Corporate Resources Service Plan

The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

2017 – 2022

Foreword
Facal-toisich

The Corporate Resources Service was formed on 1 October 2017 and is a merger of the previous Finance Service and Corporate Development Service (excluding Corporate Governance and Committee Services). This is therefore the first Service Plan for the new Service.

Corporate Resources offers an opportunity to exploit the synergies that exist in the wide range of services that support frontline service delivery, primarily the key drivers of staff, ICT infrastructure and finance. These synergies will allow a strategic approach to service efficiency and improvement.

As the first point of contact for residents of Highland wishing to access council services, the Service is also the largest frontline service delivery vehicle for the Council, with responsibility for Service Points, Service Centre and Registration services.

In itself, bringing together the two services was a major achievement during the second half of 2017/18. This involved a review of service structures and management responsibilities across the service, with a focus on strategies of Efficiency, Commercialism, Customer Services, and Digitalisation.

The transfer of the Council's main ICT contract from Fujitsu to Wipro was achieved in April 2017 with minimum disruption to services. Whilst a number of challenges have been raised during 2017/18, the transfer of such a major undertaking was a particular highlight.

The Service has a major role to play in helping vulnerable people access financial benefits to which they are entitled. The Council is now the top performing council in Scotland in terms of the speed in which benefit applications are processed, meaning that individuals obtain a quick response to claims. The Service has facilitated joint working and co-location with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) in Wick and Fort William, and this has enhanced the service provided to customers and increased benefit take-up.

Managing the Council's Revenue and Capital Budgets was a particularly challenging during 2017/18 culminating in decisions taken in the last quarter of the year to agree budgets for 2018-19 (revenue) and 2018-23 (capital). The scale of the financial challenge, and the need to reduce capital expenditure significantly, formed the basis of financial advice and support given to Members in reaching budget decisions.

Linked to financial management is a workforce strategy, and the Service successfully launched a new Workforce Planning Strategy for the Council during the year. Whilst further work is required to map this strategy to the strategic priorities of the Council, and financial resources, it forms a key part of the building bricks necessary to ensure that the Council has a flexible workforce with the right skills, to deliver services in the future.

1a Purpose
   Adhbhar a 'phlana

This Service Plan is a strategic document which details the actions required for the delivery and improvement of the statutory and core functions of the Service and corporate governance priorities. This includes the work of the Service to support the delivery of Council priorities contained within a 5 year programme' Local Voices, Highland Choices'.

It presents an overview of the Service's aims, objectives and resources, how the Service intends to contribute to corporate objectives, partnership working. It outlines 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 update and review on an annual basis with a report to the relevant strategic committee for consideration. Review will take into account internal and external influences and actions arising from monitoring activity throughout the year. 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.

This plan will assist anyone who wants an overview of the Service's aims, objectives and resources, and how the Service contributes to the Programme of the Highland Council and partnership working. The plan will be useful to a range of stakeholders including:
- customers;
- partners;
- other Council Services;
- Elected Members; and
- Staff.

1b Service Structure and main functions
Structar Seirbheis agus Prìomh Dhreuchdan

The Depute Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Resources Service is responsible for the sections shown below which has a revenue budget of £27.081m. The capital budget is £18.311m.

Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism
Responsible for:
- Commercial and Efficiency Team
- Annual accounts and quarterly financial performance reporting
- Budget Strategy and Policy
- Financial management support to Council Services
- Taxation and Insurance
- Treasury Management
- Payroll, Pensions & Creditors
- Procurement

It has a revenue budget of £3.770m employing 95.96 FTE staff.

Head of People and ICT
Responsible for:
- HR Services
- Learning & Development
- IT Services
- Digital Services
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing

It has a revenue budget of £14.709m employing 71.69 FTE staff.

Head of Revenues and Customer Services
Responsible for:
- Revenues
- Benefits & Welfare
- Systems & Change
- Business Development & Support
- Customer Services
- Registrar Services

It has a revenue budget of £8.829m employing 465.31 FTE staff.

Corporate Audit and Performance Manager
Responsible for:
- Internal Audit
- Corporate Fraud
- Corporate Risk Management
- Corporate Performance Management
- Strategic Planning
- Public Performance Reporting
- Best Value
- Self-assessment

It has a revenue budget of £0.545m employing 14.2 FTE staff.

1c Resources
Goireasan

Corporate Resources Service Revenue Budget

Financial Year	Net Revenue Budget (£m)
2018/19	27.081

Breakdown of 2018/19 Budget:

By Section	Net Budget (£m)
Directorate	-0.771*
Corporate Finance & Commercialism	3.770
People and ICT	14.709
Revenues and Customer Services	8.829
Corporate Audit and Performance	0.545
Total	**27.081**

Nett of Central Support Services & unallocated savings

By Staff and Other Costs	Budget (£m)
Staff costs	20.758
Other costs	16.128
Total costs	**36.886**
Income	8.965
Grant income	0.839
Net budget	**27.082**

Staffing 2018/19	FTEs
Directorate	1.00
Corporate Finance & Commercialism	95.96
People and ICT	71.69
Revenues and Customer Services	465.31
Corporate Audit and Performance	14.20
Total	**648.16**

Highland Council Capital Budget

Year	Net Budget (£m)
2018/19	18.311
2019/20	3.235
2020/21	0.152
The capital budget is a corporate resource and may be adjusted subject to corporate priorities.	

Other Budgets(directly managed by Corporate Resources)

By Function	Net Budget (£m)
Loan Fund	56.744
Council Tax	119.409

	Gross budget (£m)	Income (£m)	Net Budget (£m)
Welfare	56.658	38.821	17.837

Highland Council Pension fund – total assets under management

	As at 31/3/18
Pension Fund	£1.872bn

2. PERFORMANCE
   COILEANADH

2a Performance analysis
   Mion-sgrùdadh Coileanaidh

Corporate Finance and Commercialism

The work done within this team does not lend itself easily to assessment by performance indicators as much of it contributes to ensuring the wider financial sustainability of the organisation. As such key outputs include the timely and accurate production of the annual accounts and annual budget setting.

The priorities for the service in 2018-19 are as outlined in section 4b and include the delivery of a medium term financial strategy, supporting managers across the Council, leading organisation change initiatives and developing the Council's commercial strategy.

People and ICT

To date, the People and ICT service has not produced year-on-year performance statistics. The Service operates as an enabling service that supports service delivery across the whole of the organisation. The key aims of the Service for 18/19 are:

- Delivery of ICT transformation against the schedule of the new contract; supporting efficiency through Digital Transformation; meet the Scottish Government's statutory requirements with regards to Cyber Resilience; provision of a Video Conferencing and Telephony refresh across the Curriculum and Corporate main estate;

- Ensuring compliance with Statutory Health and Safety requirements on the Council; management of an effective Health and Wellbeing strategy, including delivery of an Occupational Health contract;

- Development and delivery of an effective Workforce Planning Strategy; work with partners to develop a Talent Attraction, Retention and Returns Strategy for Highland; delivery of HR Policy and Operational support in compliance with Employment Law; continuation of a strong working relationship with Trade Unions through our Partnership Agreement; achieve successful accreditation as a living Wage Employer; delivery of Training and Development for employees and elected members; development and delivery of a Modern Apprenticeship Programme; provision of a strategy to support staff through the implications of Brexit; successful implementation of Holiday Pay legislation and settlement of valid claims.

- Development of a suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and report.

Audit & Performance

Internal audit has 2 KPIs currently reported and benchmarked through CIPFA. The first is self-reported nationally on adherence to the audit plan. While over the past 3 years there has been a 1.1% improvement in performance the results range from achieving 90%-104% of planned work and a rank of between 5th and 24th nationally. There is concern over the robustness of self-reporting of this indicator with some Council's appearing to report 100%

every year. The 2nd KPI is also an SPI for the Council as is the cost of internal audit per £m of net expenditure and this shows that has been a 17.8% reduction in cost over the past 3 years with the Council consistently ranked 5th to 10th nationally, this reflects a smaller team size. The main focus for improvement from available data trends against available resource is productivity; a Lean review of the internal audit process is underway to seek improvements and identify more robust KPIs. Through improving and streamlining the audit process the aim will be to increase productivity and release capcity for further audit work or to support fraud investigation work and other Service and corporate initiatives.

The Performance Team is a small team of 3FTE and while there are no KPIs for this area of activity the function is a statutory one with significant high profile targets to meet in delivering key performance report to Highland Council to meet public performance reporting (PPR) requirements.

