



**FINANCE SERVICE
SERVICE PLAN
2007 – 2011
update at June 2010**

**PLANA-SEIRBHEIS
SEIRBHEIS AN IONMHAIS
2007 – 2011
ùrachadh san Ògmhios 2010**

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Section 1 Background and Context

Earrann 1 Eachdraidh is Co-theacsa

1.a Purpose of the Plan, time frame and how it will be monitored

1.a Adhbhar a' Phlana, Frèam-ùine is mar a thèid a sgrùdadh

This Service Plan is a strategic document which outlines how we will contribute to the delivery of the Programme commitments of the Highland Council for which the Finance Service has either a lead or supporting role. The plan also details key actions required for the delivery and improvement of the statutory and core functions of the Service and corporate governance priorities. The plan covers the period 2010-2011 and is supported by a series of specific operational and project plans, where appropriate.

It presents an overview of the Service's aims, objectives and resources, how the Service intends to contribute to corporate objectives, current Service issues and priorities, and the main risk factors identified in relation to these matters.

The plan is an active document and will be subject to review on an annual basis with reports being submitted to the Resources Committee for consideration. In addition the plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis through the Chief Executive's Quarterly Performance Review of the Service with the Service Director and Senior Managers.

The Service Plan will be formally updated annually taking into account internal and external influences and actions arising from monitoring activity throughout the year including the development of the Scottish Government's requirements surrounding the Single Outcome Agreement.

The plan will be useful to many people including:

- Staff
- Customers
- Elected members
- Other Council Services
- All partners or potential partners

1.b Main Functions, Structure and Overview of Financial Resources

1.b Prìomh Dhreuchdan, Structair, is Thar-sealladh de Stòrasan Ionmhasail

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”.

1.b.1 Finance Service Goals & Values

1.b.1 Amasan & Luachan Seirbheis an Ionmhais

The Service has agreed the following goals and values:

- 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.b.2 Main Functions of the Finance Service

1.b.2 Prìomh Dhreuchdan 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 & 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 the Proper Officer has direct jurisdiction over all financial activities taking place in the Council.

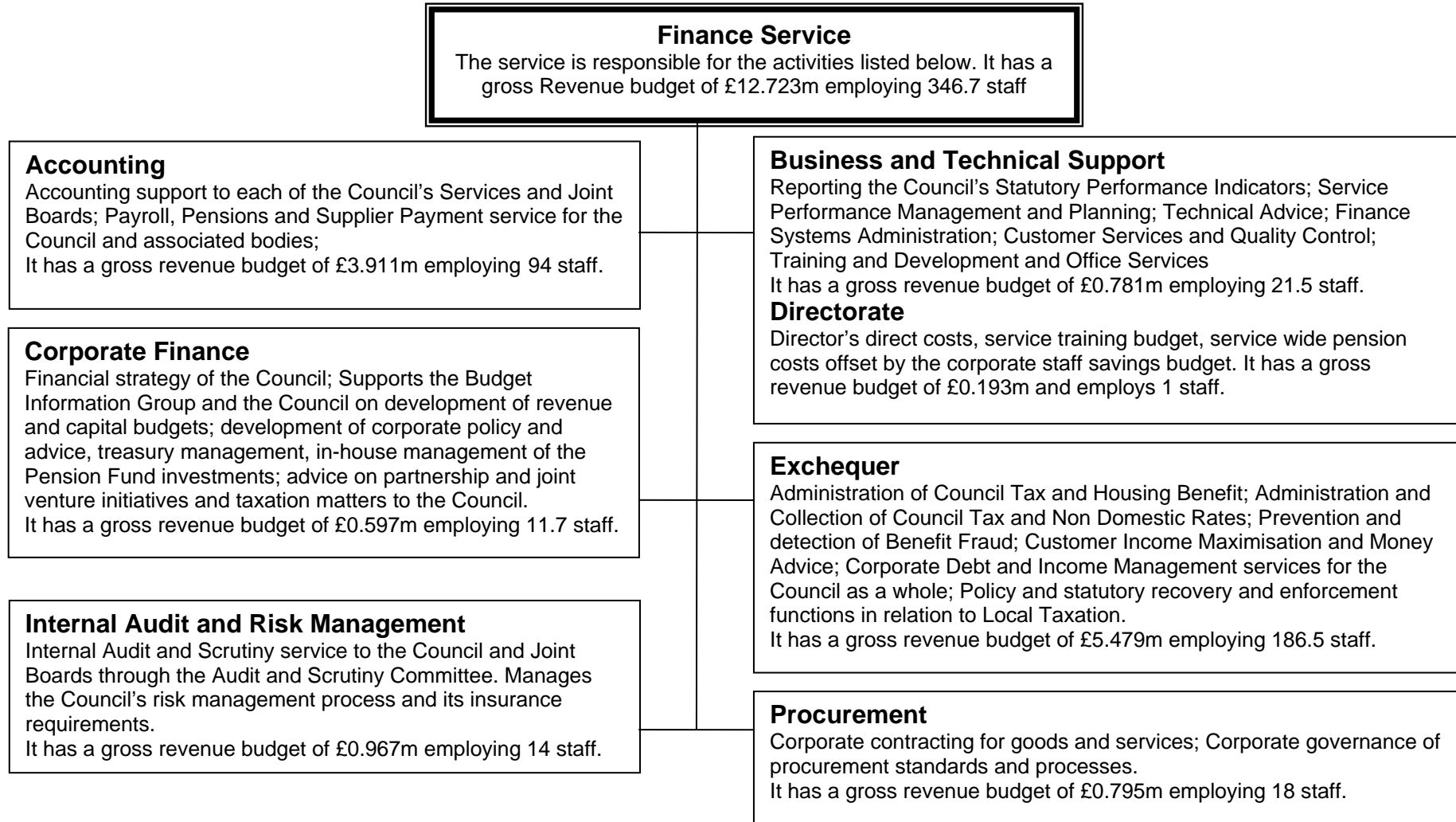
In addition to providing corporate support to the Council and Joint Boards (Police, Fire, Valuation and HITRANS), and the mainstream financial responsibilities including local government taxation and administration of Benefits, the Service now manages Money Advice and Customer Income Maximisation. It 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, along with Council Tax, and manages the Council’s Consolidated Procurement Service.

1.b.3 Overview Of Financial Resources

1.b.3 Thar-sealladh de Stòrasan Ionmhasail

The Finance Service is responsible for delivering a range of services through the Director supported by six sections, Accounting; Business and Technical Support; Corporate Finance; Exchequer; Internal Audit and Risk Management, and Procurement.



