

Environment, Finance & Communities Scrutiny Committee

Due to Scottish Government guidance relating to Covid-19, this meeting will be held remotely.



Tuesday, 1 June, 2021 - 10.00 a.m.

AGENDA

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1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – In terms of Section 5 of the Code of Conduct Members of the Committee are asked to declare any interest(s) in particular items on the agenda and the nature of the interest(s) at this stage.
3. **MINUTE** – Minute of meeting of Environment, Finance & Communities Scrutiny Committee of 13 April 2021 3 - 5
4. **“DIGITAL PROGRESS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT – FIFE’S POSITION”** – Report by the Head of ICT 6 - 18
5. **CONTACT CENTRE AND PANDEMIC RESPONSE REVIEW** – Joint Report by the Head of Customer and Online Services and the Head of Revenue & Commercial Services 19 - 37
6. **ENVIRONMENT, FINANCE & COMMUNITIES FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME** 38 - 39

Members are reminded that should they have queries on the detail of a report they should, where possible, contact the report authors in advance of the meeting to seek clarification.

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25 May, 2021

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**THE FIFE COUNCIL - ENVIRONMENT, FINANCE & COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – REMOTE MEETING**

13th April, 2021

10.00 a.m. – 12.55 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Tim Brett (Convener), Neil Crooks, John Docherty, Linda Erskine, Ian Ferguson, Derek Glen, Mick Green, Andy Heer, Rosemary Liewald, Fay Sinclair, Ryan Smart, Darren Watt and Jan Wincott.

ATTENDING: Eileen Rowand, Executive Director, Finance & Corporate Services; Michael Enston, Executive Director, Communities; William Penrice, Research Team Manager, Zahida Ramzan, Policy Co-ordinator (Equalities), Communities & Neighbourhoods; John Rodigan, Senior Manager, Environment & Building Services; Derek Crowe, Senior Manager, Roads & Transportation Services; Sharon McKenzie, Head of Service, Barbara Cooper, HR Service Manager, Human Resources; Morag Ferguson, Head of Service and Elizabeth Mair, Committee Officer, Legal & Democratic Services.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No. 7.1.

42. MINUTE

The Committee considered the minute of the meeting of the Environment, Finance & Communities Scrutiny Committee of 2nd February 2021.

Decision

The Committee agreed to approve the minute.

43. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER - UPDATE

The Committee considered a joint report by the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods and the Head of Assets, Transportation and Environment providing information on the Council's community asset transfer policy and process, along with the number of community asset transfer (CAT) applications received to date, the number of approvals and refusals and any issues arising.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) noted the information provided on community asset transfer applications received to date; and
- (2) agreed that a working group, consisting of Councillors Crooks, Liewald, Erskine, Wincott, Heer and Docherty, along with Zahida Ramzan, be set up to examine the CAT Transfer process and the reasons for only two successful applications to date and report back to the committee on their findings.

44. TACKLING POVERTY - FUNDING ANALYSIS

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director, Communities, presenting the findings of analysis into anti-poverty spending and the impact it had on alleviating the effects of poverty.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) noted the information presented in the report; and
- (2) agreed that a further report be submitted to the Committee later in the year.

45. MANAGING FOR HEALTH, WELLBEING AND MINIMISED ABSENCE (POST CORPORATE ABSENCE PROJECT)

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Human Resources providing an update on absence and related activity, including Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) finalised results for 2019/20, plans for future progress in the context of managing in a post-COVID environment and statistical information on absence and SPI information, along with directorate scorecards.

Decision

The Committee noted:-

- (1) the information contained in the report; and
- (2) that further update reports would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

The meeting adjourned at 11.46 a.m. and reconvened at 11.56 a.m.

46. PARKS, STREETS & OPEN SPACES SAVINGS 2013-2021

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Assets, Transportation and Environment providing details in respect of savings taken from the Parks, Streets and Open Spaces (PSOS) budget over the last 8 years and highlighting the consequential environmental impacts.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the financial savings to the Parks, Streets and Open Spaces budget and the transformation in the operating model over the last 2 years to assist with delivering these; and
- (2) that a further update report would be submitted to the Committee in nine months time.

47./

47. PRESSURES ON ROADS & TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The Committee considered a report by the Senior Manager (Roads and Transportation Services) advising of the current pressures on the Roads and Transportation Service and in particular, the implementation of the risk based approach to road inspections and repairs, related systems and other pressures impacting on service performance.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) noted the current performance and activity as detailed in the report; and
- (2) agreed that a further report be submitted to the Committee prior to the Council Elections in May 2022.

Councillors Wincott, Ferguson and Liewald left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

48. ENVIRONMENT, FINANCE & COMMUNITIES FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Environment, Finance & Communities Services Committee Forward Work Programme which would be further updated as appropriate.

1 June 2021.
Agenda Item No. 4

“Digital Progress in Local Government” – Fife’s position

Report by: Charlie Anderson, Head of ICT

Wards Affected: N/A

Purpose

In January 2021, Audit Scotland published the report “Digital Progress in Local Government” highlighting both progress made and challenges encountered in delivering true digital transformation in Scottish Councils. The purpose of this report is to outline Fife’s position in relation to progress and areas of further consideration.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:-

- (i) note the progress made in Fife and note the areas for further development and improvement.

Resource Implications

Digital transformation projects and developments will be subject, where required, to separate approvals on additional resources.

Legal & Risk Implications

No specific additional risks noted at this stage.

Impact Assessment

An EqlA is not required because the report does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practices, for example, annual reports or monitoring reports. Impact assessments will be carried out as required at an individual project or change level.

Consultation

This update has reflected responses from across the Council including BTS, HR, Finance, Customer Services and Communities Directorate staff involved with the planning and execution of change.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Accounts Commission asked Audit Scotland to review the position related to digital progress in Local Government, following a similar audit on Central Government in 2019. This review was updated to reflect findings from Local Government's response to the COVID pandemic and makes broad recommendations in the following key areas of digital transformation;-
- Progress and Impact of COVID-19
 - Becoming a Digital Council
 - Citizens at the heart
 - Workforce and Skills
 - Data & Technology
 - National Leadership and Collaboration
- 1.2 The report also reviews key characteristics of a Digital Council – digital leadership, user-focused design, a digital workforce, collaborative and innovative culture, technology and data-enabled service delivery with suggestions for next steps and referencing progress, areas of good practice as well as potential opportunities and barriers.
- 1.3 Although this report is a review of all Councils, it is worthy of note that Fife Council is specifically noted a few times in the report as exhibiting good practice and progress in the following areas
- Fife Council has prioritised investment in ICT infrastructure and enabling technologies that will support service transformations. This is allowing the council to create better value for money through reuse of common systems and address the limitations of legacy systems. The council has clear investment plans for these projects and is now looking at how to invest in people and skills.
 - Fife Council's Organisational Development Strategy and Digital Strategy are clearly linked with a workforce plan in place. This includes the skillsets and culture changes required to support the Digital Strategy, as well as the changes to its technical architecture and supplier and customer engagement.
 - Fife Council has a change network in place, with service representatives working together to identify common problems and find solutions.
 - Fife Council has established an innovation hub that has a small fund to help develop business cases and works with suppliers to test the feasibility of new approaches, using a 'prove and explore' approach.

Appendix A provides more detailed responses to the points made in the report.

2 Summary of Fife's Position

- 2.1 The report considers in detail the progress made in local government to delivering digital services as a Digital Council. It also considers the digital response to the pandemic as well as suggesting next steps. It notes that Councils are at very different stages in relation to their progress and face significant challenges in terms of investing in becoming digital organisations and developing a digital workforce, securing the right skills to support their ambitions.
- 2.2 It references the breadth of action required across many areas – leadership and culture, workforce and skills, technology and data – and reflects a need to recognise that Digital Councils are not simply technology-enabled, they are people-driven.