Overall the focus of change in the Audit & Performance Team is to add value through supporting continuous improvement across the organisation by shifting the focus of audit and performance work to support Services and also through contributions to activities such as Council Redesign and Lean.
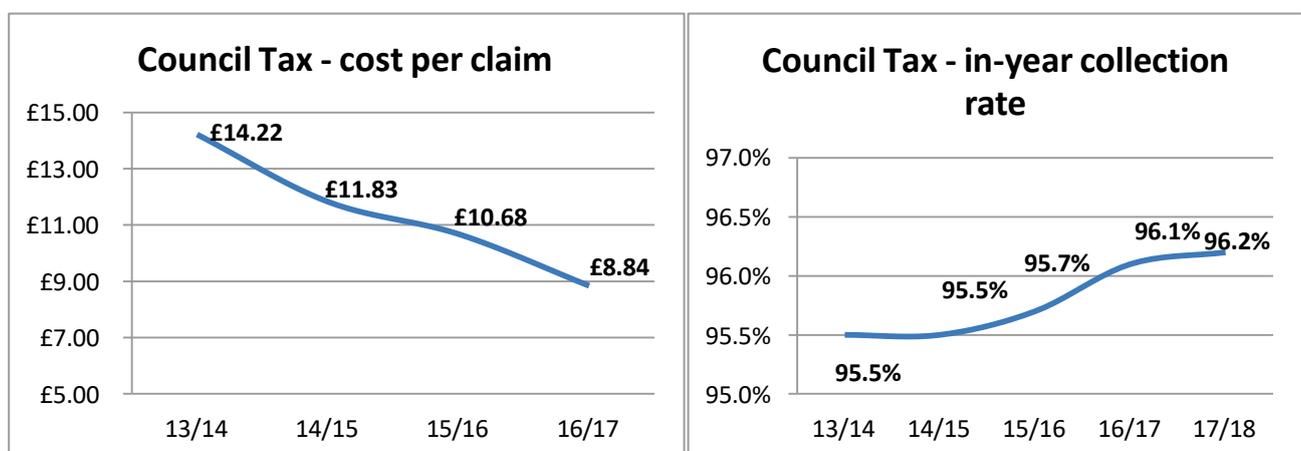

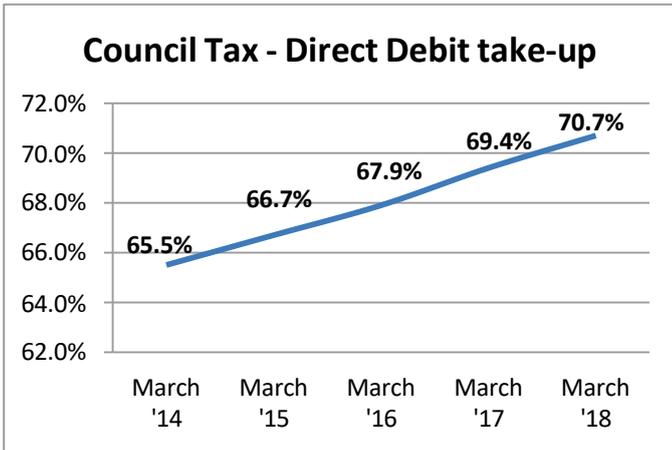**Revenues and Customer Services**

This section has a range of performance indicators whilst, as reported later, further indicators are to be developed for Customer Services.

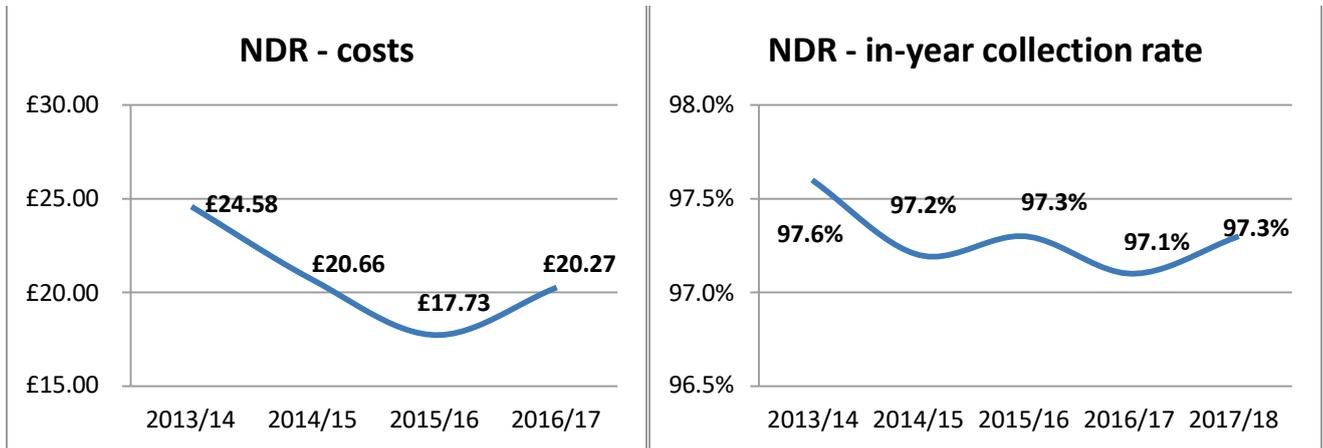Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and Benefits
The graphs below present significant improvements delivered since 2014 enabled by structure reviews, improved resource management (e.g. absence management, training & development, empowerment of staff), and business process reviews and change. This commitment to deliver continuous improvement is very prevalent in this section as evidenced in the continual delivery of budget savings approved by Council.

Council Tax costs have reduced by 38% since 13/14 whilst in-year collections have increased by 0.7%. The nett billed in 17/18 for example was £116.1m. The sums involved are not insignificant therefore efficient and effective collection rates are important to the Council, even more so at a time of financial challenge.

Council Tax - cost per claim

£15.00	
£13.00	£14.22
£11.00	£11.83
	£10.68
£9.00	£8.84
£7.00	
£5.00	
	13/14 14/15 15/16 16/17

Council Tax - in-year collection rate

97.0%	
96.5%	96.1% 96.2%
96.0%	95.7%
	95.5%
95.5%	
95.0%	95.5%
	13/14 14/15 15/16 16/17 17/18

Council Tax - Direct Debit take-up

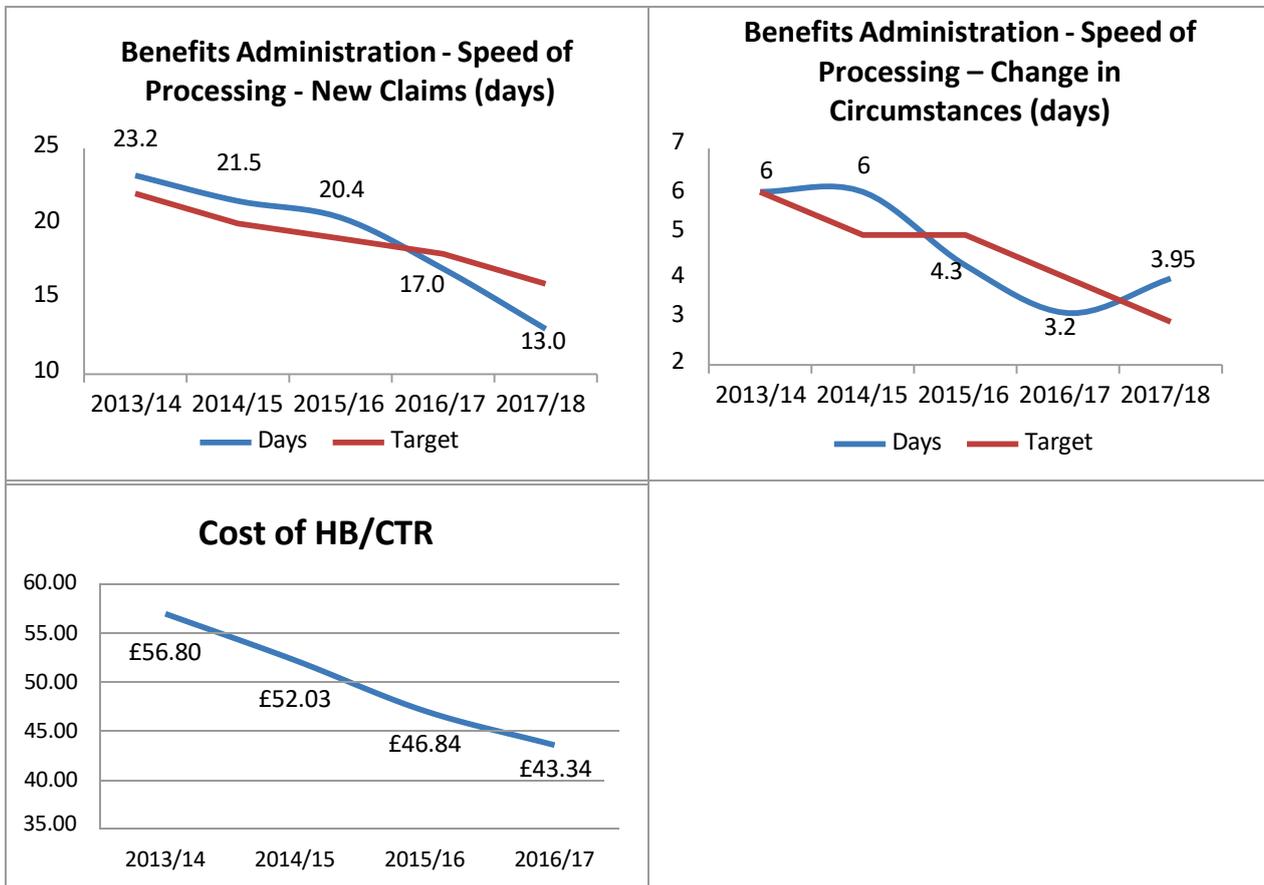|	March '14	March '15	March '16	March '17	March '18
	65.5%	66.7%	67.9%	69.4%	70.7%

