

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL****29th June, 2006**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**Local Code of Corporate Governance****Report by Director of Corporate Services****Summary**

The report provides information on progress with the Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2005/2006 and suggests themes which could appear in the Code for 2006/07.

The report was considered by the Audit and Standards Committee at its meeting held on 15 June 2006.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Corporate governance is the system by which local authorities direct and control their functions and relate to their communities. It also incorporates the way in which a Council manages its business, determines strategy and objectives and goes about achieving those objectives. It is concerned with structures and processes for decision-making, accountability, control and behaviour at the upper levels of the organisation. Three fundamental principles of corporate governance apply equally to all public sector bodies – openness, integrity and accountability.
- 1.2 The Audit and Standards Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2002 agreed that a local Code of Corporate Governance should be prepared following advice from CIPFA and SOLACE on best practice on this matter.
- 1.3 The framework developed by CIPFA/SOLACE urged each local authority to:
- review its existing corporate government arrangements against the framework
  - prepare, adopt and maintain an up-to-date local Code of Corporate Governance, including arrangements for ensuring its implementation and ongoing application.
  - make a statement in its annual statement and refer to it in its best value performance plan on how the authority is complying with its local code, including how it has monitored the effectiveness of its corporate governance arrangements in the year and any planned changes in the coming period.
- 1.4 The Council on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2002 agreed that:
- (i) the Audit and Standards Committee would receive an annual review of the local Code.
  - (ii) the tactical plans of the Internal Audit section would include a review of the Council's compliance with the local Code. It was also noted that the Council's arrangements in relation to Corporate Governance would be examined by Audit Scotland.

- 1.5 The Audit and Standards Committee considered the draft document at its meeting on 15 June 2006 and it was recommended for approval by the Council.
- 1.6 This Report now finalises the Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2005/06, advises of areas where further action is required and suggests possible themes for the Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2006/07.
2. Further Information
- 2.1 Code of Corporate Governance 2005/06
- (i) Progress on the themes included in the Code for 2005/06 is detailed in Appendix 1. While the majority of targets have been met some do require attention and these are detailed in Appendix 2.
- 2.2 Code of Corporate Governance 2006/07
- (i) The suggested themes for inclusion in the Code for 2006/07 are contained in Appendix 3.
- (ii) A number of the themes which were included in previous codes and which have a date for action in 2006/07 have been rolled forward
- (iii) Themes which have not been concluded by the target date in 2005/06 have also been rolled forward to the revised Code for 2006/07. Following consideration of Appendix 3 by the Council, it is proposed that immediate action is taken to progress any outstanding actions for 2005/06.
- (iv) A number of themes should be seen as being required to be reviewed annually and these will continue to appear in the revised code.
- (v) New themes which have now been identified as corporate priorities and which would assist in ensuring good governance of the Council's business have been included in the Code for 2006/07.
- 2.3 It should be noted that this Code is a major element of the External Auditors annual review of Council governance arrangements.

### **3. Recommendation**

#### 3.1 That the Council :-

- (i) notes progress on actions for 2005/06;
- (ii) notes that any actions which are behind schedule will be addressed as a priority; and
- (iii) approves the actions proposed for the 2006/07 Code of Corporate Governance.

Signature

Designation: Director of Corporate Services

Date: 16 June, 2006

Author/Reference: Alistair B Dodds

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – 2005/06

COMMITMENT	FURTHER ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE	CURRENT STATUS
1. <u>Community Focus</u>  The Council reviews its Corporate Plan on a mid-term basis and Service Plans on an annual basis for each service. Progress on implementing the Corporate Plan is monitored by six Improvement Groups, each chosen by a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT).	<b>Report on Completed Actions from Corporate Plan</b>	Head of Policy	By December 2005	Completed
	<b>Review Corporate Plan</b>	Head of Policy	By December 2005	Completed
	<b>Review Service Plans</b>	All Directors	June 2005	Completed
It also prepares annually a Public Performance Report and a set of Annual Accounts.	<b>Prepare Public Performance Report annually</b> New guidance on public performance reporting (Jan 2005) provides flexibility in how reporting is done. From 2005, performance information will be reported in a variety of ways to suit the range of interests in Council performance. From 2005 this will include: a section in the Council Tax leaflet each April; the website will have a new section which provides 24/7 access to a range of performance data; newspaper supplements each autumn; and annual review of progress against the corporate plan, reported to Council. This framework will be supplemented by the availability of SPIs at 30 <sup>th</sup> September each year and the annual accounts, press reports and all committee reports on progress.	Head of Policy	October 2005	Completed
	<b>Prepare Annual Accounts</b>	Director of Finance	30 June 2005	Completed