1.c Resources

1.c Stòrasan

1.c.1 2010/11 Budget

1.c.1 Buidseat 2010/11

Financial Year	Net Revenue Budget (£m)
2010/11	12.723

Breakdown of 2010/11 Budget

By Section

Section	2010/11	
	Net Budget (£m)	% of Budget
Accounting	2.331	18.3
Payroll, Pensions and Creditors	1.58	12.4
Business and Technical Support	0.781	6.1
Corporate Finance	0.597	4.7
Directorate	0.193	1.5
Exchequer	5.479	43.1
Internal Audit and Risk Management	0.967	7.6
Procurement	0.795	6.2
Total	12.723	100.0

By Staff and Other Costs

Cost	2010/11	
	Net Budget (£m)	% of Budget
Staff costs	10.707	84.2
Other costs	2.016	15.8
Total costs	12.723	100.0
Income	6.254	49.2
Net budget	6.469	50.8

1.c.2 Major achievements and changes in relation to staffing, in terms of use and development.

1.c.2 Coileanaidhean is atharrachaidhean mòra a thaobh sgioba-obrach, a thaobh cleachdadh is leasachadh.

Complaints Handling

For the second successive year, the Finance Service has met the Council's target of 90% to respond to complaints within 10 days.

Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit Administration

There has been a steady improvement trend in Council Tax and Benefits Administration performance. This is measured by the Department for Work and Pensions by means of their Right Time Indicator. The figure for 2009/10 was 19 days and shows improvement compared with 2008/09 when the performance was 34 days.

The Service continues to work with experts from the Department for Work and Pensions Performance Development team on process evaluation covering: reduced duplication of work, working with stakeholders, increased telephone usage for gathering evidence, and making best use of process maps.

Income and Recovery

Processing times for income management have improved from four days to two days following the successful implementation of Business Internet Banking and access to electronic information. Staff handled 19.6% more telephone payments with 0.2 fte less resource as a result of improved business processes. This resource has been redirected into more proactive recovery work.

Despite dealing with higher levels of debts, the average days' sundry debt outstanding has reduced from 94.6 days to 77.2 days and the actual debt percentage collected has improved from 82.3% to 82.9%.

£146k was generated, against a target of £120k, through increased direct deductions from ongoing benefit, reduced borrowings and additional Court income.

Non Domestic Rates Performance

The in-year collection rate improved by 0.8% to 96.9% from prior year. Promotion of the Small Business Bonus Scheme has increased take-up and the deferral scheme has had a marginal improvement impact.

Payroll

The successful payment to all council employees of the new Job Evaluation salaries and wages.

Pensions

The successful implementation of the new Local Government Pension Scheme.

Procurement

Savings in excess of £3m have been delivered to the close of financial year 2009/10, and further savings in excess of this figure have been identified for financial year 2010/11. A national programme of procurement capability assessments has ascertained that Highland Council is one of only eight Councils in Scotland compliant with required minimum

standards, and third best in the country behind the combined assessment of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, and Glasgow City Councils.

Response to Economic Downturn

During 2009/10 the Customer Income Maximisation Team gained additional annual benefits for customers of £1.378m against a target of £900k. Synergies from close and effective working with the Money Advice Team, also under Exchequer management, meant that 823 Money Advice customer contacts involving client debt of £5.8m could be dealt with.

During 2009/10 preparatory work for national accreditation was undertaken, and this culminated in an excellent audit report against the national standards, with particular plaudits being received for the Finance Service publication "An Essential Guide to Benefits, Money Advice, Energy Advice and other Entitlements 2009/10."

Training & Development

Training was designed and delivered on time to all relevant Council staff on the new Revenues and Benefits system.

Year end accounts

The Council's and Joint Boards Year End Accounts were successfully completed on time including managing significant changes to the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP).

1.c.3 Changes to financial arrangements and major investments

1.c.3 Atharrachaidhean a thaobh rèiteachaidhean ionmhasail is seilbhean mòra

The Service's provision of financial management guidance and advice to a number of high profile partnership projects and joint venture initiatives continued throughout the year with the following developments;

- The roll-out implementation of the Highlands and Islands Pathfinder North Project delivering high capacity broadband links to schools and other Council buildings throughout the Highlands and Islands was completed in December 2009.
- The contract for the provision of ICT Services to the Council was concluded in March 2010.
- Electronic Banking facilities were introduced in April 2010 and continue to be developed.
- Work in relation to the Caithness Heat and Power project continues with the aim of concluding a contract with an external supplier for the provision of a district heating system by August 2010.

1.c.4 Changing use of property

1.c.4 Cleachdadh cuid-seilbhe ag atharrachadh

Continually reviewing existing accommodation supplemented by sound understanding of service delivery needs, has enabled the vacation of a property. This property is being considered for use by other Council Services and, if the case put forward does not represent value for money, then Member approval will be sought for its sale and thereby a capital receipt for the Council. Numerous other internal moves have taken place during 2009/10 delivering adjacency benefits for all staff.

1.c.5 Significant Efficiency Projects (started and due)

1.c.5 Pròiseactan Èifeachdais Cudromach (air an tòiseachadh is an dùil)

Use of Technology

Within the Exchequer Section, 2009/10 again saw continuing improvements in how Non Domestic Rates, Council Tax and Housing and Council Tax Benefits are administered. By increasing use of digital technology it has been possible to build on earlier annual efficiency savings at the same time as improving the services to customers. Fewer staff are again dealing with a higher caseload (numbers influenced by local economic circumstances).

By exploiting the full potential of a workflow system for Council Tax, Benefits and Non Domestic Rates, the Service has a strong “management handle” on the day to day operational aspects of these critical public services.

The Pensions Section are in the process of moving all data held on micro-fiche to CD, which will facilitate faster and easier access to our pension records.

1.c.6 Impact and Resourcing of ICT Enabled Developments

1.c.6 Buidh is Goireasachadh Leasachaidhean Comasaichte le TFC

Note: No. * – This is the Finance Service Improvement Priority number from Pages 30 — 34

No. *	Finance Service Target	Impact Assessment	Funding source	Anticipated Costs 2010/11
3.4	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	£40k
5.13	Implement a work flow process in Pensions.	Improve the allocation and monitoring of routine tasks and the document storage process.	Service Budget	£8k
5.20	Implement 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
5.23	Continue developing Electronic banking facilities.	Increased efficiency in administrative support work including undertaking bank reconciliations.	Service Budget	£0k
5.26	Investigate, and if appropriate, implement First Debtors module of Revs and Bens for recovery of overpaid benefit.	Increased recovery of overpayments	Service budget	£tbc

No. *	Finance Service Target	Impact Assessment	Funding source	Anticipated Costs 2010/11
5.27	Investigate and if appropriate, implement an IT solution to enable the collection and enforcement of levies relating to Business Improvement Districts (BID).	Collection and enforcement of BID Levy.	Consider BID Levy	£tbc
5.30	Implement Corporate Arrears Recovery System (CARS).	Improved collection rates.	Service budget	£tbc
5.32	Implement Performance & Risk Management System	Council Risks better managed	IT Service budget	£130k

1.d The Programme of the Highland Council, Single Outcome Agreement, Statutory and Corporate Governance priorities.

1.d Prògram Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd, Aonta na Buile Singilte, Prìomhachasan Riaghlaidh Reachdail is Corporra

1.d.1 The Programme of the Highland Council

1.d.1 Prògram Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

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

- What we will do for communities and older people;
- What we will do for the economy;
- What we will do to make Highland Council more effective and efficient.

