



**FINANCE SERVICE
SERVICE PLAN
2011 – 2012
update at June 2011**

**PLANA-SEIRBHEIS
SEIRBHEIS AN IONMHAIS
2011 – 2012
ùrachadh san Ògmhios 2011**

Contents

	Page
Section 1 Background and Context	1
1.a Purpose of the Plan, Time Frame and how it will be monitored	1
1.b Main Functions, Structure and Overview of Financial Resources	2
1.b.1 Finance Service Goals & Values	2
1.b.2 Main Functions of the Finance Service	2
1.b.3 Overview Of Financial Resources	3
1.c Resources	4
1.c.1 2011/12 Budget	4
1.c.2 Major achievements and changes in relation to staffing, in terms of use and development	5
1.c.3 Changes to financial arrangements and major investments	6
1.c.4 Significant Efficiency Projects (started and due)	7
1.c.5 Impact and Resourcing of ICT Enabled Developments	8
1.d The Programme of the Highland Council, the Single Outcome Agreement, Statutory and Corporate Governance priorities.	9
1.d.1 The Programme of the Highland Council	9
1.d.2 The Scottish Government and Central Government	9
1.d.3 E-Government	11
1.d.4 Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission	11
1.d.5 Other Bodies	12
1.d.6 The Council, the Elected Members and Committees	12
1.d.7 Employee Survey	12
1.d.8 Gaelic Language Plan	13
1.d.9 Recession Action Plan	13
1.d.10 Best Value Improvement Plan (BV2)	15
1.e Review of Performance and Progress	16
1.e.1 Service Improvement Priorities 2010/11 – Review of Performance	16
1.e.2 Progress against Accounts Commission Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs)	22
1.e.3 Progress against other Performance Measures	23
1.f Above the Line Risks	24
Section 2 Objectives and Actions	25
2.a Programme Commitments being led by the Finance Service	25
2.b Corporate Themes and Service Improvement Priorities 2011/12	29

Clàr-innse

Duilleag

Earrann 1	Eachdraidh is Co-theacsa	1
1.a	Adhbhar a' Phlana, Frèam-ùine is mar a thèid a sgrùdadh	1
1.b	Prìomh Dhreuchdan, Structair, is Thar-sealladh de Stòrasan Ionmhasail	2
1.b.1	Amasan & Luachan Seirbheis an Ionmhais	2
1.b.2	Prìomh Dhreuchdan Seirbheis an Ionmhais	2
1.b.3	Thar-sealladh de Stòrasan Ionmhasail	3
1.c	Stòrasan	4
1.c.1	Buidseat 2011/12	4
1.c.2	Coileanaidhean is atharrachaidhean mòra a thaobh sgioba-obrach, a thaobh cleachdadh is leasachadh.	5
1.c.3	Atharrachaidhean a thaobh rèiteachaidhean ionmhasail is seilbhean mòra	6
1.c.4	Pròiseactan Èifeachdais Cudromach (air an tòiseachadh is an dùil)	7
1.c.5	Buaidh is Goireasachadh Leasachaidhean Comasaichte le TFC	8
1.d	Prògram Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd, Aonta na Buile Singilte, Prìomhachasan Riaghlaidh Reachdail is Corporra	9
1.d.1	Prògram Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd	9
1.d.2	Riaghaltas na h-Alba is Àrd-riaghaltas	9
1.d.3	Riaghaltas-D	11
1.d.4	Audit Scotland agus Coimisean nan Cunntasan	11
1.d.5	Buidhnean Eile	12
1.d.6	A' Chomhairle, na Buill Thaghte agus Comataidhean	12
1.d.7	Suirbhidh Luchd-obrach	12
1.d.8	Plana Gàidhlig	13
1.d.9	Plana-gnìomha an t-Seacaidh	13
1.d.10	Plana Leasachadh Feabhas Luach (BV2)	15
1.e	Sgrùdadh air Coileanadh is Adhartas	16
1.e.1	Prìomhachasan Leasachaidh Seirbheis (SIP) 2010/11 – Sgrùdadh air Coileanadh	16
1.e.2	Adhartas an aghaidh Comharran Coileanaidh Reachdail Coimisean nan Cunntasan	22
1.e.3	Adhartas an aghaidh Ceumannan Coileanaidh eile	23
1.f	Cunnartan Àrda	24
Earrann 2	Amasan is Gnìomhan	25
2.a	Dealasan Prògraim gan stùireadh le Seirbheis an Ionmhais	25
2.b	Cuspairean Corporra is Prìomhachasan Leasachaidh Seirbheis 2011/12	29

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 2011-2012 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.