<p>The Council has established an Audit and Standards Committee to consider the actions arising from External and Internal Audit Reports; it is also subject to external inspection and regulation by government inspectorates in relation to management arrangements and standards of service delivery.</p>	<p><b>The Council and its Committees will consider external inspection reports</b></p>	<p>Relevant Directors</p>	<p>31 March 2006</p>	<p>Actioned and Ongoing</p>
<p>Nationally defined Key and Statutory Performance Indicators form part of the Council's service planning and performance reporting process.</p>	<p><b>Monitor and improve performance in relation to Statutory Performance indicators</b></p>	<p>All Directors</p>	<p>Quarterly Review</p>	<p>Actioned and Ongoing</p>
	<p><b>Continue to seek to achieve targets for improvements in Service Performance Indicators</b></p>	<p>All Directors</p>	<p>March 2006</p>	<p>Actioned and Ongoing</p>
<p>The Highland Wellbeing Alliance is the partnership responsible for promoting and developing Community Planning in the Highlands and has ownership of the Highland Community Plan. The Council strongly supports the role of over 150 Community Councils as the prime consultative fora with communities, but also supports the development of other communities of interest. The geography of the Highlands means that community planning and consultation are most effective when decentralised. This is a major current priority for improvement for the Council.</p>	<p><b>Review and report on progress with Community Plan</b></p>	<p>Head of Policy</p>	<p>December 2005</p>	<p>Completed</p>

<p>One of the six key themes of the Council's corporate Plan is to be open, fair and accountable in the way the Council takes decisions. The Council is an independent Council with all committee business being conducted in public, other than items containing personal or commercial details. The Council makes available all agendas to all 150 Community Councils and also makes agendas, papers and minutes available on-line to the general public.</p>	<p><b>All Council agendas and minutes will appear on the Council's internet</b></p>	<p>Head of Committee Services</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Actioned and Ongoing</p>
<p>2. <u>Service Delivery Arrangements</u></p> <p>The Council has agreed Service Plans which are monitored, reviewed and updated annually by Service Committees. The Service Plans have details of statutory performance indicators and also contain other service performance indicators, which have been developed internally. An Annual Performance report is published and the Council's Annual Accounts are produced on time.</p>	<p><b>For Service Plans, Annual Performance Report and Annual Accounts – See above</b></p>			
<p>In relation to monitoring standards of service delivery, the Council has a Complaints Procedure in place.</p>	<p><b>Review and report annually on Complaints handling</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>August 2006</p>	<p>Completed and ongoing</p>
<p>The Council's Best Value Review arrangements have been further reviewed and strengthened following the implementation of the Local Government in Scotland Act.</p> <p>A Business Improvement Team has been put in place to enhance our approach to continuous improvement and Best Value.</p>	<p><b>Revise the Council's Best Value arrangements</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>February 2006</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>The Council has developed a budget review system, which considers the allocation of resources against Corporate Plan and</p>	<p><b>The Council will ensure that the budget process commences at an appropriate time to ensure sound</b></p>	<p>Director of Finance</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Actioned and ongoing</p>