- 2.3 Fife recognised this a number of years ago and Organisational Development and Digital Strategies are developed as “joined up” activities – something reported favourably in the report. The Council’s Digital Strategy, approved by Policy & Coordination Committee in November 2020, also reflects that breadth of consideration and ambition across all service areas, and balances that with the need to ensure the correct foundations from which to build.
- 2.4 The report notes that developing the right leadership and culture is crucial to progress. Leaders must develop confidence, through awareness in the art of the possible and challenge traditional cultures of “siloes development” to drive forward progress in a Digital Council. As we consider our approaches to Council Reform going forward, a new Leadership framework has been introduced to address these issues and support and encourage a culture of collaboration and innovation.
- 2.5 As well as the workforce and skills aspects, it is important that we continue to develop secure, robust and trusted digital services as well as working hard to retire legacy or unnecessarily complex or duplicated technologies. The report correctly references these as a major obstacle to progress. The Digital Strategy addresses these areas and outlines the steps being taken, and legacy replacement activities underway or planned to create a solid, modern foundation for progress.
- 2.6 We have also recently implemented a new Council website with more online services accessible more simply and accessible from any device. As we consider the Council’s Reform Agenda, digital service re-design will be a major consideration and we have already begun to re-design services with the “customer experience” as the primary consideration, utilising the Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAatSD) as a basis for that work. This work is at an early stage but will continue as we consider new opportunities for redesign.
- 2.7 The report also notes the need to ensure digital inclusion is considered in delivery of digital services to citizens. There remains an issue with those who are digitally excluded or lack trust in digital service delivery. The reasons for this are varied – economics and cost of connection, availability/coverage of broadband, individual skills or confidence levels, concerns over privacy etc. Annual ONS figures reflect a steady increase over the last 10 years in numbers of regular internet users with 92% of the population now reporting that they are regular internet users, up from 91% in 2019. This leaves around 8% of the population who are not “connected”, though, with the majority of these being in the 75 and over age group. Even in this group, there is some cause for optimism – while the figures remain relatively low compared to other age groups, only 54% are regular internet users, that has increased significantly in recent years (it was only 29% in 2013). This reflects a steady demographic drift as many older people now have been accustomed to using technology in their working or daily lives and are less likely to lack confidence in using, or mistrust digital services.
- 2.8 Through the pandemic, digital connectivity has become a much more significant issue and we have drawn on funding sources to deliver devices and connectivity to over 5000 disadvantaged pupils as well as securing funding for other disadvantaged groups distributed through partners. More work needs to be done, particularly on tackling the root causes of digital exclusion and in building trust in digital services and allaying privacy concerns. Failing to do so means that the delivery of joined-up, digital services will not be fully realised.
- 2.9 Finally, the report references Council responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fife was in a relatively good place from a technology standpoint as many of the enabling technologies were already in place to support the changes enforced on us as a result of the pandemic. Through feedback gathered both in May 2020 and November 2020,

improvements have been made to the solutions in place and significant work has been done to provide training, guidance and support to officers and Members thrust into very new and different ways of working in very short timescales.

- 2.10 Connectivity with staff was maintained, if not improved, through the use of the Employee App and new tools like Microsoft Sway. That work continues with the development of a new Employee intranet/portal and further development of our approaches to Digital Skills in the workforce. We are also keen to capture and embed the best aspects of this digital transformation and are developing our New Ways of Working approach as an early deliverable from the Council's Reform Agenda.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Fife welcomes the report and recommendations as both useful in highlighting areas for further development, but also as an affirmation of our approaches strategically pre-pandemic which aided our response to the pandemic itself. Both have combined to accelerate our journey to becoming a Digital Council.
- 3.2 More work needs to be done in developing the right leadership mindsets and culture, on progressing our retiral of legacy and complex/duplicated technology platforms, in further developing digital skills in our workforce, delivering trusted and reliable digital services and addressing issues of digital exclusion.
- 3.3 The Council's Reform Agenda will be underpinned by these digital approaches. Specifically, it will develop and implement new digitally-enabled ways of working by the end of 2021 as an early outcome to support our future ambitions, embedding the learnings from our pandemic experiences. This will include development of considerations for blended (remote and office combined) working arrangements, including considerations for blended working approaches to Committee and Council meetings.
- 3.4 It will also incorporate the right approaches to digital service redesign to ensure new services are well-architected technically, designed around the customer, developed collaboratively and which utilise new and innovative approaches and solutions where required.

List of Appendices

- Appendix A – Detailed Responses to Report Recommendations and Findings

Background Papers

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973:

- "Digital Progress in Local Government" report, January 14th 2021, prepared by Audit Scotland - [Digital progress in local government | Audit Scotland \(audit-scotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/digital-progress-in-local-government)

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Appendix A – “Digital Progress in Local Government” – Detailed Fife response.

Area of review	Recommendation/best practice	Fife response
<p><u>Progress and impact of Covid-19</u> Councils are at different stages of digital transformation. Progress is strongest where councils have focused on how digital technology can deliver better outcomes for people. The pace of change has increased as digital technologies have played a vital role in the public sector’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has also heightened the awareness of digital exclusion</p>	<p>To maintain momentum, councils should assess their progress, learn lessons, and identify and address barriers and inequalities</p>	<p>Throughout our response to the pandemic, regular checkpoints and surveys were taken to establish what was working, what was not working and actions taken to address these. This has informed the “Sustaining New Ways of Working” theme which is developing plans for new digitally-enabled ways of working, being implemented between now and the end of 2021, building on the lessons learned and the feedback from staff on what they wish to see going forward. Currently, we are analysing the potential workstyles and roles throughout the Council to determine the new HR, technology and accommodations requirements to support new digital ways of working. This extends to considering the future of Committee meetings in the Council – examining blended arrangements for these going forward and will be piloting these in June with a view to establishing the future approaches by September 2021.</p> <p>We also worked rapidly within the Council and with partners to deliver “Connecting Scotland” funding. BTS delivered over 5000 Chromebooks and almost 1000 4G connections to disadvantaged or disconnected pupils throughout Fife with a further 5000 being deployed in the next few months. To ensure we remained connected to young adults, social media and conferencing solutions were used supporting initiatives such as “YOUth Space Fife”. In addition, we worked across the voluntary agencies in Fife to deliver devices and digital support to those in “shielding” or recognised as digitally excluded, or where low incomes/affordability or children in care were a factor in potential digital exclusion.</p>