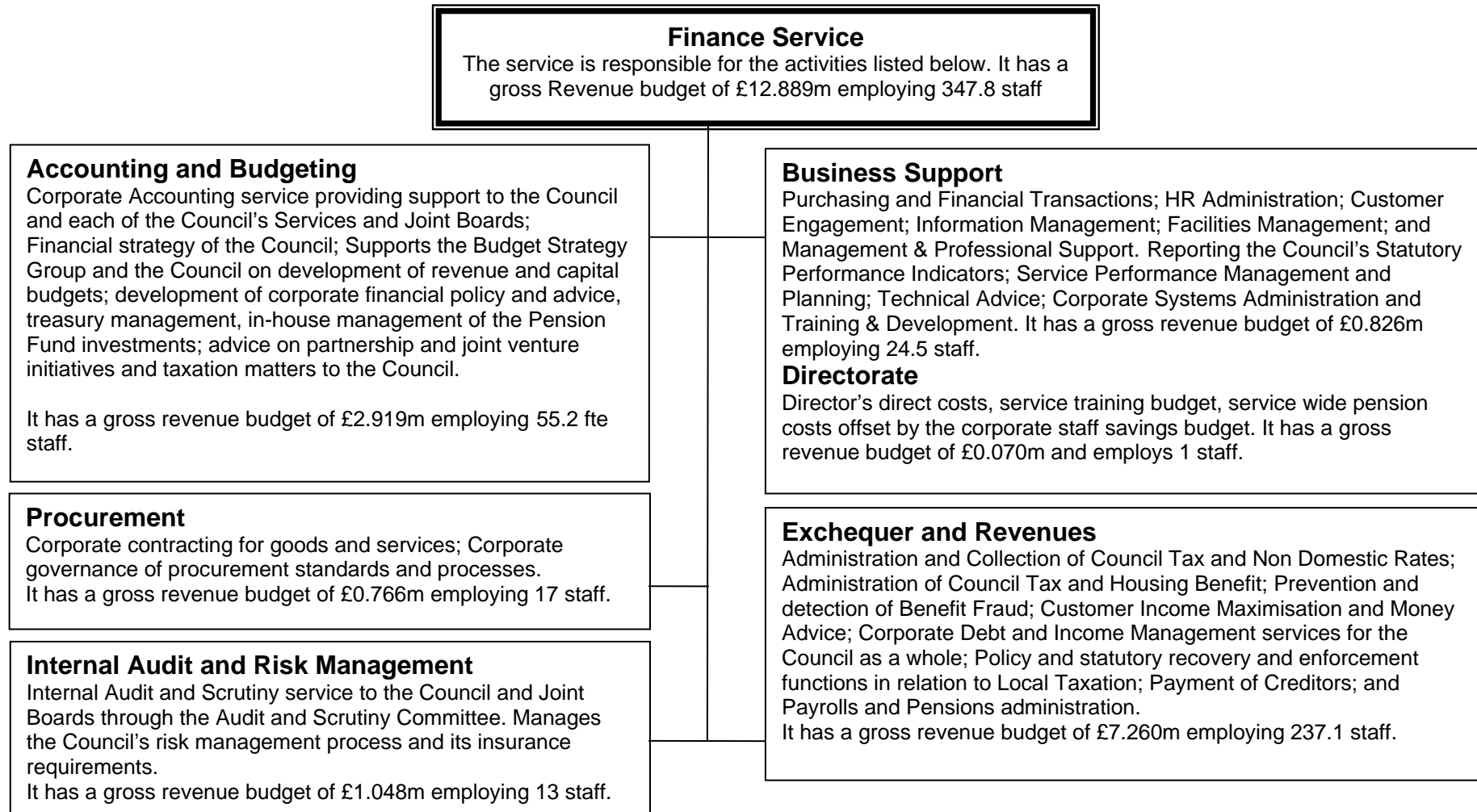
The Service bills and collects water and wastewater charges on behalf of Scottish Water, along with Council Tax, and manages the Council’s Consolidated Procurement Service.

The Service also provides Business Support services across the Council. Business Support is: Purchasing and Financial Transactions; HR Administration; Customer Engagement; Information Management; Facilities Management; and Management & Professional Support.

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 five sections, Accounting and Budgeting; Business Support; Corporate Finance; Exchequer and Revenues; Internal Audit and Risk Management, and Procurement.



1.c Resources

1.c Stòrasan

1.c.1 2011/12 Budget

1.c.1 Buidseat 2011/12

Financial Year	Net Revenue Budget (£m)
2011/12	12.889

Breakdown of 2011/12 Budget

By Section

Section	2011/12	
	Net Budget (£m)	% of Budget
Accounting and Budgeting	2.919	22.65
Business Support	0.826	6.41
Directorate	0.070	0.54
Exchequer and Revenues	7.260	56.33
Internal Audit and Risk Management	1.048	8.13
Procurement	0.766	5.94
Total	12.889	100.00

By Staff and Other Costs

Cost	2011/12	
	Net Budget (£m)	% of Budget
Staff costs	10.988	85.3
Other costs	1.901	14.7
Total costs	12.889	100.0
Income	6.058	47.0
Net budget	6.831	53.0

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 third successive year, the Finance Service has met the Council's target of 90% to respond to complaints within 10 days. Performance achieved in 2010/11 was 93% of complaints responded to within 10 days, with the average days to respond being 5.4 days.

Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit Administration

The steady improvement trend in Council Tax and Benefits Administration performance continues. This is measured by the Department for Work and Pensions by means of their Right Time Indicator. The figure for 2010/11 was 13 days, down from 19 days in 2009/10.

Improved efficiency has meant that Exchequer and Revenues staff have been able to cope with increased volumes attributable to the economic downturn.

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. A reduction in counter payments and an increase in Internet payments of 17% have allowed 1FTE resource to be redirected to more pro-active recovery work.

Despite dealing with higher levels of debts, the average days' sundry debt outstanding has reduced from 77.2 days to 67.5 days from date of issue and the actual debt percentage collected has improved from 84.0% to 85.3%.

£229k was generated, against a target of £201k, through increased direct deductions from on-going benefit, reduced borrowings and additional Court income.

Non Domestic Rates Performance

The in-year collection rate for 2010/11 improved by 0.45% to 97.37% from prior year comparison (96.92%). Promotion of the Small Business Bonus Scheme has increased take-up.