Service Plan priorities. However, a priority of the Council is to better link the Corporate Plan, the Service Plans and the Budget process, and in particular to include firmer financial and more detailed performance targets.	<b>budgeting</b>			
	<b>Review the link between the Corporate Plan, Service Plan and the budget review process</b>	Chief Executive/ Director of Finance	March 2006	Work in progress
The Council has developed sound relationships and partnership agreements with other public agencies and the voluntary sector in the Highlands through the Wellbeing Alliance, and a well-developed Community Plan is in place. The Council also works closely with Community Councils, and is prepared to develop partnerships with the private sector. The Council invites and encourages wide participation through its Working with Communities strategy, the Community Council Concordat, Highland Youth Voice, Joint Committees, tenant participation groups, Planning for Real, etc. Through its Area Committee and management structures the Council ensures that the needs of the wider Highland community are met.	<b>Pilot approach to involving community in setting priorities for service delivery through community budgeting</b>	Head of Policy	September 2005	Completed
	<b>Ensure that public caller buildings in the Highland Council area are DDA compliant</b>	Director of Property & Architectural Services/Director of Corporate Services	March 2006	Actioned in part and Ongoing
The Council welcomes external inspection and has a sound record of implementing the review outcomes. These are considered by the Audit and Standards Committee and by Service Committees. The Council sought external scrutiny through the Peer Group Review and acted on relevant recommendations. The Council will be subject to a Best Value audit by Audit Scotland in 2005/06. An Improvement Plan will also be produced following the Audit of Best Value by Audit Scotland.	<b>Prepare for Best Value Audit by Audit Scotland</b>	Chief Executive/All Directors	March 2005	Completed
	<b>Implement the Improvement Plan following the Best Value Audit by Audit Scotland</b>	Chief Executive/All Directors	December 2006	Improvement Plan agreed for immediate priority actions following Best Value Audit

3. <u>Structure and Processes</u>  The Council has in place a Code of Conduct for Employees. Elected Members have been issued with the Code of Conduct for Elected Members and provided training and guidance. Standing Orders and Schemes of Delegation are regularly reviewed and decisions of the Council are clearly recorded.	<b>Review Standing Orders annually</b>	Director of Corporate Services	September 2005	Completed
	<b>Review Scheme of Delegation for (i) Committees; (ii) Officers annually</b>	Director of Corporate Services	December 2005	Completed
Job specifications for senior officers have been reviewed and Members role descriptions have been considered by the Renewing Democracy and Community Planning Select Committee.	<b>Finalise members role descriptions following the final report from the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee</b>	Chief Executive	March 2006	Ongoing (being undertaken at Scottish Exec level)
The Council and its Committees meet on programmed dates to consider reports which require decisions on policy and strategic items and on the monitoring of performance standards, including budget monitoring.	<b>Review annually the schedule of Council and Committee meetings</b>	Head of Committee Services	September 2005	Completed
The Council works to well defined Schemes of Delegation, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders which set out the powers of members and officers. It has developed 3 year budgeting and a rigorous service planning process is in place, both of which assist in the effective management of the Council and in ensuring the efficient use of resources.	<b>(i)Review Financial Regulations and (ii) make all relevant managers and members aware of the requirements placed upon them and their responsibilities</b>	Director of Finance	(i)September 2005 (ii) March 2006	(i)Completed (ii)Ongoing
	<b>Ensure the Council's revised Contract Standing Orders are known to all relevant managers and members</b>	Procurement Manager	March 2006	Revised Contract Standing Orders being finalised and interim guidance issued
The Council offers an induction programme for members at the commencement of a new Council provides information in a systematic manner on how the Council operates and is	<b>Ensure Operational Plans are reviewed and updated to take forward Service Plan targets</b>	All Directors	October 2005	Completed

<p>able to offer accredited member training on a range of issues. Recruitment and Selection training has been provided for elected Members.</p> <p>The Council has set down in its Scheme of Delegation the powers of members and has considered draft role descriptions.</p>	<p><b>Provide training for elected members on Code of Conduct and associated guidance (including Planning guidance)</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>September 2005</p>	<p>Completed</p>
	<p><b>Implement the programme of elected member training (Equalities and Diversity)</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services/Employee Development Manager</p>	<p>December 2005</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>The terms of member allowances has been agreed by the Council and its Area Committees and guidance on members' travel and subsistence has been agreed by the Council. The Council publishes details of members' allowances on an annual basis.</p>	<p><b>Review the Scheme of Members Allowances following the final report from the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive/Director of Finance</p>	<p>May 2007</p>	<p>Ongoing (being actioned at Scottish Executive level)</p>
<p>The Council has agreed roles and responsibilities for its Chief Executive and Service Directors and has issued contracts of employment and job specifications, which contain reference to statutory duties which require to be undertaken. A Scheme of Delegation to officers is in place and a Code of Conduct for Employees has been agreed and issued to all staff. These documents will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Job specifications will be reviewed and updated to recognise changes in the Council's management structure.</p> <p>Salaries for the Chief Executive and Directors are determined by the Council and decisions are clearly recorded.</p>	<p><b>Develop a system of performance review/appraisal for Directors</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>October 2005</p>	<p>Work in progress</p>