<p><u>Becoming a digital council</u></p> <p>Clear vision and leadership, with workforce and community engagement, are essential for realising the benefits of digital transformation. Delivering change requires a culture of collaboration and innovation, as well as aligned strategies and plans, effective governance, and engaged and informed elected members.</p>	<p>Councils should have a clear digital vision and strategy that sets out how digital transformation will deliver better outcomes for people. The strategy should be supported by plans detailing actions, timescales and the required investment in technology, people and skills.</p> <p>Councils should have a structured approach to collaboration and innovation, with staff given space and time to learn, test new ideas and put them into practice. Councils should actively collaborate through the Digital Office and other regional partnerships</p>	<p>The Council agreed its Digital Strategy and incorporated Digital Vision for Fife in November 2020, incorporating the plans and views of Council Directorates, Services and in consultation through workshops with Fife partners.</p> <p>The Council’s Reform Agenda is now, on the back of clear priorities agree with Members, in the process of building more detailed action plans and timescales and the digital implications of these will be established as part of that planning process. Work will be progressed within the Council in support of the refreshed Plan 4 Fife.</p> <p>A suggested approach for Innovation using an Innovation Hub approach has been trialled, but Service capacities to engage, particularly through the pandemic, has been limited. We would hope to see more innovation proposals coming through from Services in the coming months as we develop plans for Reform and the Plan 4 Fife.</p>
<p><u>Citizens at the heart</u></p> <p>There has been a lack of citizen involvement in digital service design and not enough focus on outcomes in monitoring progress of digital programmes.</p>	<p>To better understand the needs of citizens, councils should have a citizen and community engagement plan and ensure they have sufficient staff with the skills to carry out service design.</p> <p>Councils need to improve how they monitor outcomes. This could include adopting a benefits realisation approach.</p>	<p>Targeted citizen and community engagement was carried out in a variety of ways as part of the recent ‘Housing Access’ Service Design approach, based on the “Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAtdSD) - The Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAtdSD) - gov.scot (www.gov.scot).</p> <p>This practice is also being considered for other targeted services across the Council. At this point, we only have a small cohort of staff trained as part of the Customer Programme.</p> <p>In addition, prior to the pandemic, Fife had carried out a consultation on transport in the region using the Consul digital participation solution, first created by Madrid City Council and adopted as a standard by many government agencies globally. This will be the main platform for future, similar community consultations.</p>

		<p>Benefits realisation approaches have been developed within the council through successive change programmes with programme monitoring arrangements delivered in conjunction with Finance.</p> <p>Benefits are not all financial savings, there are also other non-financial outcomes to focus on. This could be developed further in future.</p>
<p><u>Workforce and skills</u> Insufficient staff capacity and digital skills are the most significant barriers to progress. There are digital skills initiatives in place, but there needs to be better alignment with councils' wider workforce plans.</p>	<p>Councils should conduct a staff skills survey to better understand what digital and data skills they need. Councils should have detailed workforce and skills development plans, including for leadership teams and elected members, that align with digital transformation plans.</p>	<p>The IT Skills Leads are participating in the national development programme established to support Councils with the assessment of digital workforce skills and the creation of a digital champion programme. This programme runs till March 2022. Work is underway to consider effective approaches to surveying the digital skills of the workforce and creating a community of digital champions. Training is scheduled for Trainers to develop the necessary skills to train Digital Champions across the Council.</p> <p>Through the planned survey work, we will be able to develop a detailed digital skills workforce plan. This plan will identify skills gaps and the digital skills development programmes which will meet these gaps. This work will be aligned with our digital transformation plans.</p>
<p><u>Data and technology</u> Councils are starting to develop strategies to make better use of data. Data standards, governance and ethics are important areas in which councils need to make progress. Legacy systems, however, remain a barrier</p>	<p>Councils should understand their technology infrastructure and have a clear plan to address legacy systems to create better coordinated solutions.</p> <p>This could include common platforms and shared procurement. Councils should work with the Digital Office and Scottish Government in developing common data standards and a data ethics approach</p>	<p>Legacy replacement activities are well established, and the Council has replaced ageing corporate systems with a single Oracle Cloud solution as well as current projects to replace our ageing Housing and Social Care platforms by March 2022. Work in replacing the Council's Works, Costing and Asset Management platforms has been impacted by priorities in other areas, but that work is also restarting now.</p>

		<p>It has been difficult to tie up with other Councils on common procurements for software and applications, largely due to contracts and timing issues. We have assisted in the development and establishment of Public Sector frameworks for procurement of infrastructure, hardware and devices in recent years.</p> <p>We are engaged actively with the Digital Office on both developing common data and technical standards as well as supporting efforts to develop greater insight into procurement cycles to facilitate common software procurements in future.</p> <p>Where possible and appropriate, we use common frameworks for ICT software and hardware in preference to procurements which start from first principles.</p>
<p><u>National leadership and collaboration</u></p> <p>There needs to be greater leadership and clarity of roles at a national level, with consistent vision and direction across the sector. The Digital Office has enabled councils to collaborate, share knowledge and innovate. Opportunities exist for it to do more but this requires changes to how it works, how councils support it and how it is funded.</p>	<p>The refresh of the digital strategy for Scotland provides an opportunity for all organisations which support the delivery of digital transformation in local government to set the vision and agree shared priorities. These organisations, including the Digital Office, the Improvement Service and councils, should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree on and clearly articulate their roles and responsibilities • identify where a shared approach would add value to developing and delivering common systems and platforms, and specialist skills • review the funding and delivery model for the Digital Office, to ensure it has the capacity and support to deliver on the agreed priorities • streamline a work programme for the Digital Office, with each part of the programme having senior-level sponsorship 	<p>We agree that there is a significant degree of overlap and confusion on roles at a national level, particularly in relation to the respective roles of COSLA, the Improvement Service and the Digital Office – who all provide different “digital services” to the Local Government sector as a whole.</p> <p>We continue to work with and advise the Digital Office and Scottish Government on areas where we see potential value for Fife in delivering greater collaboration and commonality and will continue to push for greater clarity in this area. It is imperative that these agencies are working effectively and delivering additional and tangible value for Fife and will support further funding approaches, where they return tangible value and benefit.</p>

<p>Digital Leadership</p>	<p>Councils that are making progress have a digital vision and strategy focussed on improving outcomes for citizens</p> <p>Digital strategies are most effective when leaders champion change in staff are engaged</p> <p>Leadership teams must have the right level of digital awareness, expertise and skills</p> <p>Involvement of elected members is not well developed</p> <p>Councils have adjusted governance arrangements to ensure the right level of scrutiny for digital programmes</p> <p>Investment to date has been largely focused on technology and infrastructure</p>	<p>Fife’s Digital Strategy articulates the Digital Vision for Fife aligned to the Plan 4 Fife.</p> <p>Leadership teams within the Council are developing a greater awareness of the art of the possible as well as starting to address the leadership, cultural issues which drive digital change and progress. It is recognised that more work needs to be done in this area. The Digital Strategy references the organisational development work we need to undertake and there is joint work taking place with BTS and HR to progress work in this area.</p> <p>The new Leadership Behaviours Framework - How we Work Matters (HWWM) was introduced earlier this year. The framework is applicable to all roles and sets out what we need to know, be and do to deliver on the Council vision. Developing digital skills and making the best use of technology are behaviours which are set out in the framework.</p> <p>Members have been engaged through Reference Groups and in informing priorities for Council Change and Reform. With Changing to Deliver (2018 on) a members reference group was established to steer change including digital improvements - both for wider infrastructure and customer/staff change. Members working groups led the 2020 reform work including new ways of working which included workstyle and digital change. Committee approval of the direction of travel was approved in April 2021 and progress in that agenda will be reported back.</p> <p>The Council Executive Team, Council Leadership Team and Directorate Management Teams have all considered and cascaded the digital strategy and vision through their regular briefing sessions. A partnership sharing event (hosted by voluntary sector partners) considered digital strategies across partners.</p>
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		<p>Investment in technology and infrastructure in Fife has been focussed on replacing legacy systems and solutions. In the process of replacing systems, we are taking opportunities to simplify and consolidate our technology landscape. Where this has been done successfully, it has been instrumental in supporting our agility to respond to challenges such as the pandemic. This has also more clearly highlighted the issues of legacy technologies and, in particular older systems, which hamper our ability to respond swiftly to shifts in demand or which make joining up systems, services and information much more difficult than it should be.</p>
<p>User focused</p>	<p>Involving users and service designs is still limited in practise</p> <p>Councils need to improve how they monitor outcomes from digital change</p> <p>Councils are adopting a “digital first” approach but must ensure that no one is left behind</p>	<p>Targeted citizen and community engagement was carried in a variety of ways as part of the recent ‘Housing Access’ Service Design approach, based on the “Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAtSD) - The Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAtSD) - gov.scot (www.gov.scot).</p> <p>Fife monitors the impact of shifts to online/digital services and reported on these as outlined in the Contact Centre review paper, 2021.</p> <p>Fife’s customer approach is based on a tiered model. Straightforward queries and requests for service are increasingly directed to online solutions. The new Fife website (fife.gov.uk) offers a much cleaner, simpler way to engage digitally and has migrated and redesigned over 120 online services with many new offerings added recently which have been well received by the public, e.g. Bulky Uplifts, Nursery Placements. These are all designed with the customer in mind and in line with Government Digital Service standards (GDS). As a result, they are designed to operate well across all technologies from smartphones to desktop PCs.</p>