Payroll

Work continues on processing of arrears for successful Job Evaluation appeals.

Electronic notification of starters/leavers/contractual changes has been introduced and the Service is making an on-going contribution to the integrated Human Resources and Payroll project.

Pensions

Work continues processing pension benefits supporting the Councils workforce management programme, and historic data is being converted to scanned images on Pension system.

There is input to the Council's Flexible Working Policy and amended Voluntary Severance Scheme.

Payment of Creditors

The number of BACS processing runs each week has been increased from 1 to 3 which contributes to the Council's improved performance for the number of invoices paid within 30 days (89.2% for 2010/11).

Procurement

Savings in excess of £6m will have been delivered between financial years 2003/04 and 2010/11. External assessment of the Council's procurement capability has shown a clear improvement between 2008/09 and 2010/11.

Response to Economic Downturn

During 2010/11 the Customer Income Maximisation Team increased the amount of confirmed financial gain for customers by 23% to £1.7m. Synergies from close and effective working with the Money Advice Team, also under Exchequer and Revenues management, meant that 921 Money Advice customer contacts (823 contacts 2009/10) involving a 38% increase in client debt of £7.979m could be dealt with. The percentage of clients with income less than or equal to £10k fell from 58% in Quarter 1, 2010 to 43% for the same period this year.

Year-end accounts

The Council's and Joint Boards Year End Accounts were successfully completed on time in accordance with the newly introduced International Financial Reporting Standards.

Capital Programme

A revised Capital Programme was agreed by the Council following the introduction of a corporate system of assessment and appraisal.

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;

- A new system of options appraisals and prioritisation was introduced for capital projects.
- A successful expenditure mapping exercise in partnership with NHS Highland was completed for social care costs.
- Electronic Banking facilities were introduced in April 2010 and continue to be developed.

1.c.4 Significant Efficiency Projects (started and due)

1.c.4 Pròiseactan Èifeachdais Cudromach (air an tòiseachadh is an dùil)

Use of Technology

Within Exchequer and Revenues, 2010/11 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 Money Advice Casework System (MACS) continues to be configured as a casework system for the Customer Income Maximisation Team thereby avoiding the cost of a new IT system.

The pilot arrangement at Inverness Service Point which involved scanning customer documentation at point of receipt proved highly successful. Work is on-going to further improve the scanning process to enable the scanned documents to be transferred to the Finance Service’s Civica ECDM system for indexing. This will bring about many benefits including further improvements in processing times within Exchequer and Revenues.

1.c.5 Impact and Resourcing of ICT Enabled Developments

1.c.5 Buidh is Goireasachadh Leasachaidhean Comasaichte le TFC

Note: No. * – This is the Finance Service Improvement Priority number from Pages 29 — 32

No. *	Finance Service Target	Impact Assessment	Funding source	Anticipated Costs 2011/12
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
5.10	Continue to implement a workflow process in Pensions.	Improve the allocation and monitoring of routine tasks and the document storage process.	Service Budget	£8k
5.17	Investigate, and if appropriate, implement First Debtors module of Revs and Bens for recovery of overpaid benefit.	Increased recovery of overpayments	Service budget	£tbc
5.19	Implement Corporate Arrears Recovery System (CARS).	Improved collection rates.	Service budget	£tbc

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

During 2010/2011 responses were prepared by Exchequer and Revenues to the Government's Welfare Reform Bill, which will have major implications for future delivery of Benefits services to local customers. The Council also volunteered to provide evidence via COSLA to the House of Commons Committee, by way of a pilot study of the potential consequences for customers, the Council and its staff of the proposed changes.

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.

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.

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 obliges Councils to provide government, on request, reports which must contain information relating to how -

- (a) procurement policies of relevant public bodies; and
- (b) procurement activity by relevant public bodies,

have contributed to compliance with climate change duties

Major procurement projects within the Head of Procurement's remit are now assessed in accordance with the Act and other aspects of the Government's Sustainable Procurement Action Plan and these requirements taken into account at all stages.

A Settlement and Distribution Group was established in 2010 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 represents the Council on the group which deals with any concerns regarding distribution issues. The 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 2011–2012 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 on-going reductions in funding. 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 resulting in nine projects being taken forward within the Corporate Improvement Programme (CIP):

- Asset Management
- Income Generation
- Procurement
- Business Support (includes 3 projects: Business Support; Human Resources and Information Management
- Customer Engagement
- Mobile & Flexible Working
- Transport

This programme recognises the need to adopt a robust, comprehensive and systematic approach to deliver efficiencies into the future and to support the CIP to meet its savings target in excess of £17m.

It represents a major council-wide initiative focused on a transformation agenda with the ultimate objectives of improving:

- Customer satisfaction
- Stakeholder satisfaction
- Efficiency

Finance Service staff are involved at both Board and working group levels and progress reports on the CIP are presented to Resources Committee. The Depute Chief Executive & Director of Finance is the Project Executive for the Business Support project.

Flowing from the Concordat between Scottish and Local Government is the Single Outcome Agreement. The SOA requires the Council to ensure that's its financial plans are aligned with both the Council's and the Government priorities.

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

Work was carried out during 2010/11 to enable a successful implementation from April 2011 of the Council's new Corporate Payments Strategy. Staff from Exchequer and Revenues and the Chief Executive's Service worked closely together to introduce a move away from manual transactions, cash and cheques towards more efficient electronic methods of payment. Customers now have increased flexibility in terms of when and where they can make payments to the Council.