1.d.2 The Scottish Government and Central Government

1.d.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.

Finance also has an integral role with our customers in relation to new legislation. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) continues to review the delivery of the welfare benefits system, with Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit as usual at the forefront

On the Income and Recovery side, procedures have been changed to take account of the Debt Arrangement Scheme and other changes arising from the Bankruptcy and Diligence etc. (Scotland) Act. Policies have been reviewed to take account of the changed operating environment, and have been the subject of a presentation to Elected Members.

Following a successful Scottish Government funded feasibility study into Shared Services in the North of Scotland for Revenues and Benefits, an application was made to Government for funding to underwrite the potentially significant financial risks that would arise if the national system of local taxation were to be changed. Dialogue is ongoing with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, who expressed the hope that the project would eventually cover the whole of Scotland. If implemented there would be radical changes in how the vital Revenues and Benefits functions are delivered.

Consideration separately continues to be given to opportunities for the Finance Service to work in partnership with other public bodies wherever the opportunities present themselves. A recent example was the recent joint tendering of Sheriff Officer Services.

From a procurement perspective, Shared Services are now being implemented in procurement by the Council, Northern Constabulary, and the Highland and Islands Fire and Rescue Service.

A Joint Officer Group was established in 2009 and consists of Directors of Finance from 7 Councils together with representatives from COSLA and the Local Government Division of the Scottish Government. The Depute Chief Executive & Director of Finance can feed into this group any concerns regarding distribution issues. The Joint Officer 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 one of six councils represented on the Data Issues Working Group which advises the Joint Officer Group on technical matters.

In the current financial environment the Public Sector expects significant reductions in funding available. At this stage implications are unclear pending the new UK Government spending review. As a consequence, efficiency improvements in reviewing service priorities will be critical to the Council's longer term financial planning.

The Finance Service will be responding to these priorities in four ways

(1) by developing more efficient ways of working within the Finance Service e.g. through maximising the use of technology available under the recently entered into ICT contract;

(2) by exploring opportunities presented by shared services;

(3) by supporting the Council in achieving the objectives of the Corporate Improvement Programme and

(4) supporting the Council in the monitoring and reporting of efficiency savings, and in particular, the publication of an Annual Efficiency Statement.

In 2007, the Scottish Government made available funding of up to £0.150m for each local authority in Scotland to cover the costs associated with using the Improvement Service's Shared Services Diagnostic Tool. The Council's Shared Services Diagnostic Project ended in August 2008 with the production of 12 outline business cases for improvement and efficiency opportunities. The Council decided that nine of these opportunities should be progressed as improvement projects under a new programme called the Corporate Improvement Programme. This programme recognises the need to adopt a robust, comprehensive and systematic approach to deliver efficiencies into the future. It represents a major council-wide initiative focused on a transformation agenda with the ultimate objectives of improving:

- Customer satisfaction
- Stakeholder satisfaction
- Efficiency

The nine projects which are being taken forward within the Corporate Improvement Programme (CIP) are:

- Customer Engagement
- Information Management
- Transport
- Business Support
- Income Generation
- Mobile & Flexible Working
- Asset Management
- Procurement
- Human Resources

Finance Service staff are involved at both Board and working group levels and progress reports on the CIP are presented to Resources Committee.

Procurement is a stand-alone work stream within the Corporate Improvement Programme, and is expected to contribute a significant proportion of the total savings required by the programme. It has also been identified at CoSLA/Scottish Government level as a significant area of activity which can contribute to closing the predicted budget gap over the period of the forthcoming spending review.

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 requires the Council to ensure that its financial plans are aligned with both the Council's and the Government priorities. The Council is currently undertaking a budget consultation exercise to assist in reviewing spending priorities in this difficult financial situation.

The Depute Chief Executive & Director of Finance is a member of a Lead Officer Steering Group for a national Pensions Pathfinder Project being progressed by the Scottish Government and COSLA. The project is evaluating the potential for pooling or merging the assets of Scottish Local Authority Pension Funds and the administration of pensions.

The Service also continues to collect the Business Improvement District levy for Inverness.

1.d.3 E-Government

1.d.3 Riaghaltas-D

Staff from Finance and Chief Executive's Services have been working closely to review how customers interface with the Council when it comes to making payments for goods or services. A Payments Strategy has been developed, which will inform the work of the Corporate Improvement Programme, and encourage those methods of payment that are most cost effective. Subject to Members' approval, this may lead to radical change involving, inter alia, a move away from manual transactions and cash towards electronic methods of payment.

Procurement now uses a suite of technological tools to improve transparency, governance and efficiency: These include:

Advertising contract opportunities: www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk

Issuing and receiving tenders: www.esourcingscotland.com

Requesting lower value quotations: www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk

Order/Receipt Processing: <https://highlandcouncil.pecosipm.com> and www.ogc.gov.uk/tools_services_government_procurement_card.asp

Analysis and Reporting:

<https://login.spikescavell.net/?ProductURL=https://observatory.spikescavell.net>

1.d.4 Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission

1.d.4 Audit Scotland agus Coimisean nan Cunntasan

Audit Scotland, as our External Auditors, performs the External Audit of our annual accounts. The annual audit for 2008/09 accounts was completed on 30 September 2009.

Audit Scotland commenced Highland Council's second Best Value audit during 2009/10 with the final report published in May 2010. The Highland Council is one of the five pathfinder authorities.

The approach being taken should lead to a reduction in overall scrutiny. However, it is also clear that to reduce external scrutiny, there needs to be further improvements in internal scrutiny, particularly making effective use of self-assessment. The Highland Council's new Performance and Risk Management system should assist self-assessment supporting the implementation of the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF).

The Accounts Commission have made it clear within the review of Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) from April 2009 that Councils must better demonstrate publicly that they are securing Best Value – including a proper balance between quality and cost.

This review means increased cost information will be required by Services, ensuring a clear understanding of what it means and effectively supporting them to identify opportunities to reduce costs whilst maintaining, or improving, service delivery. The Finance Service has a key role to play not only in determining that the Service itself is achieving Best Value but also across the Council. Identifying the key cost measures is imperative.

As part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement, managers continue to work towards developing their own additional performance indicators as an integral part of the management process.

1.d.5 Other Bodies

1.d.5 Buidhnean Eile

Guidance as to how the Service and its officers undertake their 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, where necessary, 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.

The Public Procurement Reform Board

<http://openscotland.info/Topics/Government/Procurement/about/Review/reform-board> is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth. It is running a challenging programme of improvement priorities for public sector procurement in Scotland. In pursuit of these, a range of auditing and monitoring mechanisms have been developed, the most significant being the Key Performance Indicators: <http://openscotland.net/Resource/Doc/225005/0060882.pdf>, and the Procurement Capability Assessment: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/279615/0084174.pdf>

1.d.6 The Council, the Elected Members and Committees
1.d.6 A' Chomhairle, na Buill Thaghte agus Comataidhean

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

The Finance Service continues to provide financial support and governance for the Council & Joint Boards.

