

Agenda Item	6.
Report No	CP/7/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 22 May 2025

Report Title: Environmental Health Performance 2024/25 and Operational Plan 2025/26

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the Environmental Health Operational Plan, describing the range of proactive and reactive work involved.
- 1.2 The plan details the objectives for the whole of the Environmental Health team and is published to provide Councillors, members of the public and businesses with information on the services provided by the team.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
 - i. **Note** the Environmental Health performance in 24/25 to date including delivering statutory duties to over 6000 properties on private water supplies, over 5000 food businesses, and receiving over 13,500 service requests on a wide range of public health, nuisance, licensing, safety, dog control, animal health and incivility issues; and
 - ii. **Consider** and **approve** the Environmental Health Operational Plan to 31 March 2026 as detailed in Appendix 1.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - As reported previously to Committee, the resources available to Environmental Health have to be prioritised, focusing on areas of greatest public health significance.
- 3.2 **Legal** - As a regulatory service the Environmental Health team have a wide range of statutory duties. The team have an Enforcement Policy in place and officers follow the five principles of better regulation: regulation should be transparent, accountable, consistent, proportionate and targeted.

- 3.3 **Risk** - The pressures on the environmental health profession and challenges in workforce planning have been noted by COSLA and the Scottish Government. Work is ongoing with the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) and the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland (SoCOEHS) to increase resilience of the service and a sustainable workforce.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are no Health and Safety risk implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is a monitoring and update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

- 5.1 The Environmental Health's operational plan aims to provide Members with information on the objectives for the whole of the Environmental Health function in detail. The report is also published to provide members of the public and businesses with background information on this key service.
- 5.2 Environmental Health carries out a wide range of statutory duties on behalf of the Council with the general remit to protect and improve public health. This includes:-
- a) Public Health Protection which includes communicable disease investigation (e.g. Food-borne / waterborne disease, Covid19 and legionnaires Disease), private water supplies, statutory nuisances (e.g. foul odours, accumulations, premises in a poor state), smoking in public places, radon, airport and seaport health;
 - b) Food Safety enforcement and advisory role, covering food hygiene inspections & complaints, food labelling, food export certification and food import checks;
 - c) Health and Safety including regulatory role in Local Authority enforced premises, accident at work investigations, conducting interventions in accordance with HSE priorities, providing business advice and undertaking complaint investigations;

- d) Private Sector Housing including sub-standard housing, improvement and repairs grants, closing and demolition orders, Houses in Multiple Occupation and housing defects;
- e) Pollution Control which includes Noise Control and local Air Quality management;
- f) Contaminated Land covering the regulatory role for contaminated land prevention through development control, advisory role to other Council services on asset transfer and development;
- g) Animal Health & Welfare which can include dealing with Rabies control, Foot & Mouth disease, Anthrax, Avian Influenza and Bluetongue;
- h) Licensing duties which include a consultee and general enforcement role for activities licensed under the Civic Government legislation, which includes Public Entertainment, Street Traders; Market Operators, Boat Hire; Skin Piercing and the licensing of short term lets. The team also undertake the administrative and enforcement role for licensing of caravan sites, venison dealers, animal boarding establishments, zoos, cinemas, riding establishments, sports grounds, dangerous wild animals, pet selling, operating certain animal welfare establishments (including rehoming centres and animal sanctuaries), engaging in other animal rehoming activities and dog, cat and rabbit breeding;
- i) Dog Control, Pest Control, Dog Fouling, Litter education & enforcement, fly-tipping, waste duty of care, abandoned vehicles.

6 Environmental Health Performance

6.1 In 2024/25 the team have progressed a wide range of investigations and statutory duties as detailed in the operational report. The team implemented new regulatory and operational requirements including:

- The short term lets licensing regime. Since the legislation came into force on 1 October 2022 the environmental health team has had a key role as a consultee on applications, assessing compliance at licensed premises and responding to complaints. The team have responded to over 8100 application consultations to date.
- Continued to support businesses wishing to expand into new export markets by facilitating the provision of export health certificates for a wider range of countries as well as continuing to provide assurance of regulatory compliance to businesses which allow them to continue to export following EU exit.
- Obtained designation from the Scottish Government for a Border Control Post (BCP) at Scrabster to allow for the continuation of farmed salmon imports from the Faroe Islands, one of only three BCPs with this designation in Scotland.