Salaries of Directors were reviewed in 2004/05 to ensure they are competitive and will attract competent candidates				
<p>4. <u>Risk Management and Internal Control</u></p> <p>The Council has agreed policies in place relating to Financial Regulations, Contract Standing Orders, Schemes of Delegation, Treasury Management, Fraud and Whistleblowing and Health and Safety and these are reviewed on a regular basis. Internal Audit plans are approved by the Audit and Standards Committee. Service Plans are produced annually and a programme of Best Value Reviews has been agreed. A risk management policy and strategy has been agreed and this is related to the internal audit plan.</p> <p>A process has been agreed by the Council to implement the Freedom of Information Act.</p>	<b>Review the Corporate Health and Safety Policy annually</b>	Director of Corporate Services	March 2006	Completed
	<b>Review the system of Health and Safety risk assessment in the Council, and implement any revised system and associated training</b>	Director of Corporate Services	October 2005	Being Progressed
	<b>Prepare the Council's Annual Health and Safety Report</b>	Director of Corporate Services	October 2005	Completed
	<b>Implement Action Plans arising from the Corporate Risk Management Strategy</b>	Director of Finance and all Directors	March 2006	Actioned and Ongoing
	<b>Report on Completed Actions and review the Corporate and Service Risk Management Action Plans</b>	All Directors	October 2005	Completed
	<b>Review the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act</b>	Chief Executive	January 2006	Completed
<p>The Council has been progressively revising job specifications for its employees and has set corporate training priorities which are reviewed annually. Service training plans are being developed as the Council rolls out its personal development plan process. Revised recruitment procedures are being</p>	<b>Review job specifications for all staff</b>	All Directors	Continuing	Continuing
	<b>Complete Service Training Plans following the roll out of PDPs to at least Admin/Technician level.</b>	All Directors/Employee Development Manager	March 2006	Actioned in part and ongoing – (PDP process is however being reviewed)

implemented to improve on current practices.	<b>Implement a comprehensive management development programme for 300 managers to include People Management, Financial Management and ICT Strategy and Management (MDP4)</b>	Director of Corporate Services	March 2006	Completed
	<b>Review the PDP process.</b>	Director of Corporate Services	December 2005	Work in progress - to be completed in August 2006
	<b>Review Corporate Training Priorities</b>	Director of Corporate Services	May 2005	Completed
<p>The Council undertakes reviews of its systems and welcomes external scrutiny of its activities. Outcomes are reported to the Audit and Standards Committee, the Resources Committee, and the Council.</p> <p>Objective and professional relationships are maintained with External Auditors and other inspection staff.</p>	<b>Prepare a comprehensive asset management plan</b>	Director of Finance/Director of Property and Architectural Services	March 2006	Work in progress
<p>5. <u>Standards of Conduct</u></p> <p>The Council has issued the relevant Codes of Conduct to all members and employees. Discipline and grievance procedures have been agreed, and a Fraud and Corruption policy is in place.</p>	<b>Provide recruitment and selection training for all staff involved in interviewing</b>	Director of Corporate Services	March 2006	Actioned and Ongoing
	<b>Implement training for revised Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures</b>	Director of Corporate Services	December 2005	Actioned and Ongoing
	<b>Review the Code of Conduct for Employees</b>	Director of Corporate Services	December 2006	On target
A register of interests is maintained and updated for all elected members, and a register of gifts etc. is maintained for officers and members. The need to declare gifts etc	<b>Maintain Register of Interests and Declaration of gifts etc. for Members</b>	Director of Corporate Services	Ongoing	Actioned and Ongoing