There are, perhaps inevitably, changes to the information requirements and an example of this is data at Ward level which is available on the Council's website.

1.d.7 Development and Innovation Board
1.d.7 Bòrd Leasachaidh is Ùr-ghnàthachais

The new ICT contract took effect from 1 April 2010 and, replacing *Digital Highland* is the *Development and Innovation Board*. It is chaired by the Depute Chief Executive & Director of Finance.

ICT can provide critical contributions to service delivery and efficiencies required in response to the increasingly challenging financial climate.

The Service successfully implemented the Electronic Content Document Management (ECDM) project for Council Tax, Benefits and Non Domestic Rates, and has recently improved the quality of performance data that can be extracted for management purposes.

More details of the ICT Enabled Developments specific to the Finance Service can be found as Item 1.C.6.

1.d.8 Employee Survey
1.d.8 Suirbhidh Luchd-obrach

The fifth Employee Survey was completed in March 2010 with the response rate of 81% from Finance Service staff exceeding the previous survey in 2007 of 79%. The final report on the fifth Employee Survey for the Council will be available during May 2010.

Similar to 2007, a service analysis will be undertaken and results at both Council and Service level will be shared with staff.

The Finance Management Team (FMT) considers that it is critical for them to meet all their staff to discuss such results. This communication informs the Action Plan. The Finance Service Action Plan arising from the 2007 Survey was approved at October 2008 Resources Committee. A positive update was reported to 30 September 2009 Resources Committee and actions continue to be closely monitored at the Chief Executive's Quarterly Performance Review meetings and the Council's Employee Survey Reference Group.

1.d.9 Recession Action Plan
1.d.9 Plana-gnìomha an t-Seacaidh

In response to the economic downturn, the Council has implemented an action plan to assist Highland businesses and individuals deal with the changed economic circumstances. This plan supports the Council's Programme to create sustainable communities with more balanced population growth and economic development across the Highlands and to build a fairer and healthier Highlands.

Recession Action Plan progress
Housing
Consideration of the Council's potential role as a funder of last resort Update: Working with a pilot group of local authorities to look at ways in which the Council can act as guarantor for the proportion of a mortgage for those who can't raise deposits
The Council's Capital Programme
Ensuring successful implementation of this £60m+pa programme has the potential to create several hundred construction jobs with multiplier impacts Update: The programme is on target to deliver c£70m of spend in the current financial year including £6m of accelerated spend which has been brought forward from 2010/11
Additional private sector resources could be brought to bear to help deliver the programme e.g. on design and project management Update: A Community Planning Partnership Officer Group is being established to coordinate and align capital spending programmes.
The scope to accelerate some high impact aspects of the capital programme e.g. on areas with weaker local economies will be looked at. Update: £1.58m of Town Centre Regeneration monies has been secured from the Scottish Government for projects in Nairn, Dingwall and Fort William
Money advice and support to individuals
The Customer Income Maximisation team continues to promote benefits and also accesses social tariffs from energy advisors. Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A progress report on the development of a credit union for the Highlands was approved by the Resources Committee in April 2010. The report recommended that the Council work in partnership with the Western Isles Credit Union to develop their Business Plan for their re-branding into the Highlands and Islands Credit Union and coverage of the Highlands. • Customer contacts to the Council's Income Maximisation Team in 2009/10 were 1,040 with total gains of £1.38m. These represent substantial increases from 2008/09 when the figures were 911 contacts and gains of £0.40m. • The number of debt cases presented to the Council's own Money Advice team and the agency network was 1,368 during 2009/10, again an increase on previous years. The debt level has remained high at over £24m for the year. • A review of the delivery of advice and information services is now under way.

Recession Action Plan progress

Business Advice & Support

The up-coming public sector procurement on seminars could have an increased focus on dealing with the recession for local businesses & the third sector

Update: Two rounds of business development roadshows have been held across the Highland area, with a third one in planning. However, uptake of the opportunity in 2010 was disappointing in most areas.

The Council should ensure it pays bills promptly to avoid cash-flow problems for small businesses. The UK government has stated that it will try to pay invoices within 10 days rather than 30 for example

Update: Prompt payment is continuing to feature as a means of supporting companies. In 2009/10, 54% of payments were made within 10 days.

Proactively promote the Small Business Bonus Scheme

Update: The thresholds for the Small Business Bonus Scheme changed materially from 1 April 2010 as did the rateable values of all non domestic properties. As a result, all existing claims for Small Business bonus relief are being reviewed. Work continues to promote the scheme to those businesses that may be eligible.

1.d.10 Gaelic Language Plan

1.d.10 Plana Gàidhlig

The Finance Service will fulfil it's obligations under the Gaelic Language Plan and make Finance staff aware that the implications of the plan are far reaching and will impact upon the general working of the Council in various ways. We will also raise the visual profile of Gaelic, using Gaelic in press statements and official notices and on the website, and adopt a marketing strategy for Gaelic by drawing on the action plan to help increase the visibility of Gaelic.

1.e Review of Performance and Progress

1.e Sgrùdadh air Coileanadh is Adhartas

1.e.1 Service Improvement Priorities (SIP) 2009/10 – Review of Performance as at 31 March 2010.

1.e.1 Prìomhachasan Leasachaidh Seirbheis (SIP) 2009/10 – Sgrùdadh air Coileanadh mar aig 31 Màrt 2010.

For ease of reference the following symbols have been used to provide an assessment of performance:

✓	Commitment progressing well, is on target or has been completed	38
—	Too early to assess impact, no change is recorded yet or approach is under review	4
M	Mixed performance – positive and negative movement in indicators	9
X	Commitment not met	2
Total		53

What we will do for communities and older people. (Programme theme 2)

Na nì sinn airson coimhearsnachdan is daoine nas sine (Cuspair prògram 2)

- 2.1 **Implement a programme of corporate activities for Income Maximisation.** ✓
Presentations and meetings with Council Services to raise general awareness and increase number of referrals from internal sources. Completed.
- 2.2 **Continue to work in partnership with the Service Point Network and Service Centre to further improve services.** ✓
Roll out of ECDM to Service Points on a pilot basis. Further roll out to other Service Point staff to take place during 2010/11. Completed.
- 2.3 **Implement E-Payments project in co-operation with co-sponsor, Head of E-Government.** ✓
The project definition to align the E-Payments project with the rest of the Council's objectives within the CIP is complete, and has informed the Payment Strategy (1.d.3).