- Continued to progress workforce planning with a further two officers enrolled onto the graduate pathway to become environmental health officers. These officers gained direct entry into year 2 of the 4-year BSc (Hons) Environmental Health degree at the University of West of Scotland. A further officer who started on this pathway last year has made excellent progress through the course and will be entering their final year in September. It is expected that there will be an additional officer enrolled on a MSc Environmental Health programme later this year.
- In March 2025, two officers, Juliana Teixeira and Prameela Middleton, successfully passed their professional exams to become fully qualified Food Safety Officers. Both officers have gained the Scottish Food Safety Officers' Registration Board's Higher Certificate in Food Practice.
- In 2024 a project to improve performance of statutory work on private supplies was implemented including the recruitment of 4 additional sampling officers (1 permanent post, 3 temporary posts) to improve sampling rates.
- In 2024/25 funding provided by the Scottish Government allowed Environmental Health to continue a project carrying out air quality monitoring and awareness raising projects at primary schools. Since 2022, this has been undertaken with 22 Highland Council primary schools. The monitoring undertaken was a combination of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) passive diffusion tube monitoring over three or four months; and indicative live EarthSense Zephyr® Units monitoring multiple parameters over a few weeks at each site. An officer from the EH team offered each school an in-person presentation and a workshop with pupils to raise awareness of pollution in our local environment and highlight actions they and their carers can take to help our communities.
- Promotional work for "Clean Air Day" in June 2024 was undertaken including a successful event in Falcon Square, Inverness including bike servicing and demonstration of electric vehicles.

7. Environmental Health Operational Plan 2025/26

- 7.1 The Operational Plan through to 31 March 2026 is provided in **Appendix 1**.
- 7.2 The plan contains challenging objectives for Environmental Health to contribute to the aims of a healthier and safer Highlands. These are listed in Annex 2 of the plan detailed within **Appendix 1**. Key objectives are summarised below:-
1. Continue workforce planning activities including review of student and modern apprenticeship opportunities.
 2. Continue to implement the short term lets licensing requirements and respond to consultations within statutory timeframes.
 3. Continue engagement with Scottish Government on the new national litter and fly tipping strategy and the linked review of litter and fly tipping enforcement activities.

4. Continue engagement with Scottish Government on the XL bully ban and other dog control activities.
5. Continue to work with Food Standards Scotland on the review of the approach to Food Safety Law following recognition of national shortage of qualified officers and shortfall in resources.
6. Continue the implementation of the new national approach to inspection of Approved Establishments (Official Control Verification (OCV)).
7. Continue to work with Food Standards Scotland on national resource calculation aiming determine an accurate level of resources required to fully deliver food safety controls in accordance with the Food Safety Code of Practice.
8. Improve performance in key Performance Indicators on food safety and private water supplies.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 25 April 2025

Author: Alan Yates, Strategic Lead - Environmental Health & Bereavement Services

Background Papers: None

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Place Service Cluster

Environmental Health

Operational Plan 2025-26

Contents

Background and context

- 1. Purpose, Timeframe and monitoring**
- 2. Structure and resources**
- 3. Roles and responsibilities**
- 4. Demands**
- 5. Risk Management**

Priorities and objectives

- 6. Priorities and challenges**
- 7. Objectives and performance measures**

Background and Context

1. Purpose, Timeframe and monitoring

- 1.1 The Environmental Health team of the Communities and Place Service provides regulatory and advice functions within the Highland Council area. This Operational Plan outlines the Environmental Health approach to delivering all aspects of regulatory and advice functions through to 31st March 2026. The plan forms an important part of the Service's processes to ensure national priorities and standards are addressed and delivered locally.
- 1.2 The plan aligns with the Council's vision of being ambitious, sustainable and connected, the Council's Corporate Plan and the Communities and Place Directorate Service Plan.