Procurement continues to use 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.oqc.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 2009/10 accounts was completed on 30 September 2010.

Audit Scotland completed Highland Council's second Best Value audit with the "very positive" final report published in June 2010.

The Highland Council is committed to making effective use of self-assessment with the intention that this leads to a reduction in overall scrutiny. The Highland Council's new Performance and Risk Management system will 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 therefore resulted in increased cost information required from and by Services. The 2009/10 SPIs report to The Highland Council on 9 September 2010 included the new local performance indicators as Appendix 2.

During 2010/11, a number of benchmarking exercises were undertaken including being an active participant within CIPFA's Benchmarking Clubs. The final reports have provided

some very useful comparative information. The report on Internal Audit was reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 7 April 2011.

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://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Procurement/about/Review/reform-board> is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment. 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 Best Practice Indicators:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Procurement/BPIs/bpi> and the Procurement Capability Assessment:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Procurement/buyer-information/pca>

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.

1.d.7 Employee Survey

1.d.7 Suirbhidh Luchd-obrach

The fifth Employee Survey was completed in March 2010 with results reported to 9 June 2010 Resources Committee.

Improvement Actions at a Council level were reported to 18 August 2010 Resources Committee. Improvement Actions at a Finance Service level were reported to 5 October 2010 Resources Committee.

A response rate of 81% from Finance Service staff was achieved exceeding the previous survey in 2007 of 79%. Similar to 2007, service analysis was undertaken and results at both Council and Service level shared with staff.

Many results showed a marked improvement on 2007 and, overall, the 2010 Survey results were the most positive of all the 5 Employee Surveys undertaken to date (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2010).

Following the inaugural Annual Finance Service Staff briefings in 2009/10, the Depute Chief Executive & Director of Finance delivered a further series of Annual Briefings to staff at locations across the Highlands during 2010/11.

1.d.8 Gaelic Language Plan

1.d.8 Plana Gàidhlig

The Finance Service will fulfil its 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.

1.d.9 Recession Action

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 2010/11
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: Delivery of the 2009/10 £72.377m Capital Programme including accelerated £6m spend from 2010/11 including on the Council's interim programme of c£80m.
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 Town Centre Regeneration Funding was utilised to supplement the capital programme for town centre 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 relevant schemes from energy advisors Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased funding to £1m on extending advice provision where there are emerging pressures, specialist employment and housing advice, volunteer recruitment and development resulting in a 12% increase in the number of contacts to the Council during 2010/11. While there was a slight decline in the number of contacts to the CAB money advice teams, cases are increasingly more complex. Council supported CAB and independent providers provided general and welfare advice to 34,598 customer contacts for 2010/11 and the Council's in-house Customer Income Maximisation team for 2010/11 gained in excess of £1.7m for clients. In-kind support for the expansion of the HI-Scot Credit Union to Highland on 1 November 2010 including agreement to invest £250k in a loan fund specifically targeted at individuals who are financially excluded and who are normally unable to access credit.
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. A further roadshow is being planned. Uptake of the 2010 roadshows was largely 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 2010/11, 68% of payments were made within 10 days. This compares with 54% in 2009/10.
Proactively promote the Small Business Bonus Scheme (SBBS) Update: The Procurement section is closely involved with Business Gateway and the Highland economic Development Forum, looking at ways of increasing involvement of local and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) businesses. Highland had the highest SBBS take up rate in Scotland during 2009/10. Statistical data not yet available for 2010/11. Review of all existing claims for Small Business Bonus Relief completed. SBBS promoted at all opportunities. Proactive approach taken to identify potential entitlements and action taken to invite applications

1.d.10 Best Value Improvement Plan (BV2)
1.d.10 Plana Leasachadh Feabhas Luach (BV2)

<p>Improvement area</p> <p>2. Demonstrating Value For Money (VFM) Improve performance management capacity (not clear if performance management activities trigger reviews)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have effective and consistent mechanisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to test value for money - to provide robust and challenged options appraisal - Improve communication with the public specifically on demonstrating value for money in activities / the way services are delivered and explaining the choices made. - Review how difficult decisions <i>are communicated to public, staff and media (SE)</i>
<p>Current action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SMT agreed approach to development of VFM indicators (May 2010). VFM service specific indicators developed (October 2010). - Options appraisal for capital projects (2 x 5 year phases). - Include in public performance reporting - Report on results from the public consultation on budget savings - <i>The Council has developed a range of internal cost based indicators which over time will test value for money and demonstrate continuous improvement</i> - <i>The development of a new capital programme process involves options appraisals and assessments being applied to all projects</i> - <i>The Council undertook a full options appraisal exercise in respect of the proposed construction of 5 new Care Homes</i>
<p>5 (a) Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To progress as a matter of urgency its review of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pay, - terms and conditions including continuing legacy issues from former district and regional council structures (bonus schemes, working hours, leave entitlement).
<p>Current action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New pay structure was implemented w.e.f. 1 April 2008 - Collective agreement reached with trade unions on terms and conditions
<p>8. Project – Caithness Heat and Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council has considered the final report from the Accounts Commission and an action plan has been developed and implemented
<p>Current action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement actions arising from audit report to be implemented with a progress report to Highland Council. - The Council was unable to award a contract to allow continuation of the initiative and is now considering the re-instatement of a more conventional energy solution

1.e Review of Performance and Progress

1.e Sgrùdadh air Coileanadh is Adhartas

1.e.1 Service Improvement Priorities (SIP) 2010/11 – Review of Performance as at 31 March 2011.