is detailed in the Codes of Conduct.	<b>Maintain Register of Declaration of Gifts for Employees</b>	Director of Corporate Services	Ongoing	Actioned and Ongoing
<p>The Council has a group of officers who are addressing the equality agenda in a positive and practical manner and has approved a policy in relation to Equality in Service Delivery. The Council has also trained front-line staff in disability and race issues.</p> <p>The Council has a Race Equality Scheme in place.</p>	<b>Review progress on the implementation of policy in relation to Equality in Service Delivery</b>	Head of Policy	March 2006	Actioned (Report to Resources Committee June 2006)
	<b>Implement the Council's Race Equality Scheme</b>	All Directors	Ongoing	Actioned and Ongoing
	<b>Review the Council's Race Equality Scheme</b>	Director of Social Work	November 2005	Completed
	<b>Implement diversity training programme for front-line staff (3000 staff) and provided targeted training on specific equal opportunities issues such as race relations and disability awareness</b>	Director of Corporate Services/Head of Policy/ Equal Ops Officer/ED Manager	March 2006	Actioned for 1200 staff and Ongoing
The Council has agreed a Whistleblowing policy and a Complaints Procedure, and encourages employees and the public respectively, to use these. It also encourages officers to respond positively to complaints and to ensure that these are addressed quickly and effectively.	<b>Implement the Council's revised Complaints Procedure and roll out associated training</b>	Chief Executive	December 2005	Implemented in part – completed August 2006

## APPENDIX 2

### PROGRESS REQUIRED FROM 2005/06

1. Complete Service Training Plans following roll out of PDPs to at least Admin/Technical level (PDPs partially on target – revise date for Service Training Plans to December 2006).
2. Review the PDP process (drafts of the new process are available and revised date of August 2006 for completion).
3. Ensure that public caller buildings in the Highland Council area are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Compliant (Ongoing – good progress being made).
4. Develop further the link between the Corporate Plan, Service Plan and budget review process (this has been partially address and will be developed further through the Council's Best Value Audit Implementation Plan).
5. Ensure the Council's revised Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) are known to all relevant managers and members (revised CSOs are currently being finalised and interim guidance has been issued).
6. Review the system of Health and Safety Risk Assessments, and implement any revised system and associated training (work in progress).
7. Implement the Council's revised Complaints Procedure and roll out associated training. (This has been achieved in part within 2 Areas of the Council – development work is continuing).

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – 2006/07

COMMITMENT	FURTHER ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE	CURRENT STATUS
1. <u>Community Focus</u>  The Council reviews its Corporate Plan and Service Plans on an annual basis. These plans are submitted to the Council and Service Committees respectively.	<b>Report on Completed Actions from Corporate Plan</b>	Head of Policy and Performance	March 2007	
	<b>Review Corporate Plan</b>	Head of Policy and Performance	By September 2006	
	<b>Review Service Plans</b>	All Directors	August 2006	
It also prepares annually a Public Performance Report and a set of Annual Accounts.	<b>Prepare Public Performance Report annually</b> New guidance on public performance reporting (Jan 2005) provides flexibility in how reporting is done. Performance information will be reported in a variety of ways to suit the range of interests in Council performance. This includes a section in the Council Tax leaflet each April; the website will have a new section which provides 24/7 access to a range of performance data; newspaper supplements each autumn; and annual review of progress against the corporate plan, reported to Council. This framework will be supplemented by the availability of SPIs at 30 <sup>th</sup> September each year and the annual accounts, press reports and all committee reports on progress.	Head of Policy and Performance	October 2006	
	<b>Prepare Annual Accounts</b>	Director of Finance	30 June 2006	
The Council has established an Audit and Standards Committee to consider the actions arising from External and Internal	<b>The Council and its Committees will consider external inspection reports</b>	Relevant Directors	31 March 2007 and ongoing	