		More complex or involved enquiries can be dealt with over the phone or face to face as appropriate, and it is recognised that we must retain capacity for these interactions.
Digital Workforce	<p>Insufficient staff capacity and digital skills are the most significant barriers to progress</p> <p>Councils need to improve workforce planning</p> <p>Councils are “growing their own” digital capacity and skills in a variety of ways</p> <p>Working with business partners can accelerate digital transformation, but Councils still need their own expertise</p>	<p>It is recognised that workforce capacity is an issue in some Services. Through our reform agenda, work is being undertaken around new ways of working and service redesign.</p> <p>As mentioned earlier, work is underway to consider effective approaches to surveying the digital skills of the workforce and creating a community of digital champions and skills development programmes.</p> <p>We are reviewing our approach generally to workforce planning. The digital skills work which is planned will feed into the refreshed workforce planning process.</p> <p>Annually, we have utilised the Flexible Workforce Development Fund to access funding to provide digital development opportunities. This development has focussed on digital communications, digital technologies and digital awareness for leaders. This year the funding is providing basic digital skills training at Fife College for Catering and Cleaning employees.</p> <p>Our teams work nationally with partners such as the Digital Office and other Councils to collaborate in the development of the digital skills agenda.</p>
Collaborative	<p>Collaboration is needed within councils to support council-wide change</p> <p>The Digital Office has helped councils collaborate, share knowledge and innovate but its overall impact is not clear</p> <p>The Digital Office’s current delivery model is not sufficient to deliver the pace of change required</p>	<p>The Council’s Reform Agenda is the means by which Council-wide change will be prioritised and executed over the next 3 years.</p> <p>The recovery and reform approach being progressed within the Council have been developed collaboratively with stakeholders. The Fife Partnership plan – The Plan for Fife, pulls together the strategic priorities and ambitions for Fife and provides a platform for collaborative partnership and council wide change.</p>

	<p>A refreshed digital strategy for Scotland provides an opportunity to set out a shared vision and priorities and to clarify rules and responsibilities at national level</p> <p>There are barriers to jointly procuring and sharing systems in developing common platforms</p> <p>Place-based strategies involving stakeholders from across region are important in taking a more collaborative approach</p>	<p>Common procurement of hardware, ICT and infrastructure solutions is well-established, and frameworks are regularly used for these procurements. Asides from one or two examples, such as the on-going joint procurement of a Regional Assessors solution for 4 Assessors including Fife, it has been more challenging to collaboratively procure and commission software systems and applications as a matter of course. This is primarily due to different replacement cycles, contractual differences and differences in business processes across Councils. However, we are supporting work with the Digital Office to develop further insight into the procurement opportunities across Councils through the creation of a single repository of all business applications in use across Scottish Councils.</p>
<p>Technology & Data enabled</p>	<p>Councils need to address legacy systems and put in place a more simplified technical architecture</p> <p>Digitally mature Councils have digital strategies with a focus on data</p> <p>Councils need to put data governance frameworks in place</p>	<p>The Council has a well-established programme of legacy replacement and has recently moved our main corporate Finance, HR, Payroll and Procurement systems to an Oracle Cloud solution. Work is also underway to replace our legacy Payments, Education MIS, Social Care and Housing solutions. Work has also recently restarted in relation to our legacy Works, Costing and Stock management solution.</p> <p>Our Digital Strategy references the need to develop our data and insight capabilities as part of the Develop theme outlined in that Strategy and further work is being done to initiate a Data Office in the Council to drive data and insight initiatives. The approach is to develop unified data projects and data insights, remove silos, share data with external partners (City/Region Deal etc.) to develop our data capabilities.</p>

		<p>The Council has mature governance approaches in relation to legislative requirements on data, such as privacy and records management. These are underpinned by Privacy Impact Assessment processes and the recent Sharepoint implementation which improves our management of “unstructured data” such as electronic documents. Further work is being progressed to create a register of Information Assets and Owners by December 2021 to support improvements in data quality and management.</p>
<p>Innovative</p>	<p>Councils are at an early stage of developing the shared digital culture needed to support change and innovation</p> <p>People need to be outward looking and be given the space and time to innovate</p> <p>Councils are using different approaches to support transformation but this requires skills that in short supply</p>	<p>While an Innovation Hub and approach has been created, development of a pipeline of potential initiatives has been hampered by the pandemic and a lack of space and time to consider innovation alongside operational priorities. Further work on service redesign as part of the Reform Agenda will, it is hoped, produce a pipeline of digital innovation potentials.</p> <p>Skills and resources in this area remain a challenge as they are for all Councils. Available resources are generally focussed on the operational “here and now”.</p>

1st June 2021

Agenda Item No. 5

Contact Centre and Pandemic Response Review

Report by; Diarmuid Cotter, Head of Customer & Online Services, Communities
Les Robertson, Head of Revenue & Commercial Services

Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To follow up on the contact centre review paper before Scrutiny Committee on October 27th, 2020.

To give an overview on the progress made with increasing online services through fife.gov.uk.

To update the Committee on the activity in Customer & Online services in a year that has been dominated by the pandemic. This activity meant involvement in a number of support mechanisms for individuals and businesses.

Recommendation(s)

That members note the report.

Resource Implications

None.

Legal & Risk Implications

None.

Impact Assessment

An EqIA has not been completed and is not necessary because this is a report on that does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practice.

Consultation

None.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This report gives an overview of 2020/21 regarding contact centre performance and the increasing use of digital services. The situation changed dramatically in March 2020 when the contact centre needed to focus on delivering urgent business during the pandemic. As the year progressed near normal business resumed but people are still working in a much-changed environment.
- 1.2 The new fife.gov.uk launched in October 2019 and we have continued to add online services throughout 2020/21. This focus on improving the online offering takes pressure off the contact centre while affording more efficient ways of delivering services.
- 1.3 The nature of most of 2020 and into 2021 meant that the rest of Customer & Online Services had to help deliver a variety of support mechanisms and this is highlighted through the report. This ranged from increased funding to the Welfare Fund to the delivery of support grants to businesses. This needed cross service co-operation on an unprecedented scale.

2.0 Contact Centre

- 2.1 The centre operates with four distinct 'skill groups'. There is some overlap, but they work relatively independently due to the expertise within each group. The groups are; the Repairs Centre (reporting and scheduling of housing repairs and includes the property helpdesk), the 'Social Work' Contact Centre (dealing with initial calls for support for both Children & Families and Health & Social Care), the Out of Hours team (covering the centre on a 24/7 rota covering community alarms, out of hours repairs and out of hours Social Work. They work during the day but crucially are operational at weekends, through the night and on public holidays), the General Team (covering services such as registration, environment, road faults and homelessness. The team also monitor social media channels and work closely with the online services team to ensure content on fife.gov.uk is accurate).
- 2.2 Approximately 116 staff are employed but not all of these are full time. There are approximately 98.63 FTEs across both sites (Dunfermline and Glenrothes). This includes supervision and management.