2. Structure and resources

- 2.1 Environmental Health has 77 posts with a full-time equivalent of 74.46. This includes 4 fixed term/temporary posts. A structure diagram is provided in **Annex 1**.
- 2.2 The Service operates 3 operational areas and works through 6 offices throughout the area as shown below:

Operational Area	Offices
North Team – Caithness, Sutherland	Wick, Golspie
West Team – Skye and Lochaber	Portree, Fort William
Mid-Highland Team – Ross & Cromarty, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey	Dingwall and Inverness

- 2.3 The Service has a revenue budget of £2.573m for 2024/25.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1 Environmental Health is the branch of public health which deals with all aspects of the natural and built environment that may affect public health, together with animal welfare and licensing duties. The main functions include:

- **Public Health Protection** which includes Water supplies (private supplies and mains water issues e.g. lead), Nuisances, Smoking in Public Places, Port Health, Communicable disease investigation e.g. Food-borne / Waterborne disease, Covid 19, Legionnaires Disease;
- **Food Safety** covering enforcement and advisory role for food hygiene, food labelling, export certification, and imported food checks;
- **Health and Safety at work** including regulatory role in Local Authority enforced premises, accident at work investigations, business advice and complaint investigations;
- **Private Sector Housing** including sub-standard housing, improvement and repairs grants, closing and demolition orders, Houses in Multiple Occupation and housing defects, and radon;
- **Pollution Control** which includes Noise Control and local Air Quality management;
- **Contaminated Land** covering the regulatory role for contaminated land prevention through development control, advisory role to other Council services on asset transfer and development;
- **Animal Health & Welfare** which can include dealing with Foot & Mouth disease, Anthrax, Avian Flu, Bluetongue and Imported Pets;
- **Licensing** duties which include a general enforcement role for activities licensed under the Civic Government legislation. This includes Public Entertainment, Street Traders; Market Operators, Boat Hire; Skin Piercing and short term lets. The team also undertake the administrative and enforcement role for licensing of caravan sites, venison dealers, animal boarding establishments, zoos, cinemas, riding establishments, sports grounds, dangerous wild animals, pet selling, operating certain animal welfare establishments (including rehoming centres and animal sanctuaries), engaging in other animal rehoming activities and dog, cat and rabbit breeding;
- **Dog Control, Pest Control, Dog fouling**, Litter education & enforcement, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles;
- **Assisting with Civil contingencies** and emergency planning, with specific responsibilities regarding recovery from incidents.

- 3.2 Much of the work is preventative and the team has an important role in ensuring the Highlands maintains its reputation of a safe and healthy place in which to live, work and holiday. We aim to support local businesses by providing advice on appropriate regulations and ensuring any regulatory activity follows the five principles of better regulation: Proportionate, Consistent, Accountable, Transparent and Targeted.
- 3.3 An approximate summary of officers allocated against function is provided below:

Function	Full time equivalent
Food Safety (includes 1 temp post)	11.1
Health & Safety at Work	2.5
Private Water supply (including 3 temp. posts))	10.2
Animal Health & welfare	3.2
Licensing	12.0
Public Health & general Env Health	9.6
Housing (includes HMO role)	5.2
Pollution control (including air quality and contaminated land)	5.6
Litter, dog and pest control, abandoned vehicles (including 1 temp. post)	9.3
General management	4.0
Dedicated IT support	1.8
Total	74.5

4. Demands

- 4.1 The workload for the environmental health team can be simplistically split into proactive (programmable) work and reactive work.

4.2 **Proactive work**

- 4.2.1 The team carry out proactive/programmable work under certain legislation. The work is risk based and intelligence driven. Often specific proactive work is carried out in Partnership with other agencies such as Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, HSE, SEPA, and Home Office Immigration Enforcement.

A summary of the some of the **proactive** demands is provided below.

4.2.2 **Food Safety**

Responsible as statutory Food Authority for approximately 6000 food businesses in Highland. Resources allow around 800 programmed interventions of premises in Highland per year focussed on those presenting highest risk. Proactive food samples as part of national surveys along with additional targeted sampling as part of the Official Controls Verification process.

4.2.3 **Private Water Supplies**

In Highland the population served by private supplies is estimated at 17%. There are currently 1101 "Regulated" supplies (commercial or large private water supplies) that are registered and subject to mandatory risk assessment and monitoring and intervention by the Council.

These supplies serve 3700 properties and an estimated population of 31500. The proactive programme aims to ensure each supply is visited annually to check they meet the required standards.

There are also 1680 domestic smaller private water supplies registered whereby our duty is to offer advice and assistance and discretionary powers in respect of sampling. These supplies serve 1601 properties and an estimated population of 8740.