<p>Audit Reports. The Council is also subject to external inspection and regulation by government inspectorates in relation to management arrangements and standards of service delivery.</p>				
<p>Nationally defined Key and Statutory Performance Indicators form part of the Council's service planning and performance reporting process.</p> <p>The Chief Executive has implemented a system of Quarterly Performance whereby Services performance is monitored by the Chief Executive, and Directors of Finance and Corporate Services</p>	<p><b>Monitor and improve performance in relation to Statutory Performance indicators</b></p>	<p>All Directors</p>	<p>Chief Executive's Quarterly Performance Review and reports to Strategic Committees</p>	
	<p><b>Continue to seek to achieve targets for improvements in Statutory Performance Indicators (these SPIs which are worsening and those in the bottom quartile of other Councils' comparators)</b></p>	<p>All Directors</p>	<p>March 2007 and ongoing</p>	
<p>The Highland Wellbeing Alliance is the partnership responsible for promoting and developing Community Planning in the Highlands and has ownership of the Highland Community Plan. The Council strongly supports the role of over 150 Community Councils as the prime consultative fora with communities, but also supports the development of other communities of interest. The geography of the Highlands means that community planning and consultation are most effective when decentralised. This is a major current priority for improvement for the Council.</p>	<p><b>Review the Community Planning process in the Highlands, in conjunction with Wellbeing Alliance partners</b></p>	<p>Head of Policy and Performance</p>	<p>May, 2007</p>	

One of the six key themes of the Council's corporate Plan is to be open, fair and accountable in the way the Council takes decisions. The Council is an independent Council with all committee business being conducted in public, other than items containing personal or commercial details. The Council makes available all agendas to all 150 Community Councils and also makes agendas, papers and minutes available on-line to the general public.	<b>All Council agendas and minutes will appear on the Council's internet</b>	Head of Committee Services	Ongoing	
2. <u>Service Delivery Arrangements</u>  The Council has agreed Service Plans which are monitored, reviewed and updated annually by Service Committees. The Service Plans have details of statutory performance indicators and also contain other service performance indicators, which have been developed internally. An Annual Performance report is published and the Council's Annual Accounts are produced on time.	<b>For Service Plans, Annual Performance Report and Annual Accounts – See above</b>			
	<b>Ensure Operational Plans are reviewed and updated to take forward Service Plan targets</b>	All Directors	October 2006	
In relation to monitoring standards of service delivery, the Council has a Complaints Procedure in place.	<b>Review and report annually on Complaints handling</b>	Chief Executive	August 2006	
The Council's Best Value Review arrangements have been further reviewed and strengthened following the implementation of the Local Government in Scotland Act.	<b>Review Performance Management arrangements and continue to monitor BIT projects to ensure value for money</b>	Chief Executive	March 2007	
A Staff Incentive Scheme has been developed and will be implemented across the Council with the aim of involving and	<b>Implement Staff Incentive Scheme</b>			

rewarding staff for ideas which bring about financial savings.  A Business Improvement Team (BIT) has been put in place to enhance our approach to continuous improvement and Best Value.		Director of Corporate Services	September 2006	
The Council has developed a budget review system, which considers the allocation of resources against Corporate Plan and Service Plan priorities. However, a priority of the Council is to better link the Corporate Plan, the Service Plans and the Budget process, and in particular to include firmer financial and more detailed performance targets.	<b>The Council will ensure that the budget process commences at an appropriate time to ensure sound budgeting</b>	Director of Finance	Ongoing	
	<b>Review the link between the Corporate Plan, Service Plan and the budget review process</b>	Chief Executive/ Director of Finance	March 2007	
The Council has developed sound relationships and partnership agreements with other public agencies and the voluntary sector in the Highlands through the Wellbeing Alliance, and a well-developed Community Plan is in place. The Council also works closely with Community Councils, and is prepared to develop partnerships with the private sector. The Council invites and encourages wide participation through its Working with Communities strategy, the Community Council Concordat, Highland Youth Voice, Joint Committees, tenant participation groups, Planning for Real, etc. Through its Area Committee and management structures the Council ensures that the needs of the wider Highland community are met.	<b>Ensure that public caller buildings in the Highland Council area are DDA compliant</b>	Director of Property & Architectural Services/Director of Corporate Services	March 2007	.
	<b>Develop and strengthen consultation arrangements with community groups as required by Equalities legislation</b>	Head of Policy and Performance	March 2007	
The Council welcomes external inspection and has a sound record of implementing the review outcomes. These are considered by the Council, the Audit and Standards				