What we will do for the economy (The Programme theme 3)
Na nì sinn airson na h-eaconamaidh (Cuspair prògraim 3)

- | | | |
|------------|--|---|
| 3.1 | Participation in National Shared Services work with North of Scotland Local Authorities (NOSLA) partners. Project implementation if feasibility study results acceptable. | — |
| | There is an ongoing dialogue with the Scottish Government seeking their agreement to fund/underwrite the major financial risks posed to participating Councils if investment in the NOSLA project proceeds and there are subsequent changes to the local taxation and or benefits regimes. | |
| 3.2 | 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. | ✓ |
| | All contract opportunities dealt with by Procurement advertised via the www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk portal.
Development activities cyclic and ongoing. | |
| 3.3 | Re-write 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. | ✓ |
| | Sustainable procurement action plan drafted and await comment from Council Services. Sufficient actions have been completed to meet the requirements of basic compliance with the Government's assessment framework. | |
| 3.4 | Develop procurement service web presence including updated buyer profile to ensure maximum access to Council business for all potential providers/suppliers/contractors. | ✓ |
| | Completed and ongoing during 2010/11. | |
| 3.5 | 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. | ✓ |
| | Regular monitoring and reporting will need to be re-introduced in light of evidence required for Procurement Capability Assessments. Completed and ongoing. | |
| 3.6 | Develop the long term procurement plans based on both Corporate and Service specific expert knowledge. | ✓ |
| | Cyclical and ongoing, but complete for the first round in March 2010. | |
| 3.7 | 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. | ✓ |
| | A second round of projects is in development to assess how/where best to apply the methodology. | |
| 3.8 | Develop project management disciplines within procurement projects to maximise delivery of benefits/savings. | ✓ |
| | Completed. | |

What we will do to be more effective and efficient (The Programme theme 5)
Na nì sinn airson a bhith nas èifeachdaiche is nas buadhaiche (Cuspair prògram 5)

- 5.1 Assist, where appropriate, in the provision of training to Members on all Council financial matters.** ✓
 Training, where appropriate was provided during 2009/10. Need for training to members of Audit and Scrutiny Committee (ASC) was identified.
- 5.2a Design and maintain IT System Development Plans for Finance Service -owned IT systems.** M
 A standard document has been designed and agreed by the FMT with the aim of better managing IT system developments for Finance Service-owned systems. This document will also work towards making better use of existing technology and better prioritising developments against criteria including cost, saving and legislative requirements.
 Plan being maintained for Exchequer systems and working towards planning for Oracle or PECOS systems.
- 5.2b Design and maintain IT System Development Plans for Finance Service -owned IT systems.** M
 The eProcurement Scotland Service is in phase 2 of its consultation process with a view to commencing re-tendering in April 2010.
- 5.3 Implement Performance Management Framework for the Service, developing relevant Performance Measures for the Sections.** ✓
 Council has agreed to use the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) model. Consideration will be given to possible roll out of CIPFA FM model if required once PSIF Service Self-Assessment is completed. Both Business and Technical Support Manager and Performance and Business Intelligence Manager now an accredited EFQM Assessors. PSIF to be piloted within a Housing and Property section. Then further roll-out across the Council in due course.
- 5.4 Continue to extend range of Finance Service information available on the intranet and internet.** ✓
 Increased availability and access to information.
- 5.5 Complete improvement actions from MORI staff survey.** ✓
 Very good progress being made on actions with many completed. Excellent response rate to recent 2010 survey. Whilst figure to be confirmed, looks likely that the Service response rate has surpassed the 79% achieved in 2007 (Council overall was 38% in 2007).
- 5.6 Design and maintain dedicated Finance Service web pages on the Council's Intranet.** ✓
 "Gone live" and being maintained, with commitment to ongoing improvements wherever possible.
- 5.7 Continue to improve the quality and promptness of responses to Complaints and Freedom of Information requests.** ✓

- Improvements evident including quality of responses.
- 5.8 Design and implement E-Learning Council Tax Training System, and roll-out to relevant staff.** ✓
Completed.
- 5.9 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.** ✓
New Distribution Officer Group has established replacing the three-year settlement group (3YSG). The Data Issues Working Group (DIWG) continues as before.
Briefings prepared to COSLA and further influence applied through the Resources and Capacity Executive Group which the Council Leader attends. Continued to participate in reviews of Local Government Finance in Scotland reflecting Highland needs.
- 5.10 Ensure data, held by the Finance Service, is transported securely to third parties.** ✓
Data transported securely to third parties.
- 5.11 Update Finance Service Recruitment and Selection procedure incorporating the implementation of Disclosure checks.** ✓
Completed.
- 5.12 Develop ICT Business Continuity Plans in accordance with the requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.** ✓
Plans completed, ongoing development.
- 5.13 Review the Financial Monitoring Process.** ✓
Head of Accounting has attended monitoring meetings for all services with the exception of ECS. Arrangements will be made in the new year to capture ECS process.
- 5.14 Rationalise the number of payrolls following the introduction of Job Evaluation.** ✓
Timing of any rationalisation will be determined by new terms and conditions arrangements. Latest date from Human Resources is October 2010.
- 5.15 Develop electronic bulk timesheets for Supply Teachers.** ✓
Completed.
- 5.16 Implement work flow processes in Pensions** M
Imaging up and running, work flow is being done on a staged basis and will be further progressed when the transfer from microfiche to CD is complete.
- 5.17 Monitor and report agreed efficiency measures for the Council to meet national directives and address in-house budgetary issues in this regard.** ✓
The Council's Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) for 2008/09 reported to Highland Council committee in June 2009. Efficiency target met.
Work on the AES for 2009/10 is on-going, to be finalised in June 2010.

- 5.18 Implement 3 year revenue budgeting within the Council.** ✓
Revenue Budget for 2010/11 agreed with significant savings (£11m) also agreed for years 2 and 3. Work ongoing with budget consultation and process for years 2 and 3 with decisions on further savings to be taken Autumn 2010.
- 5.19 Produce rolling five-year capital programmes.** ✓
Current capital review moves forward on a '5 plus 5' year basis and with option appraisal used to support decision making.
- 5.20 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 (AMPs)).** ✓
Following the approval of the 2010/11 Revenue Budget in February 2010 work continues with the Administration/Service Directors on the development of the 2011/12 – 2012/13 revenue budgets. This will include improved service planning, the management of agreed efficiency and savings measures to ensure successful delivery and the development of AMPs in liaison with colleagues in Housing and Property Services.
- 5.21 Implement phase 2 of move to paperless Direct Debits (DDs).** M
The Automated Return of Unpaid Direct Debits service (ARUDD) has been implemented. Work is underway to implement paperless Direct Debits as 5.22 dependent upon this.
- 5.22 Implement Direct Debit for Special Arrangements for payment of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates arrears.** ✓
Dependent on completion of paperless Direct Debits (5.21).
- 5.23 (a) Implement payment of Housing Benefit by BACS.** ✓
Completed.
- (b) Increase the percentage of Housing Benefit payments by BACS.** M
Promotional mail shots planned for June 2010 once workload has settled following Version 6 implementation. Take-up of June 2010 mail shots to be analysed and consideration given to making BACS mandatory for all Housing Benefit payments.
- 5.24 Investigate and, if appropriate, plan implementation of Electronic banking.** ✓
New Electronic Banking system installed and continues to be developed.. Earlier cash receipting reconciliations are possible.
- 5.25 Implement single application form for Council entitlements, and limiting the number of assessments undertaken.** —
Influenced by the Corporate Improvement Programme and ongoing buy-in from Services. Roll out during 2010/11.
- 5.26 Implement Version 6 of Revenues and Benefits software.** ✓
Completed.