1.e.1 Prìomhachasan Leasachaidh Seirbheis (SIP) 2010/11 – Sgrùdadh air Coileanadh mar aig 31 Màrt 2011.

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	50
M	Mixed performance – positive and negative movement in indicators	6
X	Commitment not met	0
	Total	56

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 **Further streamline processes by rolling out Civica ECDM access to Service Point and Service Centre.** ✓
Complete.
- 2.2 **Develop payment strategy for Council including E-Payments.** ✓
Strategy complete and approved by Committee in June 2010.
- 2.3 **Develop social care expenditure mapping to assist the implementation of the Scottish Government’s Integrated Resource Framework (IRF).** ✓
Completed.

What we will do for the economy (The Programme theme 3)

Na nì sinn airson na h-eaconamaidh (Cuspair prògram 3)

- 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.** ✓
Development activities cyclic and on-going.
- 3.2 **Review applications for NDR Small Business Bonus Scheme with a view to encouraging maximum take-up.** ✓
Completed.
- 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.** ✓
Complete, and reviewed as and when required.

- 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.** ✓
Completed and on-going.
- 3.5 Develop the long term procurement plans based on both Corporate and Service specific expert knowledge.** ✓
Completed for 2011/12 to 2014/15.
- 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.** ✓
Commenced with Legal Services.

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.** ✓
A financial management training programme has been developed and delivered to Members
- 5.2a Design and maintain IT System Development Plans for Finance Service owned IT systems.** ✓
Complete and on-going.
- 5.2b The eProcurement Scotland Service is in phase 2 of its consultation process with a view to commencing re-tendering in April 2010.** M
Re-procurement has commenced but new systems are unlikely to be available until late 2011.
- 5.3 Continue to extend range of Finance Service information available on the intranet and internet.** ✓
Increased availability and access to information. On-going.
- 5.4 Agree and progress improvement actions arising from 2010 MORI staff survey.** ✓
Complete.
- 5.5 Design and maintain dedicated Finance Service web pages on the Council's Internet.** ✓
Being maintained, with commitment to on-going improvements wherever possible.
- 5.6 Continue to improve the quality and promptness of responses to Complaints and Freedom of Information requests.** ✓
Improvements evident including quality of responses.
- 5.7 Update e-Learning Focus on Fraud Awareness system and roll-out to Service Centre and Service Point staff.** ✓
Complete.

- 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.** ✓
Complete.
- 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.** ✓
The Council continues to be represented on the Settlement and Distribution Group and the Data Issues Working Group. Work on the issues arising from the 2011/12 settlement are on the agenda.
- 5.10 Maintain ICT Business Continuity Plans in accordance with the requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.** ✓
On-going.
- 5.11 Review the Financial Monitoring Process.** ✓
Monitoring meetings for Services have been undertaken. Further review will be undertaken when the future structural arrangements are known.
- 5.12 Rationalise the number of payrolls following the introduction of Job Evaluation.** ✓
Timing of any rationalisation will be determined by new terms and conditions arrangements and completion of job evaluation process.
- 5.13 Implement work flow processes in Pensions.** ✓
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 and staffing compliment returns to normal.
- 5.14 Lead the identification and collation of financial and activity data required to meet Council's Best Value / Value for Money reporting obligations.** ✓
Indicators submitted to Council on the 9 September 2010 as part of the Council's overall 2009/10 SPI report.
- 5.15 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 2009/10 reported to Highland Council committee in June 2010 – Efficiency target met.
AES reported to June 2011 Full Council meeting.
- 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) on-going scrutiny meetings with Services.** ✓
Revenue Budget for 2011/12 agreed by Council 10 February 2011 together with a total package of proposals which largely closed the remaining funding gap for 2012/13. Work with Members on further savings proposals (c£3m) for 2012/13 will commence in early summer.

- 5.17 Produce rolling five-year capital programmes, based on consideration and approval of Outline Business Cases (OBC) for projects for prioritisation purposes.** ✓
Capital Programme agreed by Member in May 2011.and is fixed for 3 years with an indicative programme agreed for a further 3 years.
- 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)).** ✓
Revenue budget for Strengthening the Highlands, and Directors have also been asked for assurance statements relating to the impact of the budget on the settlement package/single outcome agreement.
In relation to capital, the new capital project appraisal/OBC process introduced to support the programme agreed in June 2010, has at it its core the Corporate Priorities/Strengthening the Highlands implications of individual projects.
- 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.** ✓
2010 CIPFA Benchmarking Clubs completed. Accounting, Payroll, Pensions, Creditors, Audit, Insurance and Risk Management.
Procurement benchmarked via Procurement Capability Assessment with Corporate Finance via Scotland's Treasury Management Group.
Council Tax, Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit report completed following review of Highland and Moray Councils. Business opportunities identified and being progressed under leadership of Head of Exchequer and Revenues at Highland.
Outcomes of Internal Audit Benchmarking report reported to Audit and Scrutiny Committee in April 2011.
- 5.20 Implement paperless Direct Debit facilities.** ✓
Complete.
- 5.21 Implement Direct Debit for Special Arrangements for payment of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates arrears.** ✓
Testing on-going.
- 5.22 Continue to explore shared service opportunities.** ✓
On-going.
- 5.23 Continue developing Electronic banking facilities.** ✓
Complete.
- 5.24 Increase by 20% the percentage of Housing Benefit payments by BACS.** ✓
Increased from 1.74% in quarter one of 2009/10 to 53.45% in 2010/11.
- 5.25 Implement single application form for Council entitlements with a view to limiting the number of assessments undertaken.** ✓
On-going. Timetable to be developed.