Committee and by Service Committees. The Council sought external scrutiny through the Peer Group Review and acted on relevant recommendations. The Council has been subjected to a Best Value Audit by Audit Scotland in 2005/06. An Improvement Plan has been produced following the Audit of Best Value by Audit Scotland.	<b>Implement the "Immediate Priorities" contained in the Best Value Audit Improvement Plan following the Best Value Audit by Audit Scotland</b>	Chief Executive/All Directors/ Head of Policy and Performance	December 2006	
3. <u>Structure and Processes</u>  The Council will review its political and managerial organisational structures to take account of the electoral changes to be implemented from May, 2007.	<b>Review the Council's political and managerial organisational structures to take into account new electoral processes to be implemented in May, 2007</b>	Chief Executive	May, 2007 and ongoing	
The Council has in place a Code of Conduct for Employees. Elected Members have been issued with the Code of Conduct for Elected Members and provided training and guidance. Standing Orders and Schemes of Delegation are regularly reviewed and decisions of the Council are clearly recorded.	<b>Review Standing Orders annually</b>	Director of Corporate Services	September 2006	
	<b>Review Scheme of Delegation for (i) Committees; (ii) Officers annually</b>	Director of Corporate Services	December 2006	
Job specifications for senior officers have been reviewed and Members role descriptions have been considered by the Renewing Democracy and Community Planning Select Committee.	<b>Implement members role descriptions following Scottish Executive issue</b>	Chief Executive	May, 2007	
The Council and its Committees meet on programmed dates to consider reports which require decisions on policy and strategic items and on the monitoring of performance standards, including budget monitoring.	<b>Review annually the schedule of Council and Committee meetings</b>	Head of Committee Services	May, 2007	

<p>The Council works to well defined Schemes of Delegation, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders which set out the powers of members and officers. It has developed 3 year budgeting and a rigorous service planning process is in place, both of which assist in the effective management of the Council and in ensuring the efficient use of resources.</p>	<p><b>(i) Review Financial Regulations and (ii) make all relevant managers and members aware of the requirements placed upon them and their responsibilities</b></p>	<p>Director of Finance</p>	<p>(i) March 2007 (ii) March 2007</p>	
<p>The Council offers an induction programme for members at the commencement of a new Council provides information in a systematic manner on how the Council operates and is able to offer accredited member training on a range of issues. Recruitment and Selection, and Diversity training has been provided for elected Members.</p> <p>The Council has set down in its Scheme of Delegation the powers of members and has considered draft role descriptions.</p>	<p><b>Continue to provide training for elected members on Code of Conduct and associated guidance (including Planning guidance) and on other relevant issues</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	
<p>The terms of member allowances has been agreed by the Council and its Area Committees and guidance on members' travel and subsistence has been agreed by the Council. The Council publishes details of members' allowances on an annual basis.</p> <p>The Council is awaiting a revised scheme from the Scottish Executive</p>	<p><b>Prepare for the introduction of the new Scheme of Members Allowances following approval from the Scottish Executive</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive/ Director of Finance</p>	<p>May 2007</p>	
<p>The Council has agreed roles and responsibilities for its Chief Executive and Service Directors and has issued contracts</p>				

<p>of employment and job specifications, which contain reference to statutory duties which require to be undertaken. A Scheme of Delegation to officers is in place and a Code of Conduct for Employees has been agreed and issued to all staff. These documents will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Job specifications will be reviewed and updated to recognise changes in the Council's management structure.</p> <p>Salaries for the Chief Executive and Directors are determined by the Council and decisions are clearly recorded.</p> <p>Salaries of Directors were reviewed in 2004/05 to ensure they are competitive and will attract competent candidates.</p> <p>The Council is preparing to introduce a job evaluation scheme for APT &amp; C and Manual staff and is harmonising terms and conditions of employment. This will address, inter alia, equal pay liabilities.</p>	<p><b>Develop a system of performance review/appraisal for Directors</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>December 2006</p>	
	<p><b>Complete the job evaluation and harmonisation process and identify Equal Pay risks</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	
<p>4. <u>Risk Management and Internal Control</u></p> <p>The Council has agreed policies in place relating to Financial Regulations, Contract Standing Orders, Schemes of Delegation, Treasury Management, Fraud and Whistleblowing and Health and Safety and these are reviewed on a regular basis. Internal Audit plans are approved by the</p>	<p><b>Review the Corporate Health and Safety Policy annually</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	
	<p><b>Review the system of Health and Safety risk assessment in the Council, and implement any revised system and associated training</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>December 2006</p>	
	<p><b>Prepare the Council's Annual Health and Safety Report</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>October 2006</p>	