NDR costs have reduced by 18% since 13/14 whilst in-year collections are 0.3% less than 13/14. Collections in 17/18 are particularly challenging given the impacts of the Revaluation that took effect from April 2017 (delayed from April 2015 as determined by the Scottish Government) so an improvement in 17/18 compared to prior year is positive to report. The nett billed in 17/18 was £140.2m. Unlike Council Tax, NDR income is pooled by the Scottish Government with NDR income/funding forming part of the overall local authority grant settlement.

NDR - costs

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
	£24.58	£20.66	£17.73	£20.27

NDR - in-year collection rate

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	97.6%	97.2%	97.3%	97.1%	97.3%

<u>Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction</u>
The cost of Benefits administration has reduced by 24% since 13/14 whilst over the same period new claims and change in circumstances are processed 10 days and 2 days quicker, respectively.

Prompt processing times for New Claims and Change in Circumstances not only helps collection levels but also assists customers in being advised of the outcome of a new claim/ change in their circumstances as quickly as possible.

9

Benefits Administration - Speed of Processing - New Claims (days)

Year	Days	Target
2013/14	23.2	
2014/15	21.5	
2015/16	20.4	
2016/17	17.0	
2017/18	13.0	

Benefits Administration - Speed of Processing – Change in Circumstances (days)

Year	Days	Target
2013/14	6	
2014/15	6	
2015/16	4.3	
2016/17	3.2	
2017/18	3.95	

Cost of HB/CTR

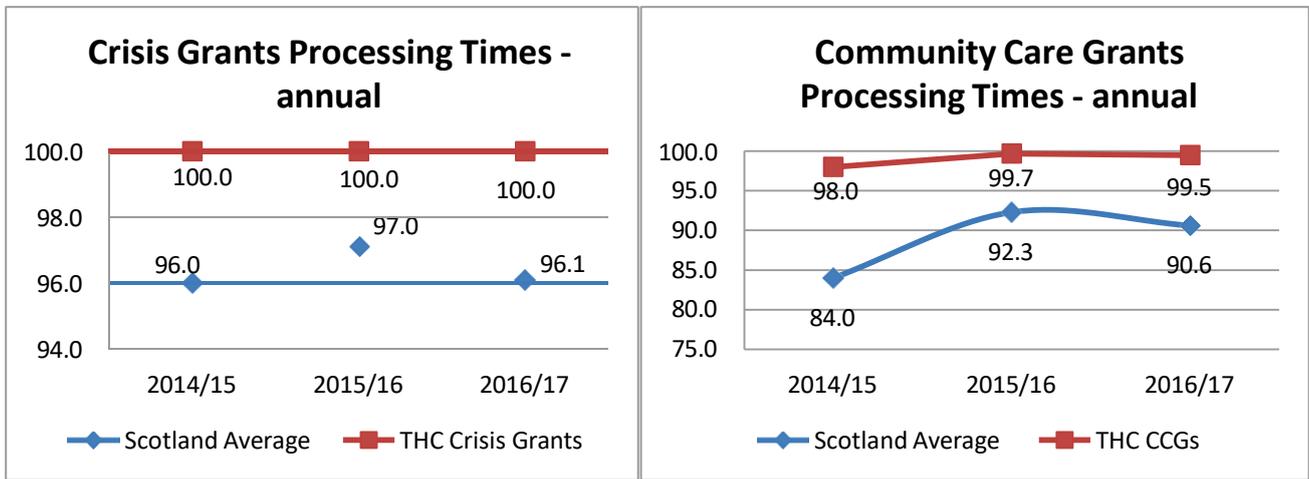| Year	Cost
2013/14	£56.80
2014/15	£52.03
2015/16	£46.84
2016/17	£43.34

For Housing Benefit itself, the DWP report performance nationally and the table below details Qtrs 1-3 in 17/18. The staff are very pleased and rightly proud of the improvements delivered since 13/14. They have played such a key role in delivering this success not only adapting to changes in ways of working but being involved and help support such changes.

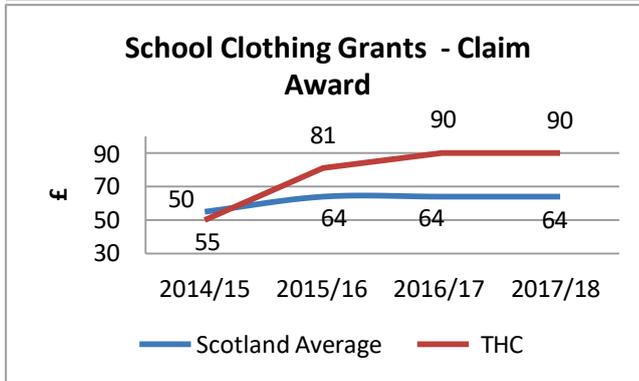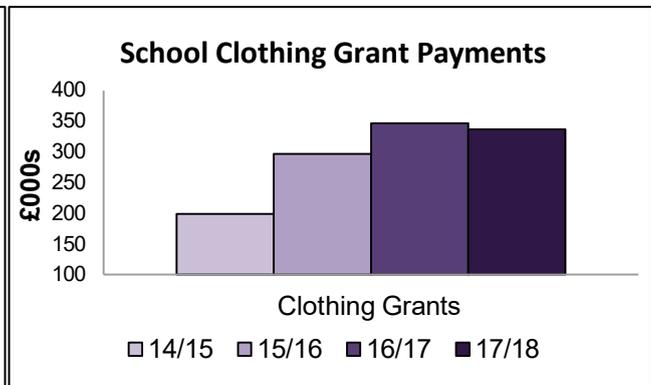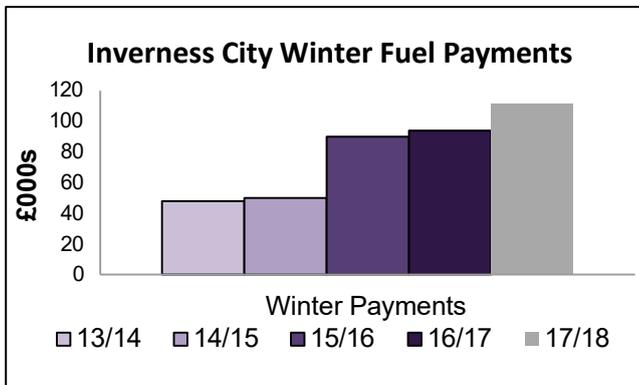| Housing Benefit – days to process – DWP 17/18						
Description	Highland			Scotland		
	Q1/ (rank)	Q2/ (rank)	Q3 / (rank)	Q1	Q2	Q3
New Claims	15 **(1)**	12 **(1)**	12 **(1)**	22	21	22
Change in Circumstances	3.9 **(3=)**	4.1 **(1=)**	4.5 **(1=)**	6.2	7.8	8.6

Scottish Welfare Fund
Scottish Welfare Fund payments support customers during period of significant challenges in their lives for them and their children and to help remain in their communities. Prompt processing is therefore imperative. Expenditure is generally funded by the Scottish Government, with the spend on Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants in 17/18 approximately £1m.