5.27	Assess case for implementing First Debtors system for overpaid Housing Benefit, following implementation of Version 6 of Revenues and Benefits software. Case still to be assessed.	X
5.28	Investigate and if appropriate, implement an IT solution in the administration of levies relating to Business Improvement Districts (BID). Manual solution for years 1 and 2 in place. BID for Fort William and Inverness Tourism BID now under discussion. This will have resource implications. Quotes for an IT solution previously provided have been unaffordable. Awaiting further quote.	M
5.29	Implement Northgate Performance Management and QA module. Not yet implemented. Consideration regarding its implementation to be undertaken during 2010/11.	—
5.30	Implement findings of Oracle Accounts Receivable consultant's review. Report received and being implemented as appropriate.	✓
5.31	Improve the Council Tax collection rate. As at 31 March 2010, 95.0% of Council Tax had been collected. This compares to 95.3% at March 2009.	X
5.32	Review Financial Regulations Review of Regulations ongoing and to be reported during 2010/11.	M
5.33	Investigate and, if appropriate implement, an electronic system to record and monitor risk. Performance and Risk Management system (PRMS) in the process of being implemented.	✓
5.34	Address the implementation of Operational Risk Management throughout the Council. All Services requested to develop and maintain Risk Management at Operational level. Implementation will be supported by new PRMS.	—
5.35	Review the operation of the Audit Management System (Galileo) and revise the User Manual accordingly to ensure that audits are undertaken in the most efficient way. Ongoing. Aim to complete by June 2010.	M
5.36	Revise the Internal Audit Section's Employee Development Programme (EDP) to ensure it continues to reflect the ongoing training requirements of the Section and meets the recommendations from the CIPFA guidance "The Excellent Internal Auditor". Work ongoing and aiming to complete by June 2010.	M

- | | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| 5.37 | Implement and manage new Internal Audit structure, enabling additional time for unplanned investigations.
Completed. | ✓ |
| 5.38 | Appropriate compliance with the recommendations, applicable to local authorities, of the McClelland report.
Ongoing. | ✓ |
| 5.39 | Produce and analyse Key Performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the McClelland Implementation Project and act upon any improvements identified.
Complete and ongoing. | ✓ |
| 5.40 | Deliver Procurement training courses to plan.
Ongoing. | ✓ |

1.e.2 Progress against Accounts Commission Statutory Performance Indicators

1.e.2 Adhartas an aghaidh Comharran Coileanaidh Reachdail Coimisean nan Cunntasan

Our performance in each of these Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) over the past 3 years is shown below. Information in respect of 2009/10 performance will not be available until September 2010. The rankings will not be available until January 2011.

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

	Finance Service SPIs	06/07	07/08	08/09	Rank 08/09
1	Population of local authority area	213,590	215,310	217,440	
1 a)	Number of litigation claims incurred by the council in the current reporting year	226	180	143	
	Number of litigation claims incurred by the council in the current reporting year per 10,000 population	10.6	8.4	6.6	4
1 b)	Total revenue budget	£529,300,000	£558,300,000	£572,258,000	
	Total value of claims incurred by the council in the current reporting year	£924,811	£656,824	£473,798	
	Claims as a percentage of revenue budget	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	
	Population of local authority area in previous reporting year	211,340	213,590	215,310	
	Number of litigation claims incurred by the council for the previous reporting year, including those made after the end of the previous reporting year	251	241	201	
	Total number of claims incurred by the council for the previous reporting year per 10,000 population	11.9	11.3	9.3	2
	Total revenue budget in the previous reporting year	£505,700,000	£529,300,000	£558,300,000	
	Total value of claims incurred by the council for the previous reporting year	£616,919	£866,433	£798,920	
	Total claims value for the previous reporting year as a percentage of the previous year's revenue budget	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	
2	Cost of collecting council tax per dwelling	£18.28	£18.61	£14.84	20
	Cost of collecting council tax	£1,971,346	£2,036,655	£1,637,831	
	Number of dwellings	107,830	109,463	110,377	
	Income received from council tax summary warrants	£147,228	£156,596	£161,849	
3 a)	Income due from council tax for the year excluding reliefs and rebates	£89,063,597	£93,748,162	£95,412,393	
	Income due from council tax for the year excluding all water charges and outstanding council tax	£116,371,904	£121,649,087	£123,521,678	
	Reliefs and rebates due to council for council tax for the year	£27,308,307	£27,900,925	£28,109,285	
3 b)	Percentage of income due from council tax for the year that was received by the end of the year	95.4%	95.5%	95.3%	14
	Income received from council tax for the year	£84,936,783	£89,543,798	£90,908,846	
4	Number of invoices sampled	328,798	278,747	280,257	
	Number of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days	275,584	233,869	241,850	
	Percentage of invoices sampled paid within 30 days	83.8%	83.9%	86.3%	17

1.e.3 Progress against other Performance Measures

1.e.3 Adhartas an aghaidh Ceumannan 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 2008/09. These indicators provide a wider picture of the services provided by the Finance Service. 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.

1.f Above the Line Risks

1.f 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 2010.

Corporate Risk:

Owners: Head of Accounting and Head of Corporate Finance

Risk No.	1	Likelihood	CII	SIP ref	
The Council's Balances. The global economic position and outlook and other pressures such as Winter Maintenance are placing significant pressure on the Council's budget. There is also uncertainty in predicting future grant settlements particularly with the change in Government following the General Election in May 2010.					
Update: £9m set aside in 2010/11 budget to address a range of outstanding pressures including replenishment of balances. Decisions on use of the unallocated sum likely to occur by June 2010.					
There are likely to be further calls on balances from outstanding equal pay and job evaluation issues so the Council is still likely to see levels of balances under pressure.					