5.26	Investigate, and if appropriate, implement First Debtors system for overpaid Housing Benefit. Business case being worked on.	✓
5.27	Investigate, and if appropriate, implement an IT solution in the administration of levies relating to Business Improvement Districts (BID). On-going discussions with ICT Services.	M
5.28	Implement findings of Oracle Accounts Receivable consultant's review. On-going.	M
5.29	Improve the Council Tax collection rate. Outturn 2010/11 95.4%, an improvement on prior year.	✓
5.30	Implement Corporate Arrears Recovery System (CARS). Procurement in progress.	M
5.31	Deliver actions to increase effectiveness and efficiency as set out in the Exchequer Operational Business Plan. On-going.	✓
5.32	Deliver appropriate actions from the Process Improvement Plan for Benefits Administration, developed in partnership with Department for Work and Pensions. On-going.	✓
5.33	Consult on, and implement as appropriate, "Collection of Payments" Strategy. Complete and on-going.	✓
5.34	Review of Financial Regulations to be agreed by Audit & Scrutiny Committee in August 2010. Review of Regulations complete and approved by Audit and Scrutiny Committee in August 2010 and the Council in September 2010.	✓
5.35 (i)	Implement the Council's new Performance and Risk Management system. In respect of performance management within the Finance Service. Performance and Risk Management system content continues to be loaded. All SPI data fully loaded for prior years.	M
5.35 (ii)	Implement the Council's new Performance and Risk Management system In respect of risk, Council-wide. Performance and Risk Management system in the process of being implemented. Additional training being delivered.	M
5.36	Address the implementation of Operational Risk Management throughout the Council. Requested all Services to develop and maintain Risk Management at Operational level.	✓

- 5.37 Review the Council's Risk Management Strategy.** ✓
Revised Strategy drafted and agreed by Council's Senior Management Team, and presented to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in June 2011.
- 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.** ✓
The scope of this review has been expanded and is now substantially completed.
- 5.39 Revise the Internal Audit Section's Employee Development Programme (EDP) to ensure it continues to reflect the on-going training requirements of the Section and meets the recommendations from the CIPFA guidance "The Excellent Internal Auditor".** ✓
Complete.
- 5.40 Review the format of Internal Audit reports, particularly with regard to the provision of a clear audit opinion.** ✓
Complete.
- 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.** ✓
Completed
- 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.** ✓
On-going.
- 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 on-going development.** ✓
On-going.
- 5.44 Deliver Procurement training courses.** ✓
Complete (2010/11).
- 5.45 Consult with Personnel and Unions regarding payroll matching for Council Tax collection.** ✓
Complete.

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 2010/11 performance will not be available until September 2011. The rankings will not be available until January 2012.

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	07/08	08/09	09/10	Rank 09/10
1	Population of local authority area	215,310	217,440	220,490	
4	The gross administration cost per benefits case	—	—	£57.96	22
	Average rent rebate caseload			8,656	
	Weighted rent rebate caseload			13,071	
	Average private rented sector caseload			1,556	
	Weighted private rented sector caseload			3,314	
	Average registered social landlord caseload			4,584	
	Weighted registered social landlord caseload			9,168	
	Average council tax benefit caseload			19,263	
	Weighted Council Tax Benefit caseload			29,280	
	Gross cost of providing the service			£3,178,158	
2	Cost of collecting council tax per dwelling	£18.61	£14.84	£14.80	20
	Cost of collecting council tax	£2,036,655	£1,637,831	£1,638,672	
	Number of dwellings	109,463	110,377	110,685	
	Income received from council tax summary warrants	£156,596	£161,849	£165,533	
3 a)	Income due from council tax for the year excluding reliefs and rebates	£93,748,162	£95,412,393	£96,094,356	
	Income due from council tax for the year excluding all water charges and outstanding council tax	£121,649,087	£123,521,678	£123,816,024	
	Reliefs and rebates due to council for council tax for the year	£27,900,925	£28,109,285	£27,721,668	
3 b)	Percentage of income due from council tax for the year that was received by the end of the year	95.5%	95.3%	95.0%	15
	Income received from council tax for the year	£89,543,798	£90,908,846	£90,908,846	
4	Number of invoices sampled	278,747	280,257	255,324	
	Number of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days	233,869	241,850	225,172	
	Percentage of invoices sampled paid within 30 days	83.9%	86.3%	88.2%	16

SPI1: 2009/10 Finance Service Local Performance Indicators

LPI 15	Audit - cost of audit per £1 million of net expenditure	£404.52
LPI 16	Insurance - cost per claim processed	£76.00
LPI 17	Creditors - unit cost per creditor invoice issued	£1.28
LPI 18	Payroll - cost per payslip produced	£3.26
LPI 19	Pensions - cost per member	£18.90
LPI 20	Accounting - cost of Accounting as a percentage of Net Revenue Budget + HRA	0.33%
LPI 21	Accounting - cost of completing the Annual Accounts	£114,048
LPI 22a	Exchequer - cost of NDR collection (per chargeable property)	£26.89
LPI 22b	Exchequer - % NDR collected by year end	96.90%
LPI 23a	Exchequer - cost of sundry debtors (per debtors account issued)	£5.47
LPI 23b	Exchequer - % income for sundry debtors collected during the year	85.30%
LPI 24	Corporate Finance - cost of Corporate Finance as % of Net Revenue Budget + HRA	0.09%
LPI 25	Procurement – cost of Procurement Section as % of Net Revenue Budget + HRA	0.11%

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 2009/10. 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 18 April 2011.