Crisis Grants Processing Times - annual

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Scotland Average	96.0	97.0	96.1
THC Crisis Grants	100.0	100.0	100.0

Community Care Grants Processing Times - annual

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Scotland Average	84.0	92.3	90.6
THC CCGs	98.0	99.7	99.5

School Clothing Grants and Inverness Fund Winter Fuel Payments (Inverness Common Good Fund)

The school clothing grants policy review resulted in the claim awards increasing from grant awards from £55 to £90 (5th highest in Scotland). Combined with the move to a single service delivery model for benefits processing as part of the restructuring from 2014 increases the sharing of information across the Council, to the benefit / financial gain of the customers.

The Winter Payments awards, determined by the City of Inverness Area Committee, has also supported the increase in sums paid annually. The payment award has increased from £73 in 13/14 to £81 in 17/18. The administration of this discretionary scheme has been effectively delivered within the Revenues & Customer Services section by the Service Delivery Team since 2015. This approach continues to deliver efficiencies as the team is able to draw on their considerable experience of administering Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Scottish Welfare Fund, Education Maintenance Allowance, Discretionary Housing Payments and such like.

Inverness City Winter Fuel Payments

Legend: □ 13/14 ■ 14/15 ■ 15/16 ■ 16/17 ■ 17/18

School Clothing Grant Payments

Legend: □ 14/15 ■ 15/16 ■ 16/17 ■ 17/18

School Clothing Grants - Claim Award

Scotland Average — THC

Welfare Support

Welfare Support (formerly Income Maximisation) staff in Revenues & Customer Services continue to support customers and maximising benefits awards by attaining previously unclaimed welfare benefits.

Financial benefit to the customer from advice given (£000) (backdated and annualised)					
1 Apr–31 March	**2013/14**	**2014/15**	**2015/16**	**2016/17**	**2017/18**
	1,635	3,975	4,015	4,651	6,024

During 17/18, 1,366 customers were supported achieving £6.024m financial gain comprising:
- £1.355m backdated awards (with the average backdated award per customer = £991.95)
- £4.669m annualised weekly gains (i.e. the weekly benefit gain multiplied by 52 weeks with the average weekly benefit gained per customer = £65.73)

This success has been delivered during significant welfare reform. Staff continues to provide claimant support at benefit tribunals and to help mitigate some of the impacts of Universal Credit Full Service throughout Highland.

Existing ways of working continue to be challenged looking to identify areas where performance and efficiency can be increased and customer service improved. This has included: intensive staff training to enable the team to undertake additional tribunal appeals; the extended number of co-location arrangements has also enabled more clients to be engaged by taking the service to customers. This can be demonstrated through the partnership approach with Highlife Highland for example which has allowed the welfare support team to have access to broadband in all libraries within the Highland Council area; and the co-location of Wick Jobcentre within Caithness House has been very successful delivering advantages to customers, The Highland Council and DWP. One example is enabling closer working opportunities between DWP and the Council to deliver a 'one-stop' approach to support customers.

The prompt processing of invoices supports all our businesses and their cash flow. Other than Glasgow, Highland has the highest number of small businesses. During 15/16 the Council implemented a new financial system delivering significant IT savings. Performance within 30 days is now exceeding pre 15/16 levels.
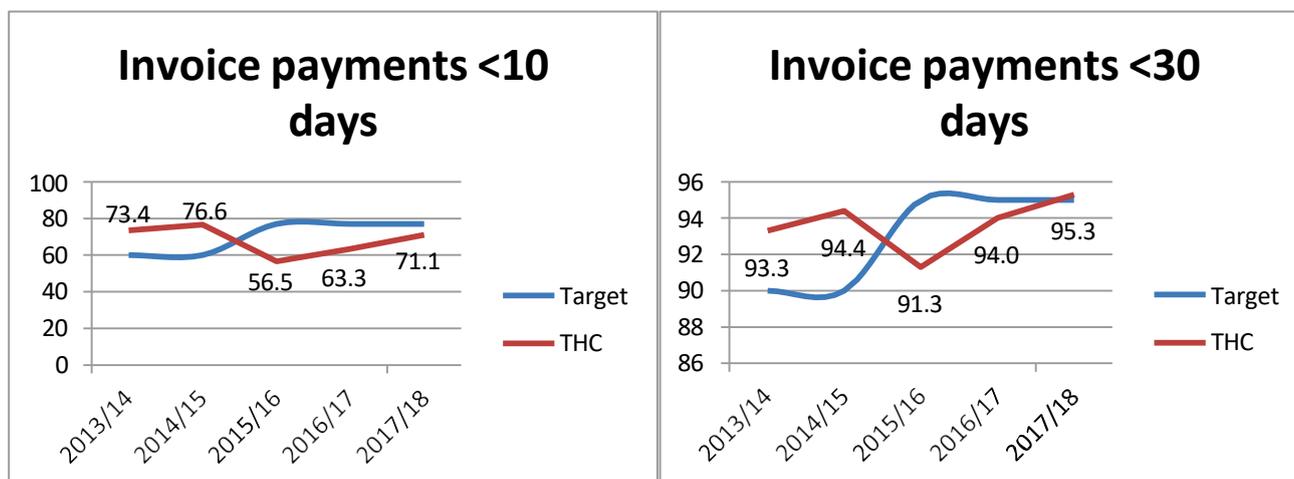
Business Support supports the recruitment process including advertising posts timeously and handling all paper applications for those unable to submit applications on-line. Receiving applications electronically provides numerous benefits including significant reductions in paper (and photocopying), increased information security and reduced filing space. Additionally managers are able to access applications in real time, reducing delays and supporting a consistent and auditable approach to the recruitment process. In terms of paper reductions, the annual equivalent exceeds 250,000 pages with a consumables saving of approximately £5k per annum.

Recruitment	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of posts advertised	2,199	2,403	1,914	1,947
% of posts advertised on time	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number (and %) of electronic applications	17,301 95.8%	15,217 95.9%	14,427 95.3%	17,206 97.5%
% of paper applications processed within 2 working days	100%	100%	99.3%	100%

Business Support provides support to a number of Council staff such as Ward Managers in the administrative process of Single Grant Applications (SGA). The role is primarily logging SGAs (onto SharePoint), issuing an acknowledgment to customers and distribution of the SGAs to relevant staff.

Since 14/15 (when this data was first available) performance has improved year-on-year and reflects positively on staff attitude and their commitment to continuous improvement irrespective current standards.
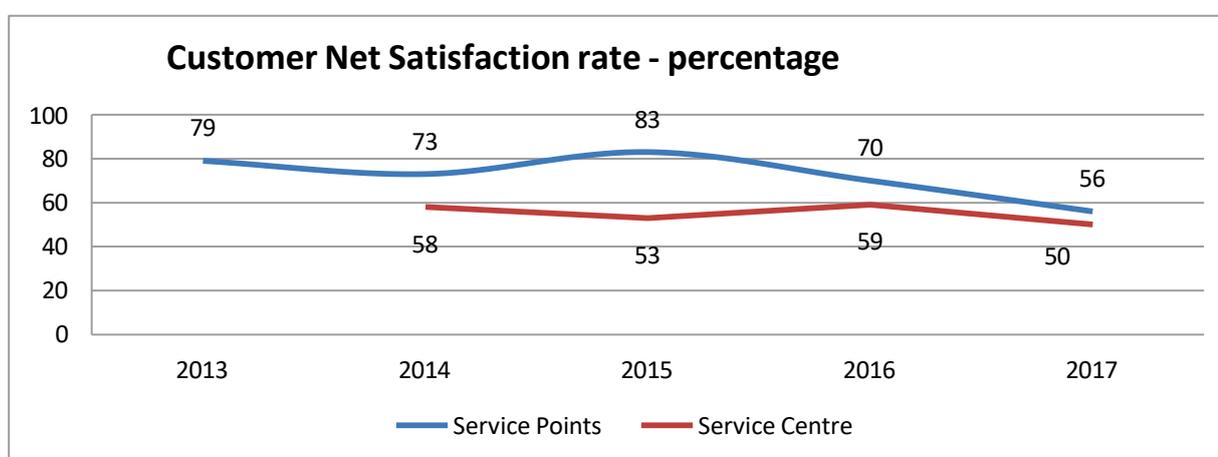
Single Grant Applications	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Percentage logged, acknowledged & distributed within 5 days	97.7%	97.9%	98.3%	99.2%

Customer Services
As part of restructuring across the Council and within the resulting new Corporate Resources Service, Customer Services merged with Revenues & Business Support, reporting to the Head of Revenues & Customer Services since late 2017.