4.2.4 **Health & Safety at Work**

Enforcement of health and safety at work legislation is divided between the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities. HSE is responsible for workplaces including factories, farms, building sites, schools, hospitals and offshore installations. The Council cover businesses including offices, shops, hotels, leisure premises, caterers, nurseries and clubs. In Highland the Environmental Health team have responsibility for over 5000 businesses.

In line with national guidance proactive work is carried out based on the HSE identified priorities for targeted interventions. These are focussed on those sectors and activities with the most serious risks or where the risks are least well-controlled based on national statistics and local intelligence. Initiatives in the past have looked at gas safety in commercial catering premises, riding establishments, risk of infection at animal petting farms, nail bars and trampoline parks. Around 40-60 targeted inspections are carried out per year in addition to general awareness raising campaigns.

4.2.5 Animal Health and Welfare

Officers carry out proactive inspections of animal markets and other sales, and Assembly Centres to ensure compliance, in particular with biosecurity (vehicles, premises and people), livestock identification, welfare, transport, licensing and record keeping. Around 140 inspections are carried out per year. The team also investigate allegations of illegally imported pets from both the EU and third countries.

4.2.6 Dog fouling and littering patrols

Officers prioritise and focus our patrols in the worst affected areas to maintain a visible profile and issue fixed penalty notices. Officers will also speak to dog walkers on best practices regarding dog control. Current resources only allow limited pro-active patrols to be carried out and these are targeted at the worst affected areas based on feedback from communities and members.

4.2.7 Local Air Quality Management

Officers fulfil the Council's duties in terms of the requirements of Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) as set out in Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 and the relevant Policy and Technical Guidance documents. The LAQM process places an obligation on all local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. An Annual Progress Report (APR) is prepared and submitted to Scottish Government. This APR report is a summary of the work being undertaken by The Highland Council to improve air quality and any progress that has been made.

4.3 Reactive work

- 4.3.1 The team deal with significant number of incidents and major investigations in addition to the more routine service requests from the public and businesses.

The table below provides examples of the range of service requests received by the team in a year (based on category)

Category	2023/24	2024/25		Category	2023/24	2024/25
Animal Health & Welfare	599	587		National Assistance Burial enquiry	25	30
Dog fouling & general dog enquiries	225	306		Home Burial enquiry/request	3	1
Stray dogs	74	73		Housing grant enquiry	650	665
Aggressive dogs/dog bites	223	242		Housing general enquiry	33	33
Planning & general consultation	1055	891		Housing complaint – dampness	45	47
FOI request	226	286		Housing complaint – structural	13	21
abandoned vehicle	895	1512		Housing complaint – other	27	46
Litter, fly-tipping	138	195		Housing visit for immigration	2	4
Inverness Trade waste request	9	1		Request for Housing Condition survey	109	160
Accident reports	107	118		Ukraine Refugee enquiry/Property Check	67	57
H&S complaints	217	267		Pest control requests	354	285
H&S request for info	99	77		Food Premises Registration	561	625
Smoking ban complaint	1	1		food safety enquiry	463	465
Licensing enquiry	298	387		Fish/Shellfish Export Cert	658	1020
Licensing Consultation	542	648		Food (non Fish/Shellfish) Export cert	1	7
Licensing complaint	96	105		Approval/Lic/Auth application	4	5
STL licensing consultation	2318	5451		Shellfish Registration Document	67	71
Noise enquiry	109	154		Shellfish sites closure	27	23
Noise complaint	1016	1110		Fishing Vessel inspection request	20	11
Public Health house complaint	66	68		Food safety Alert/FSS reports	52	38
Foul Odours	83	117		Complaint – Food (Unfit)	85	109
Dust Complaint	6	13		Complaint – Hygiene of Premises	129	162
Smoke Complaint	85	117		Complaint – Food Standards (e.g. labelling)	44	31
General Nuisance – Other	61	76		Infectious disease enquiry/rep	12	3
Light Nuisance	12	9		Infectious disease notification	33	20
Insect Nuisance	6	6		Outbreak investigation	4	2
Choked/Defective Drain / Sewer	74	72		Port health enquiry	126	249