Owner: Head of Corporate Finance

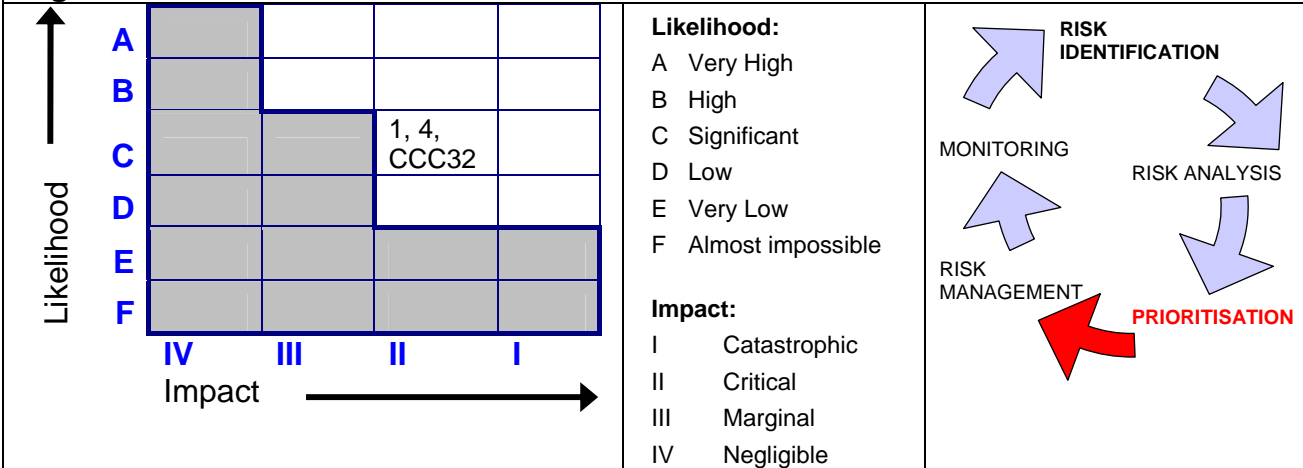
Risk No.	CCC32	Likelihood	C II	SIP ref	n/a
The Council must manage current and future pressures, and commitments within reducing available resources. The poor economic forecast for the Country and the Public Sector in the short to medium term may generate additional pressures and difficulties in balancing the Council's budgets					
Update: Budget Consultation now underway to gauge public views on ways to address the budget challenge faced. Separately, initial budget scrutiny meetings with ECS, SW and TECS took place in late March/early April to ensure services are taking steps to identify and take forward options for addressing the budget for 2011/12 and 2012/13.					

Service Risks:

Owner: Depute Chief Executive & Director of Finance

Risk No.	4	Likelihood	C II	SIP ref	5.3
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: Council has agreed to use the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) model. Consideration will be given to possible roll out of CIPFA FM model if required once PSIF Service Self-Assessment is completed. Both Business and Technical Support Manager and Performance and Business Intelligence Manager now an accredited EFQM Assessors. PSIF to be piloted within a Housing & Property section. Then further roll-out across the Council in due course.					

Highland Council – Finance Service – Risk Profile as at March 2010



Section 2 Objectives and Actions

Earrann 2 Amasan is Gnìomhan

2.a Programme Commitments being led by the Finance Service

2.a Dealasan Prògram gan stùireadh le Seirbheis an Ionmhais

Programme Commitments being led by the Finance Service

Programme theme: 2. Communities and Older People			
Fin ID:	Finance 4		
Programme Commitment:	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:	Programme 2.17		
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 2009.	Equalities Impact Assessment conducted:	N/A
By (initials):	AB	Date Published:	N/A
Enabling actions			Review Date
4.1	FMT to attend Gaelic Awareness Course		September 2010
4.2	Relevant documentation reviewed to ensure compliance with Gaelic Language Plan.		March 2011

Programme theme: 3. What we will do for the Economy			
Fin ID:	Finance 1		
Programme Commitment:	Pursue initiatives to support the procurement of local products and services by the Council and others.		
Reference:	Programme 3.12; CP 3.36		
Lead Officer:	Head of Procurement	Risk No.	N/A
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
F1.1	Reports drawn from Procurement Hub April 2010.		December 2010
F1.2	Supplier Development events for financial year 2010/11 are currently being planned.		June 2010
F1.3	Adoption of fully corporate approach to procurement, and of national, sectoral, and local joint working on procurement is in development.		June 2010
F1.4	Indicators of performance to support the procurement of local products and services by the Council & others will be reported six monthly.		March 2011

Programme theme: 5. More Effective and Efficient 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 continuously review the Council's spending programmes. We will modernise our services to achieve an annual 2% efficiency savings target.		
Reference:	Programme 5.01; CP5.03/5.05/5.06; SOA 15.D.14		
Lead Officer:	Heads of Corporate Finance (5.03 & 5.06) & Accounting (5.05)	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service Budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget aligned to spending priorities. • Public services are delivered effectively, efficiently & jointly. • 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 / DR	Date Published:	N/A
Enabling actions			Review Date
CP5.03	Efficiency Programme deliveries by Services collated and Annual Efficiency statement signed off.	Annually, by 30 June	
CP5.05	Effective financial stewardship confirmed in the audit of the Council's accounts annually.	Annually, by 30 September	
CP5.06	Service Plans and Budgets aligned.	July 2010	

Programme theme: 5. More Effective and Efficient Council			
Fin ID.	Finance 5		
Objective:	Corporate risk register reviewed quarterly and management actions in place		
Reference:	Programme 5.03		
Lead Officer:	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
5.1	Implement, as part of an integrated Performance & Risk Management system, an electronic system to record and monitor risk.	July 2010	
5.2	Address the implementation of Strategic Operational Risk Management throughout the Council. Dependent on 5.1 being implemented.	September 2010	
5.3	Review of corporate risks through Quarterly Performance Review meeting.	April 2010	
5.4	A six monthly review of corporate risks by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.	August 2010	

Corporate Plan Objectives being led by the Finance Service

Corporate Plan CP 2.03b. The Administration's Corporate Objectives for the Highland Council – Communities and Older People			
Fin ID.	Finance 6		
Objective:	Increase in financial benefit to customers from the advice given (THC)		
Reference:	CP 2.02b; 2.03b, SOA 7.G		
Lead Officer:	Head of Exchequer	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service Budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial benefit to customers from the advice given – (The Highland Council) Increase number of customers reached with money advice and welfare rights. (The Highland Council) 		
Date Equalities Screening conducted:	12/04/10	Equalities Impact Assessment conducted:	N/A
By (Initials):	SMcK/YH	Date Published:	N/A
Enabling actions			Review Date
CP2.03b	Quantify aggregate service to customers receiving advice. (Target £1.5m)		March 2011

Corporate Plan CP 2.04. The Administration's Corporate Objectives for the Highland Council – Communities and Older People			
Fin ID.	CP2.04		
Objective:	Paying the right benefit, to the right people at the right time. Average time taken in calendar days to process all new claims and change events in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB).		
Reference:	CP CP2.04		
Lead Officer:	Head of Exchequer	Risk No.	N/A
Resource:	Service Budget		
Key Performance Results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet DWP target. 		
Date Equalities Screening conducted:		Equalities Impact Assessment conducted:	N/A
By (Initials):		Date Published:	N/A
Enabling actions			Review Date
CP2.04a	Reduce the average number of days per case to process new HB/CTB claims.		March 2011
CP2.04b	Reduce the average number of days per case to process change events HB/CTB claims.		March 2011

2.b Corporate Themes and Service Improvement Priorities 2010/11

2.b Cuspairean Corporra is Prìomhachasan Leasachaidh Seirbheis 2010/11

The Service Improvement Priorities below are grouped by the relevant Programme themes.

Corporate Theme 2: Communities and Older People

Cuspair Corporra 2: Coimhearsnachdan is Daoine nas Sine

What we will do	Outcome target
2.1 Further streamline processes by rolling out Civica ECDM access to Service Point and Service Centre.	By October 2010.
2.2 Develop payment strategy for Council including E-Payments.	By June 2010.
2.3 Develop social care expenditure mapping to assist the implementation of the Scottish Government's Integrated Resource Framework (IRF).	By October 2010.