The net satisfaction reports a downwards trend (as reported to Highland Council in October 2017 as part of the *Citizens' Panel 2017 Performance and Attitudes Survey).*

As reported later in Section 4, a priority for the Service will include the development of a suite of KPIs for Customer Services and report.

Customer Net Satisfaction rate - percentage

Year	Service Points	Service Centre
2013	79	
2014	73	58
2015	83	53
2016	70	59
2017	56	50

Note: rating of Service Centre satisfaction not available in 2013.

2b Service Transformation
Cruth-atharrachadh Seirbheis

Baseline Budgeting
The vision for the work is a comprehensive database that will allow members to determine the Council's Revenue Budget based on levels and quality of service, linked to the Council's strategic priorities, and supported by a workforce strategy to ensure that appropriate levels of staffing are in place to deliver these outcomes over the next few years.

Organisational Culture of Financial and Performance Management
In partnership with all parts of Corporate Resources the Corporate Finance and Commercialism team will be proactive in helping all managers across the council develop their skills in financial and performance management. This work should enable the desired medium term financial planning to happen effectively. Specific focus will be placed on improving the quality of information provided to managers, providing clear and concise training and reference materials on budget holder responsibilities and ensuring all managers are appropriately skilled to lead the Council through the financial challenges that lie ahead.

Commercial Strategy

The development of a commercial strategy will be a central plank of the Council's Financial Plan for the coming year. The commercial strategy will focus primarily on income generation and how the Council can make a profit from undertaking certain activities in order to subsidise core services. The communication of the strategy throughout the organisation and the mobilisation of all Council staff to contribute to this agenda will be of key importance.

ICT Transformation

The ICT Team will ensure the delivery of a transformed ICT estate as per defined deliverables in the Wipro contract whilst protecting the Council's commercial interests, this includes delivering the contract against the revised contractual milestone dates agreed between the two parties. The ICT Team will also deliver council dependencies to enable Wipro plan including: completion of corporate and curriculum device refresh; completion of network refresh; delivery of self-service ICT for end-users. We will also work collaboratively with Wipro to achieve service delivery meeting SLA expectations.

Digital Transformation

We will develop and initiate a robust strategy to further develop and deliver the Council's Digital Ambition through transformation; crucially, the programme will be developed in line with ICT transformation to ensure alignment of both of these business-critical initiatives. This will be underpinned by a benefits-led Business Case development, leading to a defined programme of work initiated with affordable resources in place.

Cyber Resilience

We will adopt the Scottish Government common approach to cyber resilience. Having already met the requirements for Cyber Essentials, we will endeavour to undertake Cyber Essentials Plus assessment by adopting best practice, updating procurement guidance, delivering Cyber resilience training and reviewing ICT Policy to ensure alignment with Scottish Government Policy.

Workforce Planning

Based on our values, the Workforce Planning Strategy underpins our stated commitment to avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible and will follow a set of guiding principles; it will be objective-led and focus on the Council's strategic change programme; with the development of our workforce at its core. The aim of the strategy is to deliver the work streams required to ensure that the Highland Council can transition from our current position to build and maintain the workforce of the future.

The programme is designed to be agile and will be reviewed at the end of each annual workforce planning cycle. For this year the focus will be on four primary Business Objectives: Transition - we need to develop an agile and flexible workforce through effective recruitment, transition, upskilling and retraining opportunities; Future Workforce - we need to grow our workforce of the future, rebalance our age profile and build and retain knowledge through effective succession planning; Leadership & Management - we need to build the leadership and management capability to support organisational development, embed commerciality, and reduce demand on supporting services. Flexible Workforce - we need to develop an agile and flexible workforce that reflect the future needs of the Council and cements our commitment to be the employer of choice.

Training and Development

In addition to supporting Workforce Planning business priorities, the Training and Development team will deliver 1,700 corporate training opportunities over the course of the

next year. We will also create the conditions to generate 150 Modern Apprenticeship Opportunities and deliver 100 SVQ qualifications, shared between the Council's Children's Care staff and NHSH Adult Care staff. We will continue to achieve an average rate of 90% delegate satisfaction for corporate training.

Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing
We will ensure the provision of a new Occupational Health contract, reducing costs and improving performance. We will support the HC Fire Safety Action Programme by delivering Fire Risk Assessments to all high risk premises by 2020, with a robust action plan for the remaining estate. We will deliver an Electronic Health and Safety Management System (EHMS) to allow effective reporting and analysis as part of our Safety Management System.

Business Intelligence to Support Service Transformation
Corporate Audit and Performance support a range of service transformation activity. The Corporate Performance team collate performance indicators on cost, quality, and satisfaction, and will continue to increase the awareness and use of this information as part of service transformation projects. The Internal Audit Team carefully reviews and evaluates key processes and functions, identifying areas for improvement within detailed action plans. The annual internal audit plan has been produced following an assurance mapping exercise and risk analysis process to ensure that any "gaps" in assurance will be subject to audit. All of this business intelligence is also used to support Council Redesign, Lean and budget processes.

Lean Review of Internal Audit and Upgrade of Galileo (internal audit software)
A Lean review of internal audit processes has commenced and is expected to be completed by July 2018. The overall aim of the review is to review and refine processes looking for both efficiencies and improved experience for both internal customers and staff. The review is also explicitly seeking to identify improved key performance indicators for the function. In parallel the internal audit system Galileo will be upgraded by August 2018 to ensure that staff are working with the latest software version offering improved functionality.

Customer services
In addition to delivering continuous improvements in Revenues & Business Support services through business process redesign and increasing automation where appropriate, the merger of Revenues, Business Support and Customer Services offers opportunities such as sharing/pooling resource and reviewing service delivery across Service Points, the Service Centre and Registration Services. Reviews will include structure and business processes (e.g. Blue Badge processing, National Entitlement Cards, complaints handling) as well as the physical assets/office accommodation, and opportunities to improve customer services standards.

Service Points require to be effectively supported to help deliver Digital Transformation, for example. This would include provision of public access wi-fi and terminals for customers to use who do not have access to a PC or as a result of lack of connectivity (broadband). Greater use of IT can also support local employment; "moving" / accessing work electronically can deliver efficiencies and support local employment. Close working with the Development & Infrastructure Service is taking place to ensure where possible the service needs of Customer Services are met as part of ongoing asset reviews.

Welfare Reform
The Council will continue to play a proactive role within Highland, Scotland and the UK in a variety of its service areas including Welfare Reform, Revenues and Registration matters.

This includes submissions to consultations and providing evidence (e.g. Scottish Parliament), attendance at Working Groups informing national policies and speaking at meetings & conferences.

We will also work closely with other public sector bodies including the DWP and Scottish Government. In addition to policy and funding matters, service delivery too. For example, the co-location of DWP within Council offices in Wick (Dec '17) and Fort William (May '18) offers many advantages including in financial and customer service delivery. As part of the development of the new Social Security Agency in Scotland, the Council continues to work closely to deliver some locally-based jobs in Highland.

2c Inspections/ Internal and External Audits
Sgrùdaidhean

Annual External Audit Report

The annual External Audit Report of the Council sets out opinion on financial management and sustainability, internal audit, risk management and the priorities and performance of the Council. The report also includes an action plan against the 2016/17 audit finding. This was submitted to Audit and Scrutiny Committee in September 2017 with 11 actions to be completed over the following 12 months covering financial controls, corporate risk management and effective scrutiny and linking performance results to improvement actions.

Best Value Assurance Report

During 2018/19 and into 2019/20 we will be subject to a Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) of the Council which is anticipated to start in late 2018/19 with a final report to the Accounts Commission to be published by the end of November 2019. This audit work will be carried out by the Council's appointed external auditor (Grant Thornton) and Audit Scotland. The focus of the Best Value work will be based on a local risk assessment by our auditors and at present it is expected to include the following key areas:
- Does the Council have a clear strategic direction?
- How well is the Council performing?
- Is the Council using its resources effectively?
- Is the Council working well with its partners?
- Is the Council demonstrating continuous improvement?