Choked/Defective Septic Tank	21	29		Ship Sanitation Certificate Request	29	33
Blue Green Algae Alert	9	5		Ship/aircraft request for sample	4	8
Plant cmplt/query (injurious weeds)	10	5		Private water supply enquiry	549	969
Whale/animal carcase	37	15		Private water supply request for sample	176	137
Air quality query or complaint	10	10		Private water supply other	76	20
Public Health Incidents (e.g. pollution/flooding)	7	8		Public water supply query/complaint	53	22

2024/25 data

4.3.2 Significant incidents can take considerable time to investigate and conclude as often complex issues involved. For example, a prosecution can take the equivalent of 4-6 weeks of one officer's time to investigate including interviewing witnesses and then to prepare a detailed case for the Procurator Fiscal.

In recent years the team have referred cases for offences under food safety, animal health, housing and health & safety legislation. The health & safety cases have followed investigations of fatalities or serious accidents.

Complex cases have included:

- major noise nuisance investigations at electric substations, sawmills and ports
- Significant fatality and major accident investigations for breaches of health and safety legislation

5. Risk Management

5.1 The team manages significant risks in relation to the consequences of serious foodborne or waterborne disease outbreak.

Priorities and Objectives

6. Priorities and challenges

6.1 Over the next period the team will be taking forward a range of projects and these are listed in in **Annex 2**.

7. Reporting and performance indicators

7.1 Annual reports on local environmental health team performance are being presented in 2025 to the City and Local Committees.

7.2 Key performance measures for the team are identified in the Communities and Place Directorate Service Plan with reporting via the quarterly 'Communities and Place – Revenue Budget Monitoring and Service Performance' report to the Communities and Place committee.

7.3 Other performance measures and outcomes

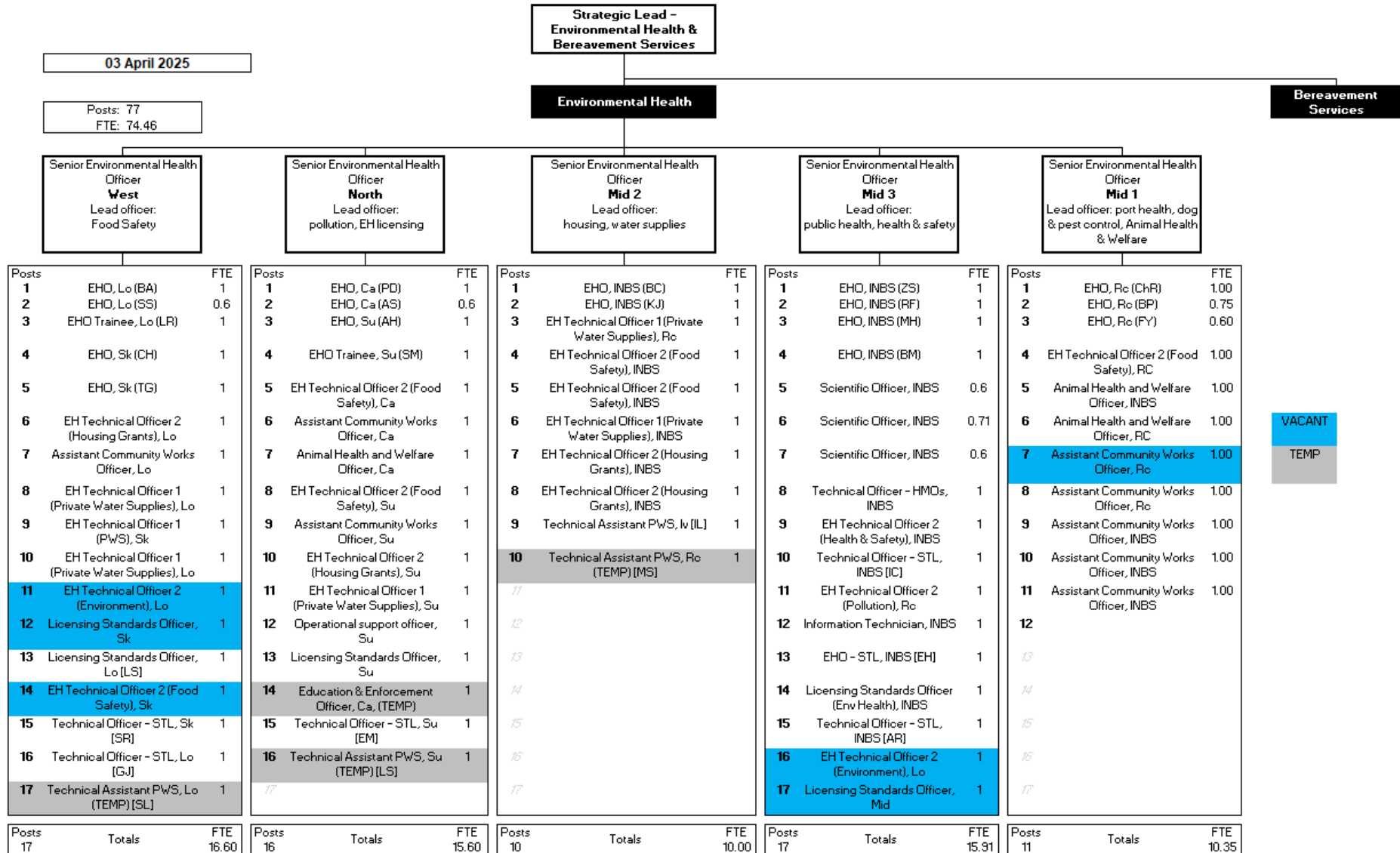
As a mainly preventative service, it is challenging to demonstrate the impact of all statutory interventions. The team are working with professional networks on benchmarking and other appropriate performance measures for the future. This will contribute to the development of the CP Service performance framework.