3.0 Contact Centre Performance

- 3.1 Table 1 outlines the overall call performance of the contact centre in recent years. This is based on calls only and doesn't include the 156,000 community alarms calls and 40,000 e-mails dealt with annually.
- 3.2 The contact centre originally aimed for a performance in the lower 90's e.g. 92%, but after the budget round of 2016 and the reduction in staff it was agreed that the target would be 88% of calls answered. It should be noted that this is a centre wide average and there are variances across the various phone lines.
- 3.3 Another target is 'speed to answer'. This is only measured on phone calls. With the target 88% you would expect 65% answered in 20 seconds (this is referred to as 'grade of service' – GOS).

Table 1

	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Offered	483,170	592,775	623,175	654,945	651,673	684,509	684,675
Answered	427,241	487,269	456,620	536,495	570,099	616,481	616,107
% Answered	88.4%	82.2%	73.3%	81.9%	87.5%	90.1%	90.0%
Answered in 20s	245,664	242,660	192,187	261,899	333,185	393,526	402,155
% Answered in 20s	57.5%	49.8%	42.1%	48.8%	58.4%	63.8%	65.3%
% Abandoned	11.6%	17.8%	26.7%	18.1%	12.5%	9.9%	10.0%

- 3.4 While call answering and speed to answer are important it should be noted that the most important criteria is that customers are dealt with by well informed, professional advisors who leave customers clear as to what is to happen next.
- 3.5 Tables 1 and 2 shows how performance has improved since 18/19. Answering levels were at reasonable levels across all lines in 19/20 while improving significantly in 20/21. This is evident across all of the metrics, answered %, speed to answer and % answered in 20 seconds (GOS). There are a number of factors for this which are detailed below.

Table 2

Financial Year	Qtr	Offered	Answered	Answ%	GOS %	Answ Time	Handle Time	Community Alarms
2016/17	Q1	171,326	153,839	89.8%	63.9%	01:14	3:37	39,036
	Q2	167,899	144,040	85.8%	53.3%	01:51	3:48	40,346
	Q3	153,092	134,328	87.7%	60.3%	01:36	3:39	39,366
	Q4	159,356	137,892	86.5%	55.9%	01:44	3:44	38,129
2017/18	Q1	152,699	134,142	87.8%	57.4%	01:41	3:34	37,710
	Q2	160,599	134,705	83.9%	48.5%	02:10	3:41	40,392
	Q3	161,289	135,370	83.9%	51.4%	02:06	3:38	43,187
	Q4	180,358	132,278	73.3%	37.8%	02:57	3:50	40,146
2018/19	Q1	168,858	116,516	69.0%	39.2%	03:30	3:59	36,870
	Q2	160,749	108,839	67.7%	38.9%	03:57	3:58	40,821
	Q3	143,235	113,525	79.3%	46.4%	03:01	4:00	43,763
	Q4	150,333	117,740	78.3%	43.7%	03:10	4:12	41,610
2019/20	Q1	145,890	119,706	82.1%	47.6%	03:15	4:08	40,687
	Q2	157,327	128,643	81.8%	48.4%	03:11	4:00	38,805
	Q3	140,885	117,206	83.2%	54.3%	03:22	3:55	39,939
	Q4	148,673	121,714	81.9%	49.0%	03:39	3:50	40,406
2020/21	Q1	74,396	70,194	94.4%	78.7%	00:49	4:17	35,382
	Q2	133,922	114,579	85.6%	51.0%	03:07	4:52	40,350
	Q3	140,409	121,330	86.4%	50.6%	02:55	4:47	40,725
	Q4	134,443	121,138	90.1%	58.3%	01:59	4:51	39,642
2016/17	Year	651,673	570,099	87.5%	58.4%	1:36	3:42	156,877
2017/18	Year	654,945	536,495	81.9%	48.8%	2:13	3:41	161,435
2018/19	Year	623,175	456,620	73.3%	42.1%	3:24	4:02	163,064
2019/20	Year	592,775	487,269	82.2%	49.8%	3:22	3:58	159,837
2020/21	Year	483,170	427,241	88.4%	57.5%	2:22	4:45	156,099

- 3.6 Q1 of 20/21 saw a drop of 50,000 calls. Covid-19 resulted in all non-emergency call lines being closed. However, after three months lines returned to a degree of normality even if some services weren't available e.g. routine repairs.
- 3.7 Customer service centre staff while dealing with the Covid Community Helpline (section 3.10) also provided crucial support to some of the main contact centre lines. This was important as we were able to increase the number of people working from home as the pandemic progressed. This solution has become more robust over time but back up was essential as home working sometimes led to system issues.

3.8 Access to the contact centre beyond phone calls had been increasing but the pandemic ensured there was a step change in volumes. Table 3 shows the move to digital solutions in comparison to calls. Digital contact has now come on stream fully, offering the customer a wider range of ways to contact the council. Digital channels for example, emails, social media, and webchat has seen a marked increase from the end of Q4 19/20. This was the trend previously but has increased significantly as a direct consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Q4 19/20 had an average 200-300 digital contacts, this spiked to 900 from Q1 20/21 and continues to rise across all digital channels. Table 4 shows the comparison between the digital channels.

Table 3

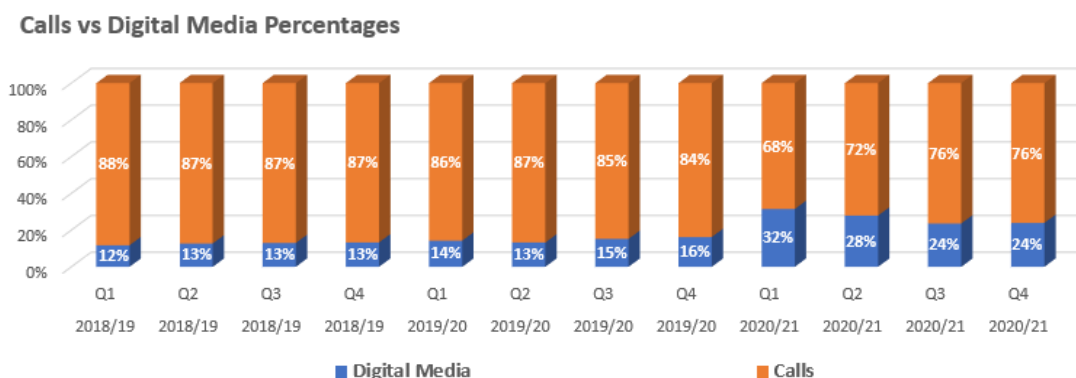
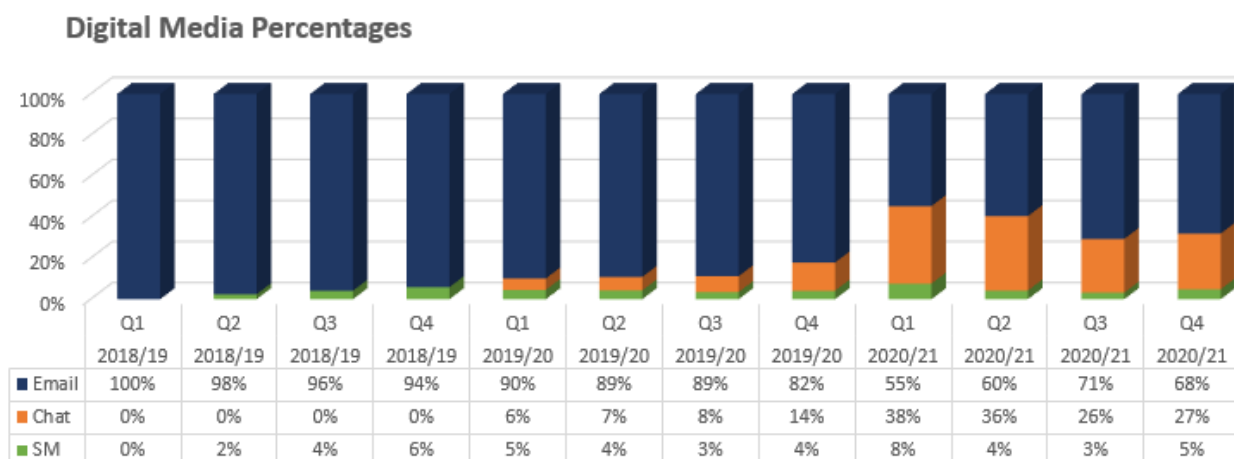


