Equalities Screening conducted:	01/05/08	Equalities Impact Assessment conducted:	N/A
By (Initials):	NR	Date Published:	N/A
Enabling actions		Review Date	
10.29.1	Investigate and, if appropriate implement, an electronic system to record and monitor risk.	October 2009	
10.29.2	Address the implementation of Strategic Operational Risk Management throughout the Council.	March 2009	
10.29.3	Review of corporate risks through Weekly Business Meetings every two months.	June 2008	
10.29.4	Review of corporate risks through Quarterly Performance Review meeting.	August 2008	
10.29.5	A six monthly review of corporate risks by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.	November 2008	

Best Value Improvement Plan

Audit of Best Value and Community Planning			
Fin ID.	Finance 9		
Objective:	Reduce the number of SPIs in the bottom quartile of Council performance and reducing the number of SPIs which are worsening.		
Reference	Bvip 2		
Lead Officer:	Business & Technical Support Manager	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service budget		
Key Performance Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to review Finance Service SPIs and, where possible, take action to reverse declining performance. 		
Enabling actions		Review Date	
Bvip1	Review SPI data on a quarterly basis and implement appropriate action to improve results.	March 2009	

Audit of Best Value and Community Planning			
Fin ID.	Finance 10		
Objective:	Reducing dissatisfaction with complaints handling, improving response times and reducing the number of complaints which are escalated or not dealt with satisfactorily on first contact		
Reference	Bvip 2		
Lead Officer:	Business & Technical Support Manager	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service budget		
Key Performance Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to review Finance Service complaints handling procedures and, where possible, take action to ensure responses are issued on time and to a satisfactory standard. 		
Enabling actions		Review Date	
Bvip2	Review complaints data on a continual basis and report quarterly. Implement appropriate action to improve results.	March 2009	

2.2 Corporate Themes and Service Improvement Priorities
2.2 Cuspairean Corporra is Prìomhachasan Leasachaidh Seirbheis

The Service Improvement Priorities below are grouped by Programme of Administration (PfA) theme.

PfA Theme 2: Sustainable Communities
PfA Cuspair 2: Coimhearsnachdan Seasmhach

	What we will do	Outcome target
2.1	Develop new corporate action plan for Income Maximisation.	A new Action Plan for future service delivery (with Money Advice) will be completed by June 2008.
2.2	Implement a programme of corporate measures for Income Maximisation.	A new Action Plan for future service delivery (with Money Advice) will be implemented by June 2009.
2.3	Continue to work in partnership with the Service Point Network and Service Centre to further improve services.	Activities, which are the subject of the SLA are being reviewed again in light of the practical implications of implementing ECDM, to ensure a joint understanding of performance standards that can be monitored on an ongoing basis.
2.4	Implement E-Payments project in co-operation with co-sponsor, Head of E-Government.	Sponsors utilising services of Business Improvement Team (BIT) Team to rationalise and improve payment methods Council-wide.

PfA Theme 4: A Planned Culture of Enterprise and Growth
PfA Cuspair 4: Cultar Dealbhte de dh'ìomairt is Fàs

	What we will do	Outcome target
4.1	Participation in National Shared Services work with North of Scotland Local Authorities (NOSLA) partners. Project implementation if feasibility study results acceptable.	The Highland Council is seeking to play a key role in successful Project achieving efficiencies for all Councils concerned.
4.2	Collaborate with partner agencies to make the Highlands and Islands Public Sector more accessible to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and minority/third sector businesses.	Deliver by March 2009.
4.3	Re-write the Council's Sustainable Procurement Policy, and assist partner agencies to do the same. Agree shared	Deliver by March 2009. Will be implemented once the new service has been implemented and

What we will do

procurement plans, specifications and evaluation criteria that make full use of new legal rights.

Outcome target

collaborative arrangements agreed with other organisations.

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 4.4 | Develop procurement service web presence including updated buyer profile to ensure maximum access to Council business for all potential providers/suppliers/contractors. | Procurement service web presence fully developed by March 2009. |
| 4.5 | Increase e-procurement including purchase cards, e-tendering, and e-auctions throughout the Council, leading to efficient and modernised procurement practices which will support the improved delivery of public services. | Achievement of revised e-procurement target throughput by March 2009. Being taken forward in conjunction with Services. |
| 4.6 | Develop the long term procurement plans based on both Corporate and Service specific expert knowledge. | By March 2009. Action dependant both on the establishment of the consolidated procurement section and national and sectoral commodity plans. |
| 4.7 | Implement fully the next phase of strategic sourcing, in accordance with Efficient government requirements, allowing direct contract savings and resources to be channelled into public service delivery. | By March 2010. Action dependant both on the establishment of the consolidated procurement section and national and sectoral commodity plans. |
| 4.8 | Develop project management disciplines within procurement projects to maximise delivery of benefits/savings. | By March 2009. Action dependant both on the establishment of the consolidated procurement section and national and sectoral commodity plans, as well as access to appropriate training. |

PfA Theme 5: A Skilled and Confident Highlands

PfA Cuspair 5: Gàidhealtachd Sgileil is Mhisneachail

What we will do

5.1 Assist, where appropriate, in the provision of training to Members on all Council financial matters.

Outcome target

Training, where appropriate, will be provided during 2008/09.