7.4 For food safety, the inspection programme is designed to check food hygiene standards and staff will take appropriate enforcement action, service or notices to require improvements, restrictions on process or even closure of premises, where poor standards are found. These interventions are required under the statutory Code of Practice and will contribute to Food Standards Scotland (FSS) strategy for reducing foodborne illness. FSS have previously estimated the burden of foodborne disease in Scotland annually at 43,000 cases of illness, with 5,800 cases presenting to GPs and 500 cases requiring hospital treatment.

7.5 For Health and Safety at Work, interventions are intelligence led in liaison with the HSE. In addition to the direct impact of any workplace injury on the individual and their family, the HSE estimated the wider cost to society as £44,800 for each case of 7 day or more absence due to work related ill health, £46,000 for each case of 7 day or more absence due to work related non-fatal injury, and £2.1m for each workplace related fatality.

7.3 In Highland, since 1/4/24 our officers have investigated 91 RIDDOR reported cases relating to workplace injury and ill-health and unfortunately are investigating a number of workplace fatalities. The benefits to workers, their families and the Highland economy of maintaining health and safety interventions are demonstrable.

Annex 1 – Environmental Health team structure



Annex 2 - Specific functional projects

1. Health & Safety at work

- 1.1 To devise and deliver a programme of health and safety interventions based upon Local Authority Circular (LAC67/2) (rev10) and the list of national priorities published by the HSE. The programme shall consist of work to deliver those national priorities set by HSE, work to deliver local priorities and an inspection programme that meets the requirements of the National Local Authority Enforcement Code.

All pro-active health and safety work is targeted in accordance with the HSE priorities or where local intelligence identifies any health and safety related issue. The following are proposed interventions by Environmental Health for 2025/26 albeit these may be subject to change when the HSE publish their revised priorities.

1. **Commercial Gas Safety** - One of the long standing HSE priorities is to improve gas safety within commercial kitchens. It is important that all gas equipment is properly maintained by a competent Gas Safe engineer and that all employees are trained in the use of equipment. Environmental health will continue to raise awareness of Health and Safety legislative requirements within the catering industry with respect to gas safety during routine food hygiene inspections in addition to planned intervention visits.
2. **Caravan Sites** – due to the popularity of motorhomes and use of holiday caravans within Highland, Environmental Health aim to raise awareness of health and safety requirements within this sector. This will include planned intervention visits to a number of licensed caravan sites.