Table 4



3.9 This crossover between phone calls and digital means there is now much closer working with the Digital Services team, and this is something that will continue to be built on. Appendix 1 highlights the progress with online forms, and it is important that these tie in with contact centre work.

3.10 The Covid Community Helpline was set up to provide support to people who were affected by the lockdown, people who were shielding or having to self-isolate. This was managed by customer service centre staff who worked from the Townhouse, Kirkcaldy and liaised closely with Health & Social Care colleagues and the NHS. The helpline was transferred to the Contact Centre in May 2020. There have been over 13,000 calls to the helpline, and we have arranged access to food, pharmacy deliveries, dog walking and vaccination transportation. An online form is also available to request support.

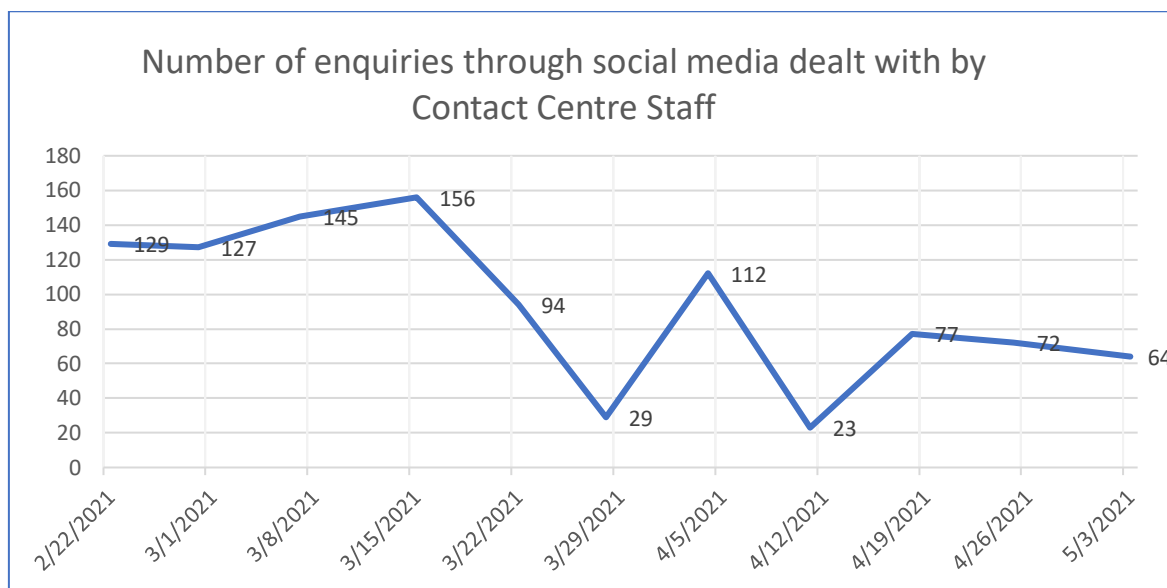
- 3.11 The contact centre also make isolate & support pro-active outbound calls daily to people on the Test & Protect database. This work is done in conjunction with the NHS. The purpose of the calls is to engage with people who have been asked to self-isolate to identify where they may require support to meet essential needs. Over 3,000 outbound calls have been made.
- 3.12 The contact centre was approached by Aberdeenshire Council at the start of 2020 with the view of taking out of hours social work calls on their behalf. Aberdeenshire run a very similar service to Fife Council's out of hours social work. With the help of colleagues in Procurement the possibilities were explored. It was agreed this was a good opportunity to expand into call handling for another local authority. Work was undertaken to agree processes and the project went live in December. Since December, the out of hours team have answered 1371 calls, an average 247 calls a month with an average call answer rate of 90%.
- 3.13 The number of complaints about the Contact Centre have seen a significant reduction since 2018. In 2018/19 a total of 199 complaints were received, mainly because of 'time taken to answer'. In 2019/20 the total was 68 and in 2020/21 was 54. Definitely an improving picture.

4.0 Online Solutions

- 4.1 The Council moved to a new web platform www.fife.gov.uk in October 2019, giving the site a fresher look while improving many features. As of April 2021, the transfer of information that was hosted on the old system has now been completed, ending a 3-year project. The technology underpinning the old www.fifedirect.org.uk was out of date, so there was a need to create a website for Fife Council on a new content management system, with new online forms and a customer account. The website also needed to be simplified. The content had become unwieldy overtime, which made it difficult to navigate. We have been improving our digital solutions throughout 2020 and into 2021 and this team now work in tandem with the contact centre to provide a more joined up service.
- 4.2 The new site was launched with a customer account which is part of the national myaccount. The account is used to simplify authentication across a number of services, something that will help us improve the customer experience. By using the national myaccount for authentication, the individual uses a single username and password to access both local and national services. Registration is only done once.
- 4.3 Most Scottish councils already use myaccount and in Fife we have approximately 89,000 total accounts in use with 55,000 of these being created through our online forms. For example, most parents have an account already for school payments, as do many who signed up for an online account for Council Tax. We have 15,000 households signed up to the new council tax account which allows customers to deal with any discounts or changes to their account online and in one place.
- 4.4 Feedback received about the use of myaccount suggested it was making it difficult for citizens to report or request certain services. From the end of May sign in was made optional for road and lighting faults.
- 4.5 The Customer Programme continues to develop and implement new online offerings, enabling us as a service to provide more services 24/7 for our customers. There have been considerable online developments within each directorate, including a significant shift to digital for Education with primary 1 and nursery applications being 100% online. During Covid and with the closure of our Customer Service Centres, customers have been able to request access to our customer advisors via the new online room booking system, ensuring our customers have felt supported during such a challenging period. More detail on all the online services provided can be found in appendix 1.

4.6 Our newer channels of communication are being well used as highlighted in section 3.8. Webchat, which is accessed through life.gov.uk, has been expanded and the average number of webchats answered per day is around 300. Webchat saw a huge increase during lockdown at the start of the pandemic and this has continued. In Q4 4,483 were offered and this has increased to 15,505 in Q1 of this financial year. Contact centre staff are also communicating with customers on social media through Facebook and Twitter. Table 5 gives a sample of social media interaction over a three-month period. This shows how numbers fluctuate depending on what customers are engaging with. In the period highlighted the peak will have related to council tax billing.

Table 5



4.7 We monitor online activity on an ongoing basis to see where adjustments may be required based on feedback from customers and from contact centre staff. An example is in appendices 2 and 3.