Corporate Risk:

Owner: Head of Accounting and Budgeting

Risk No.	CCC32	Likelihood	B II	SIP ref	n/a
The Council must manage current and future pressures and commitments and public and elected members' expectations on service delivery within a climate of reducing available resources.					
Update: The Council's budget process for 2012/13 is now underway.					

Service Risks:

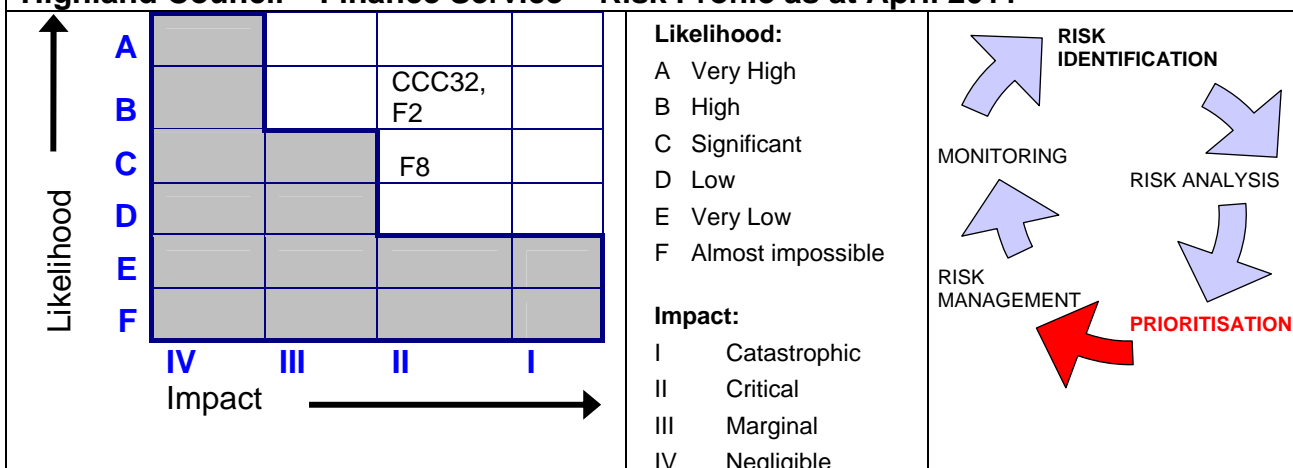
Owner: Head of Accounting and Budgeting

Risk No.	F8	Likelihood	CII	SIP ref	n/a
The Council's Balances at risk from non-delivery of savings or unidentified pressures					
Update: The Council has initiated a significant public Budget Consultation exercise to gauge public views on ways to address the budget challenge faced. Separately, budget scrutiny meetings with Services are on-going to ensure they are taking steps to identify and take forward options for addressing increased savings requirements in 2010/11 and the projected budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13. The Council is promoting a strong efficiency agenda across Services, has a Corporate Improvement Programme running with nine initiatives to generate operational savings and is actively participating in the Government's Shared Services agenda across a number of activities.					

Owner: Head of Exchequer and Revenues

Risk No.	F2	Likelihood	B II	SIP ref	n/a
Impact on staff and customers of Welfare Reform Agenda					
Update: Welfare Reform Bill now being scrutinised in House of Lords. Local impact not yet clear, although radical changes are in prospect, which will affect both service delivery for customers and work of Operations staff within Finance Service.					

Highland Council – Finance Service – Risk Profile as at April 2011



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 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		Complete
4.2	Relevant documentation reviewed to ensure compliance with Gaelic Language Plan.		March 2012

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. • Complete sustainability impact assessments on all categories of the Council's external spending reflecting the national approach to analysis and report results to Council by end of 2011. 		
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 December 2010 and passed to CEO.		June 2011
F1.2	Supplier development events for 2010/11 are complete: improvement plans will now be drawn up.		June 2011
F1.3	Adoption of fully corporate approach to procurement, and of national, sectoral, and local joint working on procurement is in development. This is likely to be a long term project over the period of the procurement strategy to 2015.		October 2011
F1.4	Assessment of sustainability/community benefits aspects of procurement projects is now underway.		September 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:	Head Accounting and Budgeting	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):	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.		Annually July

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 and Risk Management system, an electronic system to record and monitor risk.		May 2011
5.2	Address the implementation of Strategic Operational Risk Management throughout the Council. Dependent on 5.1 being implemented.		July 2011
5.3	Review of corporate risks through Senior Management Team.		March 2011
5.4	A six monthly review of corporate risks by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.		June 2011

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 and Budgeting	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) A further £100,000 to promote benefit uptake across the Highlands was committed in 2009/10. 		
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 and Budgeting	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 2012
CP2.04b	Reduce the average number of days per case to process change events HB/CTB claims.		March 2012

MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT		
Service I.D.	5.02	
Programme Commitment:	We will bring the Council's budget in on target for the financial year 2011/12 and ensure that a balanced budget is achieved in 2012/13, and that preparations are put in place for sound financial management for future years.	
Council Programme Ref:	5.01b	
Lead Officer:	Head of Accounting and Budgeting	
Resource:		
Key Performance Results:	Actual expenditure total to be within 3% of the budget target	
Risk:	Expenditure in excess of 3% of the budget target will exceed the level of available non earmarked balances	
Enabling Actions		Review Date:
CP5.02a	Monthly expenditure monitoring will be undertaken with corrective actions reported to Committee where necessary. Indicative budget and savings proposals already agreed for 2012/13.	March 2012