A key priority of the Corporate Audit & Performance Manager and the Corporate Performance Team in 2018/19 into 2019/20 will be to support the Council prepare for this Best Value Audit.

2d Workforce planning
Dealbhadh Luchd-obrach

This Council's Workforce Planning Strategy is expected to set the course for the Council for the next five-year period. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the vision, principles, themes and objectives remain consistent with the political, economic, social, technical, legal and environmental direction of the Council as an organisation. The Strategy is designed to put in place the objectives that will be required to support workforce planning conducted by services.

The Workforce Planning Strategy will be enabled by the Corporate Resources Service and following priorities have been set for the forthcoming year:

- **Transition**
  Develop an agile and flexible workforce through effective recruitment, transition, upskilling and retraining opportunities. This project stream will deliver:

- **Future Workforce**
  Set the conditions to grow our workforce of the future, rebalance our age profile and build and retain knowledge through effective succession planning. This project stream will deliver:

- **Leadership & Management Strategy**
  Build the leadership and management capability to support organisational development, embed commerciality, and reduce demand on supporting services. This project stream will deliver:

- **Flexible Workforce Strategy**
  Develop an agile and flexible workforce that reflect the future needs of the Council and cements our commitment to be the employer of choice. This project stream will deliver:

- **Health, Safety and Wellbeing** should be "designed in" when implementing change. Health, safety and wellbeing implications must be considered, and recorded, in the introduction of new processes or new working practices, or any review of these. Support is available from the occupational health, safety and wellbeing team.

3. SERVICE RISKS
CUNNARTAN SEIRBHEIS

Our methodology for identifying and managing risks is detailed in our Risk Management Strategy. An appetite for risk is set at both a Corporate and Service level, and risks are evaluated against this. Risks which are above this appetite line for the Corporate Resources Service are shown in the table below. This includes Service specific risks and corporate risks where our Service is the risk owner. All the risks detailed below have a corresponding definition and a set of mitigating actions that help us manage the risk.

All risks are monitored on our electronic Performance and Risk Management System (PRMS), and managed as part of Service Quarterly Performance Review (QPR) meetings.
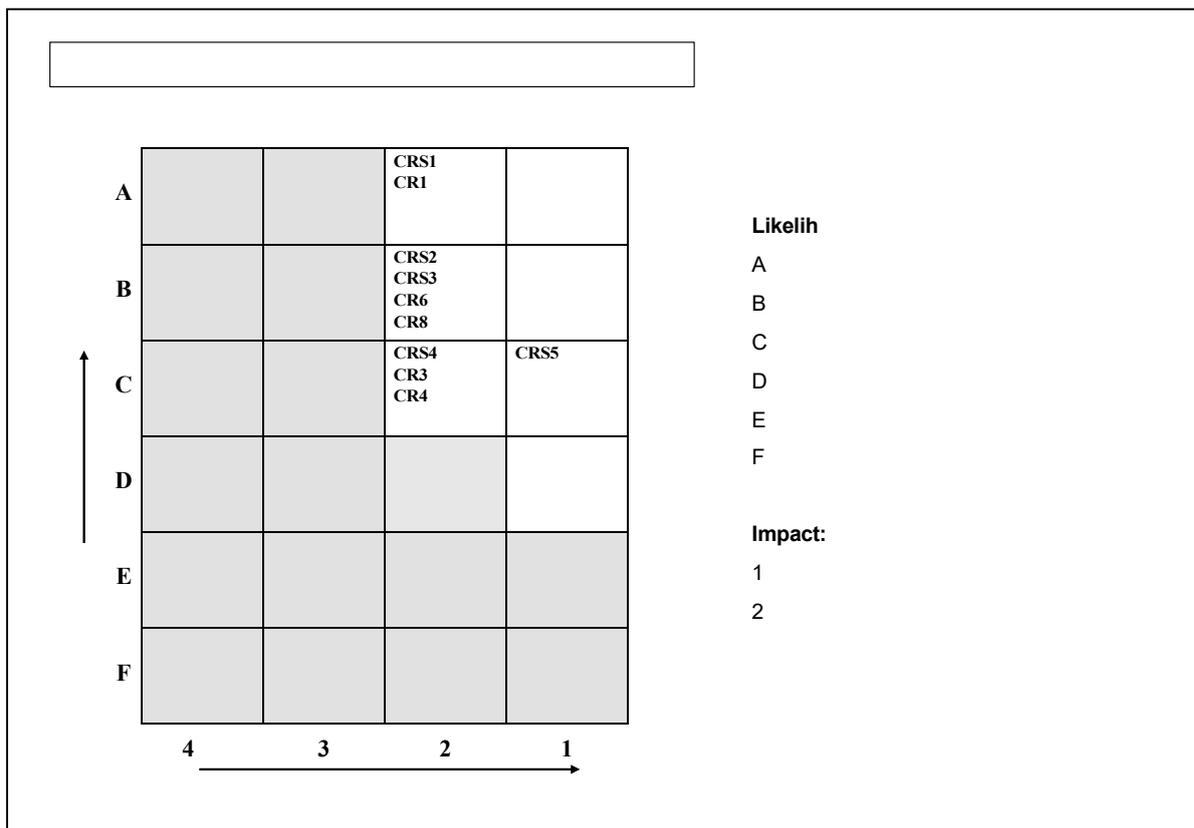
Figure: Corporate Resources Service Risk Profile

Table: Above the line risks – Corporate Resources Service

Risk ID	Risk Rating	Short Name
CRS1	A2	Service capacity
CRS2	B2	Cyber security
CRS3	B2	Budget pressures
CRS4	C2	Professional responsibilities – advice to Members
CRS5	C1	ICT
CR1	A2	Financial sustainability
CR3	C2	Legislation that significantly changes the Council's role
CR4	C2	Brexit
CR6	B2	Workforce planning
CR8	B2	Demographic change

4. PRIORITIES
PRÌOMHACHASAN

4a. Corporate Priorities
Prìomhachasan Corporra

The Service is contributing to the following strategic commitments in the Council's 2017-22 Programme, "Local Voices, Highland Choices", these are:"

Theme 2 – A Place to Learn
Priority 2.2: Grow and retain our own skilled workforce in the Highlands; making it an exceptional place to come and study, and to remain to work.
- Through an ambitious modern apprenticeship programme create capacity for 150 modern apprenticeships by September 2019.
- Develop processes for staff transition and retraining which support council redesign and a flexible workforce by April 2019.

Theme 4 – A Welcoming Place
Priority 4.2: Collaborate with our partners to develop integrated workforce planning strategies to address skills gaps, attract key workers and encourage young people to return after studying away. Engage with Scottish and UK governments to develop measures that allow for greater workforce freedom of movement.
- Work with partners to develop flexibility in the workforce between partners, co-ordinate recruitment and support opportunities for shared services and joint working by March 2019;
- Continue to engage with the Scottish and UK Governments on enabling greater workforce freedom of movement, ongoing to March 2022.

Theme 5 – A Redesigned Council
Priority 5.4: Adopt a commercially minded approach to generate income to support council services and jobs across the region.
- Develop an action plan for the Commercial Board by March 2018.
- Develop emerging proposals for commercial activity with initial proposals by March 2018 and ongoing.
- Align the work of the income and commercial budget streams with the work of the Commercial Board by December 2017.

Priority 5.6: Align the Council's strategic and financial priorities and aspire to work more closely with our public sector partners and businesses to understand and, where we can, to support their priorities.
- Agree a 5-year financial plan and align with council priorities, statutory duties and the council's workforce plan by February 2018.
- Focus Corporate Resources Service on supporting the organisation achieve change through redesign, effective workforce planning and financial stability by June 2018 and ongoing.