4.8 The Contact Centre is currently procuring a replacement telephony system and it anticipated that this will help as we converge phone and online technologies.

4.9 Our aim is to better meet the changing expectations and needs of our customers by building a new level of personalisation, where our customers are at the heart of everything that we do. We continue to aim to make it easier for our customers to get the information that they want, contact us, make payments, access services digitally or quickly reach specialist support.

5.0 Scottish Welfare Fund

5.1 The Scottish Welfare Fund has had increasing demand over recent years and was under additional strain during the pandemic. The Scottish Government increased the fund by £1.5m meaning there was a total allocation of £4.1m. There was some additional administrative funding, but it was a challenge to meet timescales over the year.

5.2 Demand for crisis grants is increasing consistently year on year with 20/21 having the added impact of the pandemic. Table 6 below shows volumes of applications and amount spent. The average payment is £106.06. The current ward rate is 71%, slightly above the national average of 69%.

Table 6

Year	Applications Received	Amount spent (£'s)
2018/19	19,549	1,478,643
2019/20	27,606	2,072,019
2020/21	31,062	2,540,079

- 5.3 Community care grant applications saw a reduction in the first half of 20/21 with an increase back to normal levels by the second half of the year. The average grant is £421.99. The award rate is 63% which is on par with the national average.

Table 7

Year	Applications received	Amount spent (£'s)
2018/19	4259	1,014,678
2019/20	3939	925,348
2020/21	4198	822,416

- 5.4 Processing timescales have been affected due to demand for crisis grants. At one point in 2020 the timescale for community care grants was over 50 days (the target is 15 days). Extra staff from the Housing service, Revenues and the customer service centres managed to bring this under control. Processing times were prolonged again over the Christmas period, but again additional staff brought this within timescale.
- 5.5 In 20/21 £3,362,495 has been awarded. This would be 30% over the normal budget if the Scottish Government hadn't added the £1.5m to the Fund.
- 5.6 Self-isolation support grants were developed by the Scottish Government and were introduced in October 2020 to provide financial support to meet the basic needs during a period of self-isolation for workers on low incomes. The grants have undergone several amendments to improve the eligibility criteria during the period. At the end of 20/21 we had received 1387 applications and awarded 412. The award rate last October was 22%, rising to 51% in March and is now at 61%.

6.0 Revenues (Assessment)

- 6.1 In September 2019 Customer & Online Services was formed to bring together a number of the customer facing areas. The largest of these was Revenues. The Revenues team are responsible for the billing, collection and recovery of council tax and business rates as well as the collection of council house rent and sundry debt. The team also deal with assessing entitlement to housing benefit, council tax reduction, discretionary housing payment, education benefits and financially assessing a service user's contribution to their residential care costs. The team is split into two areas assessment and collection.

- 6.2 In March 2020 when the UK first went into lockdown the assessment side of the team continued with business as usual whilst the collection side initially stopped recovery action and assisted with the assessment area until July when recovery action restarted.
- 6.3 In addition to carrying out business as usual work the assessment team was tasked with delivering Scottish Government grants to individuals and businesses. This was broadly split into two areas, free school meal replacement payments and business support grants.
- 6.4 Entitlement to free school meals is financially assessed using criteria provided by the Scottish Government. Weekly lists are provided to schools advising which children are eligible. When school closures were announced the decision was made to convert this into a weekly payment of £11.50 to parents directly into bank accounts. Fife Council were one of the first councils to deliver this payment directly into parents' bank accounts from the 23rd March 2020 when the schools closed. Following on from the free school meal replacement, Scottish Government announced further grants including the winter hardship payment of £100 for each child as well as a spring payment of £100. Free school meal payments have also been made through the school holidays and paid to children who have had to self-isolate when the schools returned. To date £6,808,389 has been paid to families in Fife using this method as illustrated in the table below.

Table 8

Scheme	No of Children	Amount Paid
Term Time Payments (23.03.20 to 11.08.20)	11,369	£2,713,110.50
Term Time Payments (06.01.21 to 26.03.21)	11,128	£1,216,239
Christmas Holidays	11,046	£254,058
Easter Holidays	11,172	£256,956
Self-Isolation	686	£10,949.30
Winter Hardship	11,049	£1,104,900
Spring Hardship	12,467	£1,246,700
Total		£6,802,912.80

- 6.5 Scottish Government have new announced a future pandemic support payment which includes two family pandemic payments of £100 to be paid to the parent of every child eligible for free school meals, one at the start at the summer holidays and the other at the start of the Christmas holidays. In addition, there will be a Low-Income Pandemic Payment of £130 paid to everyone who was in receipt of council tax reduction (CTR) between 1st April 2021 and 30th April 2021 along with some agreed groups who are exempt from council tax. There are currently 31,316 households entitled to CTR who will be contacted to arrange this payment directly to bank accounts by 31st October 2021. The team are working with our software supplier to automate this process where possible.

- 6.6 The Scottish Government also introduced a series of business support grants for businesses who had to close when the country went into lockdown. A process to administer these grants had to be developed quickly with the application being available on Fife Council's website by 12 noon on the 24th March 2020. Due to the volume of applications received and the quick turnaround needed to get payments to businesses resources were brought in from other areas within Revenues, Finance, Licensing and Economic Development to assist the Rates team which only consisted of 5 members of staff. At its peak over 20 staff were working on the grants. Rates work had to be suspended with annual billing delayed until the end of June.
- 6.7 A summary is shown in table 9-11 below detailing a total of £59,656,500 paid out through Revenues as well as £72,265,555 through the schemes administered by Economic Development/Business Gateway and £1,167,000 paid to Taxi Drivers by the Licensing team. In total £133,089,055 was paid to businesses in Fife through this grant funding. As well as administering the grants staff had to cope with the eligibility criteria constantly changing to make sure support was reaching those that needed it. Council officers played a key role in the oversight and strategic approach to the development of these grant schemes. Working with colleagues from other Councils, COSLA and Scottish Government to ensure a consistent approach across Scotland was taken and that advice to Scottish Ministers and COSLA leaders was provided throughout the development and implementation processes. The following tables provide details of the grants paid out to Fife Businesses.

Table 9

Grant	Dates	Rcvd	Paid	Total £
Small Business Grant Fund/Retail Hospitality and Leisure	Mid-March 2020 - 05/07/2020	5497	5216	£58,102,500
Phase 3 - Subtenants	June - 05/07/2020	91	55	£55,000
Nightclubs/Softplay	Oct 2020 - Nov 2020	15	14	£310,000
Brewery	January 2021 - February 2021	9	5	£80,000
Travel Agents	January 2021 - February 2021	22	15	£255,000
Large Self Catering	February 2021 - March 2021	89	52	£104,000
Small Accommodation Providers – Council Tax Fund	05/04/2021 - 12/04/2021	52	50	£300,000
Small Accommodation Providers – Council Tax Fund Restart	19/04/2021	50	50	£450,000

Table 10

Grant Fund	Dates Open	No. Received	No. Approved	Value
Discretionary Fund	29/01/21 – 08/04/21	1896	1600	£6,400,000
Strategic Framework Business Fund (inc. Jan Top-ups & Restart Grants)	13/11/20 – 22/03/21	3,702	2,774	£64,134,050
Small Accommodation Providers Paying Council Tax Fund (Waves 1 & 2) inc. Restart Grants	By invitation to previous recipients of the 2020 B&B Fund or Creative, Hospitality & Tourism Hardship Fund	18	18	£270,000
October Brake Restrictions Fund	20/10/20 – 03/11/20	472	344	£521,105
Covid-19 Town Centre Business PPE Grant	18/08/20 – 19/09/20	505	304	£30,400
Bed & Breakfast Hardship Fund	15/06/20 – 10/07/20	18	14	£42,000
Newly Self-employed Hardship Fund	30/04/20 – 10/07/20	503	434	£868,000