Corporate Theme 3: The Economy

Cuspair corporra 3: An Eaconamaidh

What we will do	Outcome target
3.1 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.	First targets achieved, further improvements by March 2011.
3.2 Review applications for NDR Small Business Bonus Scheme with a view to encouraging maximum take-up.	By December 2010.
3.3 Assist partner agencies to write Sustainable Procurement Policy. Agree shared procurement plans, specifications and evaluation criteria that make full use of new legal rights.	Ongoing and by March 2011.
3.4 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.	By March 2011.
3.5 Develop the long term procurement plans based on both Corporate and Service specific expert knowledge.	By March 2011.
3.6 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 2011.

Corporate Theme 5: Effective and Efficient Council
Cuspair Corporra 5: Comhairle Èifeachdach is Bhuadhach

What we will do	Outcome target
5.1 Assist, where appropriate, in the provision of training to Members on all Council financial matters.	By March 2011.
5.2 Design and maintain IT System Development Plans for Finance Service -owned IT systems. In respect of Oracle system, restructuring within Accounting required.	By September 2010.
The eProcurement Scotland Service is in phase 2 of its consultation process with a view to commencing re-tendering in April 2010.	By June 2011.
5.3 Continue to extend range of Finance Service information available on the intranet and internet.	Increased availability and access to information. Ongoing.
5.4 Agree and progress improvement actions arising from 2010 MORI staff survey.	By December 2010.
5.5 Design and maintain dedicated Finance Service web pages on the Council's Intranet.	Increased availability and access to information. Ongoing.
5.6 Continue to improve the quality and promptness of responses to Complaints and Freedom of Information requests.	Improvements evident including quality of responses. By March 2011.
5.7 Update e-Learning <i>Focus on Fraud Awareness</i> system and roll-out to Service Centre and Service Point staff.	By December 2010.
5.8 Update and deliver inaugural course in respect of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit training courses following mini-restructuring of Finance Development Team.	By September 2010.
5.9 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.
5.10 Maintain ICT Business Continuity Plans in accordance with the requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.	Ongoing.

What we will do	Outcome target
5.11 Review the Financial Monitoring Process.	By December 2010.
5.12 Rationalise the number of payrolls following the introduction of Job Evaluation.	By April 2011.
5.13 Implement work flow processes in Pensions.	By March 2011.
5.14 Lead the identification and collation of financial and activity data required to meet Council's Best Value / Value for Money reporting obligations.	By July 2010.
5.15 Monitor and report agreed efficiency measures for the Council to meet national directives and address in-house budgetary issues in this regard.	By June 2010.
5.16 Implement 3 year revenue budgeting within the Council. Budget process for 2011/12 and 2012/13 following twin-track approach: (a) budget consultation process, and (b) ongoing scrutiny meetings with Services.	By Feb 2011.
5.17 Produce rolling five-year capital programmes, based on consideration and approval of Outline Business Cases (OBC) for projects for prioritisation purposes.	Members to review Capital Planning Officers Group scoring and project OBCs and formally agree capital programme thereafter. Target date – Council meeting – June 2010.
5.18 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 (AMPs)).	By February 2011.
5.19 Participate in CIPFA Benchmarking Clubs to share good practice and identify possible service delivery efficiencies in respect of various aspects of the Finance Service, and implement changes accordingly.	By March 2011.
5.20 Implement paperless Direct Debit facilities.	By August 2010.
5.21 Implement Direct Debit for Special Arrangements for payment of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates arrears.	Dependent on completion of paperless Direct Debits (5.20). By September 2010.

What we will do	Outcome target
5.22 Continue to explore shared service opportunities.	Ongoing
5.23 Continue developing Electronic banking facilities.	By March 2011.
5.24 Increase by 20% the percentage of Housing Benefit payments by BACS.	By March 2011.
5.25 Implement single application form for Council entitlements with a view to limiting the number of assessments undertaken.	To be rolled out on a phased basis commencing June 2010.
5.26 Investigate, and if appropriate, implement First Debtors system for overpaid Housing Benefit.	By March 2011.
5.27 Investigate, and if appropriate, implement an IT solution in the administration of levies relating to Business Improvement Districts (BID).	By September 2010.
5.28 Implement findings of Oracle Accounts Receivable consultant's review.	By July 2010.
5.29 Improve the Council Tax collection rate.	By March 2011.
5.30 Implement Corporate Arrears Recovery System (CARS).	By April 2011.
5.31 Deliver actions to increase effectiveness and efficiency as set out in the Exchequer Operational Business Plan.	Ongoing and March 2011.
5.32 Deliver appropriate actions from the Process Improvement Plan for Benefits Administration, developed in partnership with Department for Work and Pensions.	Ongoing and March 2011.
5.33 Consult on, and implement as appropriate, "Collection of Payments" Strategy.	Ongoing and March 2011.
5.34 Review of Financial Regulations to be agreed by Audit & Scrutiny Committee in August 2010.	By August 2010.
5.35 Implement the Council's new Performance and Risk Management system. In respect of performance management within the Finance Service.	By October 2010.
In respect of risk, Council-wide.	By July 2010.

What we will do	Outcome target
5.36 Address the implementation of Operational Risk Management throughout the Council.	Request all Services to develop and maintain Risk Management at Operational level. By September 2010.
5.37 Review the Council's Risk Management Strategy.	To be agreed by Audit & Scrutiny Committee in December 2010.
5.38 Review the operation of the Audit Management System (Galileo) and revise the User Manual accordingly to ensure that audits are undertaken in the most efficient way.	Operations reviewed and Galileo User Manual is revised. By June 2010.
5.39 Revise the Internal Audit Section's Employee Development Programme (EDP) to ensure it continues to reflect the ongoing training requirements of the Section and meets the recommendations from the CIPFA guidance "The Excellent Internal Auditor".	By June 2010.
5.40 Review the format of Internal Audit reports, particularly with regard to the provision of a clear audit opinion.	By September 2010.
5.41 Deliver training on "CHaP – Lessons Learned" as part of the Management Development Programme 6 in order to raise awareness of project governance principles.	By April 2011.
5.42 Appropriate compliance with the recommendations, applicable to local authorities, of the McClelland report. Assessed as compliant December 2009, will be reassessed November 2010 and aim to show improvements between assessments.	By March 2011.
5.43 Produce and analyse Best Practice indicators (BPIs) as part of the McClelland Implementation Project and act upon any improvements identified. Initial targets achieved, subject to ongoing development.	By March 2011.
5.44 Deliver Procurement training courses.	Ongoing.

To request this information in an alternative format e.g. large print, Braille, audio tape, or suitable language, please contact:

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Airson am fiosrachadh seo fhaighinn ann an cruth eile m.e. clò mòr, clò nan dall, teip chlaistinneach, no cànan freagarrach, cuiribh fios gu:

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