2. Licensing enforcement and administration

- 2.1 Continue to progress the licensing scheme for short term lets.
- 2.2 To support the Council's work on Motorhomes/Tourism and Aires by providing advice on the legal requirements on caravan site licensing.
- 2.3 To implement the expected new legislation relating to the licensing of establishments offering canine fertility services

- 2.4 To continue to engage with Scottish Government on proposals to bring in new licensing requirements for the following activities:
- dog walking when carried on in the course of a business.
 - dog grooming when carried on in the course of a business.
 - providing livery services when carried on in the course of a business.
- 2.5 Non-Surgical Cosmetic procedures - Licensing
The Scottish Government are considering the regulation of non-surgical cosmetic procedures (NSCPs). NSCPs can include treatments such as micro-needling, chemical peels, Intense pulsed light therapy, use of lasers for tattoo removal or laser hair removal, botox and dermal fillers. This is likely to bring additional work for Environmental Health team in terms of licensing and assessing compliance with any mandatory conditions.

3. Private Water Supplies

- 3.1 Continue to use a risk-based system approach to the prioritising of the PWS monitoring and risk assessment programme.
- 3.2 To implement the findings of the private water supply resource review and identified improvements to improve the risk assessment and monitoring programme performance to as to meet with statutory requirements.
- 3.3 Continue to work in partnership with NHS Highlands concerning reports of illness with links to PWS.
- 3.4 Advise, educate and promote the private water supply grant funding scheme so that supplies are improved to provide safer drinking water.
- 3.5 Complete digitisation of all PWS paper files onto the environmental health case management system

4. Food Safety

- 4.1 Continue to work with Food Standards Scotland on the review of the approach to Food Safety Law. Officers are engaged in a new national project to review the approach to food safety law to provide assurance in public health protection, with sufficient and sustainable resources to deliver the required work.
- 4.2 Continue implementation of the new national approach (Official Control Verification (OCV)) to the inspection of Approved Establishments. Approved Establishments are manufacturers of products of animal origin.

4.3 **Food Safety – inspection priorities**

It must be noted that investigations, or enforcement action, significant to public health will take priority over the targets specified below.

Priority 1: Routine programme

To inspect the following on time for the due date (*or within 28 days subject to Senior EHO approval*):

- Food Hygiene: 100% target for **high-risk** premises:
 - Food Law (Category E&D Premises)
- Food Law: 100% target for Food Law category Group1 C;
- Food Law: 100% target for all Group 1 premises

Priority 2: Unrated food hygiene premises

- Food Law: Group 2 C
- Food Law: Group 3 C
- Hygiene UNRATED High
- Hygiene UNRATED Med A

Senior EHOs and officers to ensure all food hygiene premises that are 'unrated' are given priority and inspected according to the service procedure and the area list of unrated food hygiene premises is reviewed monthly.

4.4 Continue to engage with partners in Scottish Government and Industry to ensure EH Service is structured and financed to best facilitate the needs of the export market and appropriate arrangements are in place for imported food including Border Control Points if required.

4.5 Continue to support the national working groups, such as the high-risk foods working group, tasked with providing clear and consistent guidance for service delivery.

4.6 **Imported food** - Continue engagement with Scottish Government on the operational challenges faced by both industry and regulators in operating the Border Control Post at Scrabster.

5. Private Sector Housing (PSH)

5.1 To assist the Housing Policy team in undertaking a LEAN review of the Scheme of Assistance policy that provides funding for improvement and adaptations in private sector housing.

5.2 Engage with Scottish Government to seek additional capital funding towards adaptation grants that allow individuals to live securely and independently in their own house.

- 5.3 To review the allowances that are detailed in the Scheme of Assistance policy.
- 5.4 Where resource permits, work with other Council teams and external housing organisations/partners (e.g. Under one Roof, Shelter, Landlord Registration) to provide opportunities to engage with home owners and landlords on housing standards and signpost to available support.

6. General Public Health Protection

- 6.1
1. Implement the relevant priorities for Highland Council Environmental Health from the latest Joint Health Protection Plan.
 2. Ensure preparedness of emergency public health controls for airports and ports in Highland.
 3. Continue engagement with Scottish Government on proposed regulatory controls on private burials.
 4. Maintaining the Councils temporary mortuary equipment to support NHS Highland and local funeral directors in case of additional deaths.