2.b Corporate Themes and Service Improvement Priorities 2011/12

2.b Cuspairean Corporra is Prìomhachasan Leasachaidh Seirbheis 2011/12

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 ECDM access to Service Points.	March 2012
2.2	Deliver training for Civica ECDM access to additional staff in Service Point and Service Centre.	December 2011

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.	December 2011
3.2	Assist partner agencies to write Sustainable Procurement Policy. Agree shared procurement plans, specifications and evaluation criteria that make full use of new legal rights.	On-going and by March 2012
3.3	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.	March 2012
3.4	Develop the long term procurement plans based on both Corporate and Service specific expert knowledge.	March 2012
3.5	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.	March 2012

Corporate Theme 4: The Environment

Cuspair Corporra 4: An Àrainneachd

	What we will do	Outcome target
4.1	Improve the Council's approach to the reporting of procurement projects as per the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, including environmental impact assessments.	March 2012

- | | | |
|-----|---|------------|
| 4.2 | Investigate feasibility of E-billing to reduce print and postage costs for Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and other relevant elements of service delivery. | March 2013 |
| 4.3 | Investigate feasibility of online self-service implementation for Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and other relevant elements of service delivery. | March 2013 |

Corporate Theme 5: Effective and Efficient Council
Cuspair Corporra 5: Comhairle Éifeachdach 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.	March 2012
5.2 Design and maintain IT System Development Plans in respect of Oracle system, (restructuring within Accounting required).	March 2012
5.3 The eProcurement Scotland Service is in phase 2 of its consultation process with a view to commencing re-tendering in April 2010.	December 2011
5.4 Continue to extend range of Finance Service information available on the intranet and internet.	March 2011.
5.5 Implement the new Business Support structure.	July 2012
5.6 Continue to improve the quality and promptness of responses to Complaints and Freedom of Information requests.	March 2012
5.7 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.	March 2012
5.8 Maintain ICT Business Continuity Plans in accordance with the requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.	March 2012
5.9 Rationalise the number of payrolls following the introduction of Job Evaluation. (Dependent on on-going Trade Union negotiation led by Chief Executive Service).	March 2013
5.10 Continue to implement work flow processes in Pensions.	March 2013
5.11 Review the financial management and monitoring arrangements for the Capital Programme following agreement to a fixed 3 three year programme.	September 2011

	What we will do	Outcome target
5.12	Produce rolling five-year capital programmes, based on consideration and approval of Outline Business Cases (OBC) for projects for prioritisation purposes.	May 2011
5.13	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)).	March 2012
5.14	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.	March 2012
5.15	Implement Direct Debit for Special Arrangements for payment of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates arrears.	August 2011
5.16	Continue to explore shared service opportunities.	March 2012
5.17	Investigate, and if appropriate, implement First Debtors system for overpaid Housing Benefit.	March 2012
5.18	Seek to improve the Council Tax collection rate.	March 2012
5.19	Implement Corporate Arrears Recovery System (CARS).	March 2012
5.20	Deliver actions to increase effectiveness and efficiency as set out in the Exchequer Operational Business Plan.	March 2012
5.21	Deliver remaining actions from the Process Improvement Plan for Benefits Administration, developed in partnership with Department for Work and Pensions.	March 2012
5.22	Consult on, and implement as appropriate, "Collection of Payments" Strategy for residual income streams.	September 2011
5.23	Undertake a review of Financial Regulations.	August 2011
5.24	Compile an e-training solution to deliver Financial Regulations training to officers.	August 2011
5.25a	Implement the Council's Performance and Risk Management system. In respect of performance management within the Finance Service.	September 2011
5.25b	In respect of risk, Council-wide.	October 2011
5.26	Implement the Council's Risk Management Strategy presented to Audit & Scrutiny Committee in June 2011.	October 2011

	What we will do	Outcome target
5.27	Complete a PSIF review of Internal Audit and Risk Management.	September 2011
5.28	Following the move to a new version of Galileo (Audit Management System), provide training and update the User Manual to ensure the system is used consistently and efficiently.	December 2011
5.29	Revise the format of Internal Audit reports, particularly with regard to the provision of a clear audit opinion.	September 2011
5.30	Deliver Audit Committee training to Members of the Audit & Scrutiny.	August 2012
5.31	Revise and improve the Annual Internal Audit report and Statement on Internal Control.	March 2012
5.32	Implement the improvement actions arising from the initial CIPFA benchmarking review (2010) of Internal Audit, particularly with regard to the CIPFA Code of Practice on Internal Audit.	August 2011
5.33	Continue to take part and act upon any areas identified during annual CIPFA benchmarking of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management.	On-going
5.34	Tender for the provision of the Council's insurance requirements for 2012 to 2017 after considering the benchmarking data gathered from the CIPFA benchmarking exercise, particularly regarding the level of excesses.	March 2012
5.35	Appropriate compliance with the recommendations, applicable to local authorities, of the McClelland report. Assessed as compliant December 2010, will be reassessed November 2011 and aim to show improvements between assessments.	March 2012
5.36	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 on-going development.	March 2012
5.37	Deliver Procurement training courses.	March 2012
5.38	Fully implement DWPs "ATLAS" system (Automated notification of entitlements)	October 2011

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:

**Manaidsear Coileanaidh & Inntleachd Ghnothachais
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