PfA Theme 10: The Administration's Corporate Objectives for the Highland Council
PfA Cuspair 10: Amasan Corporra na Rianachd airson Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

	What we will do	Outcome target
10.1	Design and maintain IT System Development Plans for Finance Service - owned IT systems.	System Development Plans completed by June 2008, and maintained thereafter.
10.2	Implement Performance Management Framework for the Service, developing relevant Performance Measures for the Sections.	Consideration to be given to roll out of CIPFA FM model.
10.3	Continue to extend range of Finance Service information available on the intranet and internet.	Increase availability and access to information and improve presentation. By March 2009.
10.4	Address all outstanding actions from MORI staff survey.	All actions are / continue to be addressed.
10.5	Issue quarterly staff Newsletter to all Finance Service staff.	Newsletters issued on time.
10.6	Continue to improve the quality and promptness of responses to Complaints and Freedom of Information requests.	Improvements evident including quality of responses. By March 2009.
10.7	Design and implement E-Learning Council Tax Training System, and roll-out to relevant staff.	Implementation of user-friendly Training System by February 2009.
10.8	Liaise with COSLA and the Scottish Government with the aim of positively influencing national budgetary settlements. Endeavour to influence the reviews of Local Government Finance in Scotland, to reflect the needs of Highland Council.	Continue to participate in reviews of Local Government Finance in Scotland reflecting Highland needs.
10.9	Review purchasing processes undertaken throughout the Service, and implement changes wherever practicable.	Practicable changes implemented, and increased efficiencies achieved, where possible. By December 2008.
10.10	Ensure data, held by the Finance Service, is transported securely to third parties securely.	Secure data transported to third parties.
10.11	Develop ICT Business Continuity Plans in accordance with the requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.	Plans completed by August 2008.
	Assess the state of Business Continuity Planning within the Finance Service.	Ongoing.

What we will do	Outcome target
10.12 Increase the number of Supplier payment runs from one per week to two.	By April 2008.
10.13 Develop the interface between Pecos and Oracle to capture invoice date.	December 2008.
10.14 Review the Financial Monitoring Process.	By March 2009.
10.15 Review the year end Central Support Services (CSS) allocation.	By February 2009.
10.16 Create a budget for Children's Services to comply with Financial Regulations.	By June 2008.
10.17 Introduce Financial Management training courses within the ECS service.	By September 2008.
10.18 Tax Councillor's mileage claims at source.	By April 2008.
10.19 Rationalise the number of payrolls following the introduction of Job Evaluation.	By April 2010.
10.20 Issue Benefit Statements to Active and Deferred pension scheme members for Police and Fire.	By December 2008.
10.21 Develop electronic bulk timesheets for Supply Teachers.	By September 2008.
10.22 Review invoice processing procedure.	By March 2009.
10.23 Implement a document imaging and work flow process in Pensions.	By March 2009.
10.24 Monitor and report agreed efficiency measures for the Council to meet national directives and address in-house budgetary issues in this regard.	By June of each financial year.
10.25 Implement 3 year revenue budgeting within the Council.	Development of 2009/10 and 2010/11 budgets to be progressed. By February 2009.
10.26 Produce rolling five-year capital programmes.	Revised programme proposals to Council by June 2008.
10.27 Investigate recommending options to integrate more closely the Council's service planning and budgeting frameworks (including assisting Property colleagues on the development of asset management plans).	By December 2008.

What we will do	Outcome target
10.28 Commission a Mini Asset/Liability study for the Council's Pension Fund and high level Investment Strategy appraisal thereafter.	High level investment strategy to be considered by September 2008.
10.29 Implement Direct Debit for Special Arrangements for payment of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates arrears.	Dependent on completion of paperless Direct Debits (10.33). By September 2008.
10.30 Implement payment of Housing Benefit by BACS.	By July 2008.
10.31 Investigate and, if appropriate, plan implementation of Electronic banking.	By March 2009.
10.32 Implement single application form for Council entitlements, and limiting the number of assessments undertaken.	Work now included within Income Maximisation action plan for 2008/2009. By March 2009.
10.33 Implement paperless Direct Debits.	By July 2008.
10.34 Analyse CIPFA Directors of Finance/IRRV Best Practice Programme and produce action plan.	By April 2008 and ongoing.
10.35 Implement Version 6 of Revenues and Benefits software July/August 2008.	By August 2008.
10.36 Assess case for implementing First Debtors system for overpaid Housing Benefit, following implementation of Version 6 of Revenues and Benefits software during 2008/2009.	By March 2009.
10.37 Implement a solution to enable the collection and enforcement of levies relating to Business Improvement Districts (BID).	By May 2008.
10.38 Implement Northgate Performance Management and QA module.	By March 2009.
10.39 Implement Employment Support Allowance Software.	By October 2008.
10.40 Link audit planning process to Risk Management process undertaken by Services.	The Tactical Plan for 2009/2010 based upon the Council's Risk Management process.

What we will do	Outcome target
10.41 Review the methodology adopted for the Audit Planning Process.	Where appropriate, planning process revised to take account of best practice in this field, by March 2009.
10.42 Review Financial Regulations.	Review of Regulations to be agreed by Council by October 2009.
10.43 Investigate and, if appropriate implement, an electronic system to record and monitor risk.	Increase in efficiency of Risk Management by October 2009.
10.44 Address the implementation of Strategic Operational Risk Management throughout the Council.	All Services have a mature Strategic Risk Register. Encourage Services to develop and maintain Risk Management at Operational level. Success is dependent on 10.43
10.45 Undertake a review of the Internal Audit Manual following the introduction of an automated Audit Management System.	Revised Internal Audit Manual to provide guidance to all staff, by December 2008.
10.46 Pursue the establishment of a Scotland Excel regional office hosted by Highland Council to ensure a high profile for the Council in the development of the national procurement agenda.	Successful establishment of regional office in Highland by December 2008.
10.47 Produce key procurement performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the McClelland Implementation Project.	Procurement performance management information readily available by June 2008. Mandatory national KPIs are in development and expected by early May 2008, after which sectoral and individual KPIs can be determined.