7. Local environment issues (dog control, pest, abandoned vehicles, litter)

7.1 Abandoned vehicles:

- a) Continue to progress improvements in response to abandoned and nuisance vehicles.
- b) Complete the pilot project in Balintore with the Housing and Parking teams to establish TROs for car parks that have issues with abandoned and nuisance vehicles
- c) Continue engagement with Scottish Government on statutory fees for removal, storage and disposal of vehicles.
- d) Continue engagement with Scottish Government on introduction of FPNs for abandoned vehicles as available in England and Wales.
- e) If resources permit, provide information of the number of vehicles uplifted by Highland Council onto the Highland Council website for freedom of information enquiries.
- f) If resources permit, carry out a focused enforcement initiative of unlicensed vehicles in collaboration with Police Scotland and DVLA within Highland Council.

7.2 Litter, fly tipping and Dog Control:

- a) Continue engagement with Scottish Government on the new national litter and fly tipping strategy and the linked review of litter and fly tipping enforcement activities.
- b) Continue engagement with Scottish Government on the XL bully ban and other dog control activities

- c) Review the operational requirements for the provision of dog control and litter control staff within Highland Council to ensure suitable provision of enforcement through the area.
- d) Carry out focused litter control initiatives with Police Scotland within Inverness city centre.
- e) Carry out dog fouling initiatives in collaboration with local communities.
- f) Where resources permit, provide information to the Highland Council website on the number of notices issued for dog control and littering for freedom of information enquiries.

8. Pollution

8.1 Local Air Quality Management:

- a) Continue work on Local Air Quality Management Area Action Plan
- b) Review local air quality issues in Queensgate, Inverness and wider Local Air Quality Management strategy.
- c) Maintain monitoring facilities at Queensgate, Inverness, Telford Street, Inverness, Strath Viach and An Aird, Fort William.
- d) Prepare and submission of annual Local Air Quality Progress Report to the Scottish Government
- e) Continue to deliver the primary school air quality education project and deliver an anti-idling publicity campaign in the city centre as part of "Clean Air Day" on the 19th June 2025 (subject to SG funding). Clean Air Day is the UK's largest air pollution campaign.

8.2 Contaminated Land:

- a) Review information and reports submitted in support of Planning Applications and to liaise with Planning and Building Control Officers to ensure sites are safely redeveloped through the planning process.
- b) Promote ways of providing contaminated land advice in-house to other Services within the Council in order to minimise spend on external consultants.
- c) Continue to provide support and assistance to other Council departments regarding the development of the Longman site.
- d) Assist and advise when consulted on sites being considered under the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund.
- e) Continue to advise relevant authorities regarding non-radioactive contamination during the decommissioning of the Dounreay Nuclear Facility.

8.3 Renewable Developments

SSEN Transmission is currently consulting on and undertaking significant work to upgrade the electricity transmission network across the North of Scotland. Additionally, there is a considerable number of developments connected to the renewable energy sector (i.e. windfarms, Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Hydro schemes that are requiring significant input at the planning consultation stage.

Officers from each of our three EH operational teams are involved in assessing and responding to consultations for all these types of development. Such work has been ongoing throughout the last year and will continue through 2025/26 and beyond. Particular input is being required in respect of assessing complex noise assessments and any potential noise impacts arising from such developments.

8.4 Green Freeport

With development linked to the Green Freeport in and around Inverness and Cromarty Firth likely to continue increasing for the foreseeable future, there will be a corresponding increase in demand for resource in the EH team to assess any potential impacts arising from such developments. This may be for example in terms of contaminated land assessments or assessing operational impacts such as noise. Officers from the Mid Area team will be involved in assessing and responding to consultations for all the types of development linked to the Green freeport.

9. Animal Health and Welfare

- 9.1
 - a) Participate in the Animal Health & Welfare Framework agreement.
 - b) Provide support, through advice and enforcement, to agricultural industry on animal disease issues of concern.

10. General management

- 10.1 Continue general review of approach to work to improve effectiveness and efficiency (redesign). Including:
 - a) Continue workforce planning to ensure sustainable service delivery and career pathways
 - b) Performance: Review and develop improved methods of monitoring performance across all areas of work as part of the development of the C&P performance framework, linked to resources;
 - c)
 - d) Supporting Procedures: Clear & consistent work procedures to improve efficiency and avoid duplication of effort;
 - e) ICT & Business Support: Continual improvement in use of technology & reducing administrative burdens. Advance mobile working methods and solutions across the service.
- 10.2 Ensure annual environmental health reports with detailed local performance information are provided to each area Committee.