4b. Service priorities
Prìomhachasan Seirbheis

KEY	Leader Officer
HCFC	Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism
HPICT	Head of People and ICT
HRCS	Head of Revenues and Customer Services
CAPM	Corporate Audit and Performance Manager
FM-S	Finance Manager - Services
FM-C	Finance Manager - Corporate
CETPM	Commercial and Efficiency Team Project MAnager
PPM	Payroll and Pensions Manager
OHSW Manager	Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager
CAM	Corporate Audit Manager
CPM	Corporate Performance Manager

Service ID	CR01
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will deliver a 3 year financial strategy which focusses on service outcomes and performance standards, linked to the Council's strategic priorities.
Lead Officer	Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism
Key Performance Results	• Agreed Revenue Budget in February 2019 covering 3 financial years 2019/20 – 2021/22 • Agreed performance targets and key outcome measures for all services

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
CAPM	Collate key service performance and benchmarking data	July 18
HCFC	Collate key delivery outcomes and outputs from services	July 18
FM-S	Undertake review of expenditure and income based on 2017/18 actuals	July 18
FM-C	Prepare 3 year financial model based on various financial planning assumptions	June 18
CAPM	Undertake corporate benchmarking review	August 18
HCFC	Workforce strategy updated to reflect priorities of the Council	December 18
HCFC	Council determines 3 year Revenue Budget for 2019-2022	February 19

Service ID	CR02
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will support and empower managers in fulfilling their roles as budget holders throughout the Highland Council
Lead Officer	Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism
Key Performance	• More budget holders delivering annual performance on, or under,

Results	budget • Earlier identification of budget savings opportunities	
Lead Officer	**Enabling actions**	**Completion Date**
FM-C	Forecast outturns available on Integra (the Council's Financial Management Information System) and maintained appropriately	October 18
FM-C	Improving the quality of budget holder reports	March 22
HCFC	Creation of wide-ranging 'financial management' training to budget holders covering budget holder responsibilities, budget management, contract management, commercialism, procurement, improvement methodologies and key financial processes and procedures	September 18
HCFC	Helping managers to identify and deliver budget savings	March 19
CETPM	Driving the Council-wide efficiency agenda through promotion and implementation of appropriate management tools	March 19
HCFC	Provide improved workforce data including self-service accessibility to budget holders for finance and budgeting purposes.	May 19
FM-S	Review of the job costing system to ensure its fitness for purpose	March 19

Service ID	CR03	
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will lead organisational initiatives to strengthen governance, accountability, financial management and improved service delivery	
Lead Officer	Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism	
Key Performance Results	• Introduction of updated project management guidance • E-invoicing solution introduced	
Lead Officer	**Enabling actions**	**Completion Date**
CETM	Development and ownership of the Council's existing Project Management Guidance for non-construction projects	September 18
FM-C	Development of an e-invoicing solution, including reviewing use of purchase cards and imprest.	November 19
CETM	Delivering clear governance processes around resource deployment to projects Council-wide	December 18
FM-C	Assessment, and if appropriate, implementation of 'Big Red Button' year end accounting software	March 19
CETPM	Creation of a standard business case format for commercial opportunities	December 18
PPM	Reviewing the administration of the salary sacrifice scheme	August 18
CETPM	Growing the Council's advertising and sponsorship income and better managing the relationship with the current provider	March 19

Service ID	CR04	
Service Commitment/	We will develop a commercial strategy through participation with the Commercial Board	

Priority	
Lead Officer	Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism
Key Performance Results	• Strategy developed and approved by Council • Communication of strategy throughout organisation • Strategy will identify commercial opportunities that can feed into the budget process • Committee approval of fees and charges policy

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
CETM	Work with the Commercial Board to develop a commercial strategy	June 18
HCFC	Strategy approved by Corporate Resources committee and Full Council including clear governance and delegation arrangements	September 18
CETPM	Communication plan developed for awareness raising of strategy across Council Staff	August 18
CETPM	Develop and implement self-financing projects that will achieve wide ranging benefits for the Council and region (financial, social and environmental).	March 19
CETPM	Empower and support teams with marketable services, skills and products to generate income by offering these externally.	March 19
CETM	Development and ownership of the Council's fees and charges policy and fees and charges register	August 18

Service ID	CR05
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will ensure the delivery of a transformed ICT estate as per defined deliverables in the Wipro contract
Lead Officer	Head of People and ICT
Key Performance Results	• Completion of corporate device refresh • Completion of curriculum device refresh • Completion of network refresh • Delivery of self-service ICT for end-users • Wipro service delivery meeting SLA expectations

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
HPICT	Apply appropriate governance and scrutiny of Wipro contract	Completed
HPICT	Deliver Council dependencies to enable Wipro plan	June 20
HPICT	Enable rollout of Chromebooks to schools	June 20

Service ID	CR06
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will develop and initiate a robust programme to further develop and deliver the Council's Digital Ambition
Lead Officer	Head of People and ICT
Key Performance Results	• Business Case developed • Programme defined and initiated with suitable resources in place

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
	▪ Benefits identified and quantified	
HPICT	SLT workshop	June 18
HPICT	Benefits mapping exercise	September 18
HPICT	Programme definition and initiation	November 18

Service ID	CR07
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will meet the requirements of the Scottish Government Cyber Resilience Action Plan
Lead Officer	Head of People and ICT
Key Performance Results	▪ Scottish Government common approach to cyber resilience adopted ▪ *Cyber Essentials* requirements met ▪ *Cyber Essentials Plus* requirements met ▪ Cyber security guidelines applied to procurement process ▪ NCSC Active Cyber Defence Programme implemented

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
HPICT	Carry our *Cyber Essentials* assessment	Complete
HPICT	Carry our *Cyber Essentials Plus* assessment	April 19
HPICT	Work with procurement team to update procurement guidance	August 18
HPICT	Assess Active Cyber Defence Programme products and implement as appropriate	October 18
HPICT	Review ICT policy framework to align with Scottish Government approach	October 18

Service ID	CR08
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will deliver effective and efficient training and development services including workforce planning.
Lead Officer	Head of People & ICT
Key Performance Results	• Capacity to employ 150 modern apprenticeships • Delivery of 60 SVQ qualifications to NHS Adult Care staff • Delivery of 40 SVQ qualifications to HC Children's Care staff • 90% of corporate training delegates reporting satisfaction (or higher) with the quality of training provided • Delivery of 1700 corporate training opportunities

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
HPICT	We will build the capacity to develop 150 modern apprentices to meet workforce planning requirements	October 19
HPICT	We will deliver 60 SVQ qualifications to NHS Adult Care staff	March 19
HPICT	We will deliver 40 SVQ qualifications to HC Children's Care staff	March 19

HPICT	We will achieve an average 90% delegate satisfaction rate for corporate training	March 19
HPICT	We will deliver 1700 corporate training opportunities	March 19

Service ID	CR09	
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will deliver effective and efficient HR services.	
Lead Officer	Head of People & ICT	
Key Performance Results	90% of valid equal pay claims will be settled - We will: - publish approved updated policy and guidance - deliver training to 6 named Bullying & Harassment Contacts 100% of our employees affect by Brexit will have received appropriate support to remain in our employment - Holiday Pay will be implemented, including the agreement to settle valid claims. - Highland Council will adopt as a minimum the real Living Wage rate recommended by the Living Wage Foundation and contact our contractors to encourage those who do not already pay the Real Living Wage to adopt the current rate. - Privacy Statements will be published on the Council website for processing personal data along with data sharing agreements - Revised Flexible Retirement Policy implemented - Achieve no compulsory redundancies - Implementation of a graduate development scheme - Implementation of a corporate career path and succession plan - Approved and implemented Leadership and Management Strategy - Approved and implemented revised job profiles comprising core skills and competencies to enable staff to be moved between job role and across services	

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
HPICT	We will settle 90% of valid equal pay claims	April 19
HPICT	We will implement the new Bullying & Harassment Policy	December 18
HPICT	We will develop and deliver support to 100% of our employees affected by Brexit	October 19
HPICT	Negotiate with the recognised trade unions an agreed payment for Holiday Pay	May 18
HPICT	Settle valid Holiday Pay claims	October 18
HPICT	Achieve Accredited Living Wage status	December 18
HPICT	GDPR Compliance	May 18
HPICT	Review the Flexible Retirement Policy to support Workforce Planning objectives to ensure key skills are retained	March 19
HPICT	WFP - Support the development of a Transition Strategy	March 19
HPICT	WFP - Support the development of a Future Workforce Strategy	March 19
HPICT	WFP - Support the development of a Leadership and	March 19

	Management Strategy	
HPICT	WFP – Support development of a Flexible Workforce Strategy	March 19

Service ID	CR10
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will deliver effective and efficient Occupational Health Services
Lead Officer	Head of People & ICT
Key Performance Results	• New OH contract in place • Reduction in cost of OH service • Improve performance of OH • 100% high risk premises have had initial FRA • Schedule drawn up for all remaining premises for FRA • Delivery of electronic health and safety management system (EHMS) • Delivery of updated suite of staff support services by March 2019

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
OHSW Manager	Deliver re-provision of occupational health services	April 19
OHSW Manager	Progress the statutory fire risk assessment (FRA) programme	December 19
OHSW Manager	Introduce EHSMS for collation of health and safety information and management reports	March 19
OHSW Manager	Review OH and support services to staff	December 18
OHSW Manager	Supporting the development of a Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan	October 18