<p>Audit and Standards Committee. Service Plans are produced annually and a programme of Best Value Reviews has been agreed. A risk management policy and strategy has been agreed and this is related to the internal audit plan.</p> <p>A process has been agreed by the Council to implement the Freedom of Information Act.</p>	<p><b>Implement Action Plans arising from the Corporate Risk Management Strategy</b></p>	Director of Finance and all Directors	March 2007	
	<p><b>Report on Completed Actions and review the Corporate and Service Risk Management Action Plans</b></p>	All Directors	March 2007	
<p>The Council has been progressively revising job specifications for its employees and has set corporate training priorities which are reviewed annually. Service training plans are being developed as the Council rolls out its personal development plan process.</p> <p>Revised recruitment procedures are being implemented to improve on current practices.</p>	<p><b>Review job specifications for all staff</b></p>	All Directors	Continuing	
	<p><b>Complete Service Training Plans following the roll out of PDPs to at least Admin/Technician level.</b></p>	All Directors/Employee Development Manager	March 2007	
	<p><b>Progress the Management Development Passport for 300 managers to include People Management, Financial Management and ICT Strategy and Management and monitor using new technology</b></p>	Director of Corporate Services	March 2007	
	<p><b>Review the PDP process.</b></p>	Director of Corporate Services	August 2006	
	<p><b>Review Corporate Training Priorities</b></p>	Director of Corporate Services	May 2006	
<p>The Council undertakes reviews of its systems and welcomes external scrutiny of its activities. Outcomes are reported to the Audit and Standards Committee, the Resources Committee, and the Council.</p> <p>Objective and professional relationships are maintained with External Auditors and other inspection staff.</p>	<p><b>Complete the comprehensive asset management plan</b></p>	Director of Finance/Director of Property and Architectural Services	March 2007	

<p>5. <u>Standards of Conduct</u></p> <p>The Council has issued the relevant Codes of Conduct to all members and employees. Discipline and grievance procedures have been agreed, and a Fraud and Corruption policy is in place (including Whistleblowing)</p>	<p><b>Continue recruitment and selection training for all staff involved in interviewing</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
	<p><b>Continue training for revised Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
	<p><b>Review the Code of Conduct for Employees</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>December 2006</p>	
<p>A register of interests is maintained and updated for all elected members, and a register of gifts etc. is maintained for officers and members. The need to declare gifts etc is detailed in the Codes of Conduct.</p>	<p><b>Maintain Register of Interests and Declaration of gifts etc. for Members</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
	<p><b>Maintain Register of Declaration of Gifts for Employees</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>The Council has a group of officers who are addressing the equality agenda in a positive and practical manner and has approved a policy in relation to Equality in Service Delivery. The Council has also trained front-line staff in disability and race issues.</p> <p>The Council has a Race Equality Scheme in place.</p> <p>The Council will develop Gender and Disability Equality Schemes to comply with equality legislation</p>	<p><b>Review the implementation plan in relation to Equality in Service Delivery</b></p>	<p>Head of Policy</p>	<p>December 2006</p>	
	<p><b>Implement the Council's Race Equality Scheme</b></p>	<p>All Directors</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
	<p><b>Prepare the Council's Schemes for Gender Equality and Disability Equality</b></p>	<p>Head of Policy and Performance/Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	
	<p><b>Continue to implement diversity training programme for front-line staff (3000 staff – 1200 trained to date) and provided targeted training</b></p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services/Head of Policy and</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	

	<b>on specific equal opportunities issues such as race relations and disability awareness</b>	Performance/ Equal Ops Officer/ED Manager		
The Council has agreed a Whistleblowing policy and a Complaints Procedure, and encourages employees and the public respectively, to use these. It also encourages officers to respond positively to complaints and to ensure that these are addressed quickly and effectively.	<b>Implement the Council's revised Complaints Procedure and roll out associated training</b>	Chief Executive	October 2006	