Service ID	CR11
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will develop and deliver an effective statutory internal audit service including robust arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud.
Lead Officer	Corporate Audit & Performance Manager
Key Performance Results	• Cost of Internal Audit per £1m net expenditure (SPI, CIPFA) • Adherence to the Audit Plan (% achieved) (CIPFA)

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
CAM	Work with Police Scotland to deliver course for public sector organisations in their North Region for preventing Serious and Organised crime.	May 18
CAPM	Complete a Lean review of internal audit processes.	June 18
CAPM	Carry out an evaluation on the effectiveness of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.	June 18
CAM	Upgrade the Galileo internal audit management system.	August 18
CAM	Consider the above course findings, CIPFA best practice and any findings from investigations in order to review the Council's arrangements for preventing and detecting fraud and improve overall resilience in this area.	March 19

CAM	Deliver the 2018/19 Internal Audit Plan.	March 19

Service ID	CR12
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will ensure that corporate performance can be effectively measured, scrutinised, and used to improve services, helping to achieve Best Value and deliver statutory duties on public performance reporting.
Lead Officer	Corporate Audit and Performance Manager
Key Performance Results	• Completion of Council performance reports in-line with agreed deadlines; • Evidence of performance information being used to improve Services and achieve Best Value.

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
CPM	Prepare the Annual Performance Report on the Council's Programme "Local Choices, Highland Voices"	September 18
CPM	Prepare, analyse, and report on the results of the Annual Performance and Attitudes Survey of the Citizen's Panel.	October 18
CAPM	Review the Corporate Plan	December 18
CPM	Analyse and report on the Council's local and national Statutory Performance Indicators and national benchmarking.	March 19
CPM	Develop the use of the Council's electronic Performance and Risk Management System to support continuous improvement and public performance reporting.	March 19
CAPM	Support the Council prepare for a Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR).	November 19
CPM	Continue to develop public performance reporting to inform the public of the Council's performance, to meet the statutory Audit Direction and as evidence of Best Value.	March 19

Service ID	CR13
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will support the Council to embed effective corporate risk management processes.
Lead Officer	Corporate Audit and Performance Manager
Key Performance Results	• Six monthly reviews of the Corporate Risk Register presented to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee; • Evidence that risks are being escalated and as such are being managed appropriately; • The Chief Audit Executive provides a positive annual opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's risk management control.

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
CPM	Six monthly reviews of the Corporate Risk Register in September 2018 and March 2019.	March 19
CPM	Annual review of the Corporate Risk Strategy.	March 19
CPM	Coordinate and chair at least four meetings of Corporate Risk Management Group to ensure effective information sharing and risk escalation.	March 19

Service ID	CR14
Service Commitment/ Priority	We will deliver effective and efficient Revenues & Customer Services.
Lead Officer	Head of Revenues & Customer Services
Key Performance Results	• Cost of Council Tax collection • Council Tax collections • Council Tax Direct Debit Take-up • Cost of NDR collection • NDR collections • Cost of HB/CTR administration • HB/CTR processing times • Scottish Welfare Fund processing times • Welfare Support (income maximisation) • School Clothing payments • Inverness Winter Fuel Payments • Invoice Payments within 30 days • Invoice Payments within 10 days • Recruitment processing • Single Grant Applications processing • Customer Services customer satisfaction rates • Customer relationship management • Delivery of budget savings approved for 18/19-21/22

Lead Officer	Enabling actions	Completion Date
HRCS	Review the structure of Revenues and Customer Services to ensure full opportunities are identified and implemented arising from the overall Service review.	September 18
HRCS	Undertake business process redesign (using Lean where appropriate) to review processes and implement change including utilising IT/Digital/automation.	March 19
HRCS	Develop a suite of KPIs for Customer Services and report to Service, Chief Executive (Quarterly Performance Reviews) and Corporate Resources Committee	September 18
HRCS	Progress the e-Services project in respect of Council Tax, NDR and Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction, delivering new ways of working for staff and new ways of accessing services for customers.	March 19
HRCS	Continue to positively contribute to consultations / considerations / lobbying, including by the Council, professional bodies and CoSLA, in relation to Welfare Reforms. This will include membership of groups including CoSLA's Welfare Reform Advisory Group (Head of Revenues & Customer Services) and Settlement Distribution Group (Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources).	March 22
HRCS	Continue to work closely with other public sector bodies including the Scottish Government such as in relation to the implementation of the new Social Security Agency in Scotland aiming to secure locally-based jobs in Highland.	March 19

4c Partnership
Com-pàirteachas

Community Planning and the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP)
The Service has an active role in supporting Community Planning including participation in the Chief Officers Group and the Community Planning Partnership Board to support strategic planning including the HOIP, performance management and self-assessment. The Corporate Audit and Performance Manager has a specific role in relation to performance management linked to the Council's overall statutory responsibilities for public performance reporting (PPR).

Trade Unions
The Council will continue their strong working relationship with Trade Unions through our Partnership Agreement.

Talent Attraction, Retention and Returns
We will work with partners as part of the Council's commitment to develop a Talent Attraction, Retention and Returns Strategy.

5. LINKS TO STRATEGIES AND PLANS
CEANGLAICHEAN GU RO-INNLEACHDAN AGUS PLANAICHEAN

Name	Financial Regulations
Description	The Financial Regulations are compiled and govern the conduct of the Council in financial matters.
Operational period	Ongoing
Document owner	Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism/ Corporate Audit and Performance Manager
Link	https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12907/financial_regulations_june_2014

Name	Treasury Management Strategy
Description	A strategy produced in line with the Prudential Code that outlines the parameters for the Council's treasury activity (i.e. its borrowing and investments).
Operational period	2018/19
Document owner	Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism
Link	https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/73245/item_12_treasury_management_strategy_report

Name	Procurement Strategy
Description	This Joint Procurement Strategy sets outs the procurement objectives and actions.
Operational period	2017-2022
Document	Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources / Head of

owner	Corporate Finance and Commercialism
Link	https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/18613/joint_procurement_strategy

Name	Contract Standing Orders
Description	Contract Standing Orders (CSO) is to ensure that uniform contracting procedures of the highest standard are adhered to for use throughout The Highland Council; secure compliance with the law with respect of all contracts; ensure the Council obtains best value in its procurement activity and all resultant contracts; and afford protection to the Council and its staff.
Operational period	2017-2022
Document owner	Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources / Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism
Link	https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/5237/contract_standing_orders

Name	Digital Ambition Plan
Description	This plan provides a clear direction and priorities to continue our journey to provide the best possible services to our communities.
Operational period	2018/19
Document owner	Head of People and ICT
Link	https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/72386/item_18_digital_ambition_2020

Name	Workforce Planning Strategy
Description	To ensure that the vision, principles, themes and objectives remain consistent with the political, economic, social, technical, legal and environmental direction of the Council as an organisation.
Operational period	2018-23
Document owner	Head of People and ICT
Link	https://www.highland.gov.uk/peopleandtransformation/downloads/file/564/workforce_planning_strategy

Name	Internal Audit Annual Plan
Description	Planned audit and investigations activity for the year
Operational period	2018/19
Document owner	Corporate Audit Manager
Link	https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/73347/item_5_audit_and_performance_remit_and_priorities_and_internal_audit_annual_plan_201819

Name	Internal Audit Charter
Description	This defines the purpose, authority and responsibility of Internal Audit
Operational period	Approved by Committee in September 2016.

Document owner	Corporate Audit Manager
Link	https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/70921/item_6_revisions_to_the_internal_audit_charter

Name	Service Planning Guidance
Description	This guidance document supports Council Services to complete a Service Plan to ensure that appropriate links are made between corporate and service priorities, continuous improvement and risk.
Operational period	2017-2022
Document owner	Corporate Audit and Performance Manager
Link	https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/19062/service_planning_guidance

Name	Corporate Risk
Description	Corporate Risk is managed at the council through the Corporate Risk Register which identifies the Council's key strategic risks and the actions being taken to mitigate these. Our approach to how we manage risk at the Council is set out in the Risk Management Strategy.
Operational period	The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed every six months, and the Risk Management Strategy every 12 months.
Document owner	Executive Leadership Team/ Corporate Performance Manager
Link	The Corporate Risk Register and Risk Management Strategy are available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/CorporateRisk