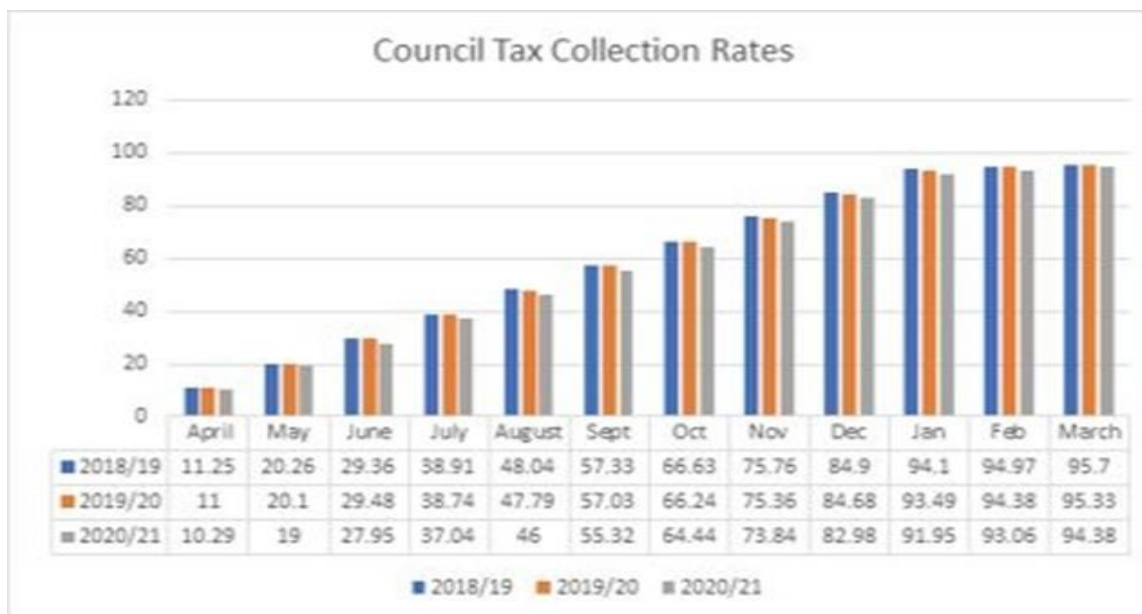
Table 11

Taxi and Private Hire Driver Grants	
Number of Eligible Drivers	1490
Number of Drivers contacted	1490
Number of applications	1098
Total Paid	£1,167,000

7.0 Revenues (Collections)

- 7.1 The collections team collected (in year) 94.38% of the Council Tax due in financial year 2020/2021 (£163m). Despite the initial operational challenges and the delaying of formal recovery until October, the pandemic the final collection performance rate was down less than 1% on the year before. During the pandemic work done by our debt collection partners (Sheriff Officers) to collect council tax debt such as wages arrestment's and charge for payments were put on hold. This team are working closely with money advice and Citizens Advice Rights Fife to identify where early intervention and a new write-off policy for council tax debts could prevent customers being forced further into poverty. Comparison with previous years is in table 12.

Table 12



- 7.2 The rent arrears team who collect outstanding housing rent debts in excess of £500 work closely with colleagues in the Housing service to ensure the maximum amount of rent is collected. For the financial year 20/21 99% of rent billed was collected. This is compared to 99% in 19/20 and 98% in 18/19. The rent officers who normally visit tenants to collect outstanding rent and support them by signposting and working closely with other services, seamlessly switched to working from home at the beginning of the last financial year. The high collection performance rates show despite the challenges the team have continues to provide tenants with consistently high levels of customer service. It should be noted that Fife has seen a continued reduction in current tenant rent arrears over the last 3 years which bucks the national trend where current tenant rent arrears in Scotland are increasing.
- 7.3 Evictions have been suspended due to the pandemic and to help with tenants a Covid support fund was made available and this ran alongside the already existing Universal Credit support fund. This totalled a combined £2m rent support fund for unemployed, self-employed, and furloughed tenants. At year end 20/21 £1.476m had been awarded - £1.119m through the Universal Credit scheme and £337k through the Covid 19 scheme with over 5,800 households assisted.
- 7.4 The income recovery team who deal with outstanding invoices on behalf of various services including Social Work, Environmental Services and Housing continued to concentrate on collection over the past year. The team collected £72.35m which is 89.9% of all invoices raised by the council the target is 88%. The outstanding debt is still chased up

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 Significant progress has been made to improve call answering in the contact centre while improving the online offering. The synergies between the web and contact centre continue to be exploited as they are increasingly interlinked. Given the nature of the recent financial year it is difficult to compare like for like and get a true reflection on channel shift, however take up of many digital services is significant.

- 8.2 The Welfare Fund was under increased pressure due to the pandemic but thanks to the co-operation of colleagues in other services timescales while volatile at times were brought under control. The wider issue of improved administrative funding is being taken up with the Scottish Government.
- 8.3 The additional work undertaken by staff in Revenues in conjunction with colleagues in other services ensured substantial support was given to both individuals and business during a time of vulnerability.
- 8.4 Even with the delay to recovery the collection levels of both rent and council tax was sustained despite the obvious challenges brought about by the Covid pandemic. The staff and our partners have shown great flexibility in the delivery of services during the pandemic which is shown in the outstanding results achieved during the last financial year

List of Appendices

1. Appendix 1 – details of new online services
2. Appendix 2 – example of fife.gov.uk monitoring
3. Appendix 3 – example of fife.gov.uk monitoring

Report Contacts

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Appendix 1

Online Forms (New Verint Online Forms Package) - Various Go Live Dates from October 2019 until Present				Phone/Web Comparison	
Subject	Reason	Type	WEB	Web %	Phone %
Education	Early Years	Accept or Reject Nursery Placement	6931	100.00%	0.00%
		Apply for a Fife Council Nursery Place	3118	100.00%	0.00%
		Apply for other Nursery Placements	195	100.00%	0.00%
		Nursery Allocation - Second Offer	33	100.00%	0.00%
	Education Maintenance Allowance	Apply for Education Maintenance Allowance	1771	100.00%	0.00%
	Primary	Accept or Decline an offer of a Primary 1 Placing Request	142	100.00%	0.00%
		Enrol a child into Primary 1	3818	100.00%	0.00%
	Secondary	Consent for a MyFife National Entitlement Card	2111	100.00%	0.00%
Enquiries	Coronavirus	Community Assistance	2386	N/A	N/A
		Self-Isolation Support Grant	1510	N/A	N/A
		Taxi Driver Grant	1135	100.00%	0.00%
Environment Planning and Protective Services	Building Standards	Building Warrant Compliance Inspection	26	100.00%	0.00%
		Request Property Enquiry	550	100.00%	0.00%
		Request Property Inspection	99	100.00%	0.00%
	Completion of Development Certificate	Completion of Development (Non-Residential)	12	100.00%	0.00%
		Completion of Development (Residential)	29	100.00%	0.00%
	Planning	Report Unauthorised Building Work	427	100.00%	0.00%
	Property & Street Naming	Apply for a New Street Name	5	100.00%	0.00%
		Change or Confirm Address	140	100.00%	0.00%
		Register a New Property Address	36	100.00%	0.00%
	Protective Services	Register a Food Business	598	100.00%	0.00%
		Report Trading Standards Issue	29	100.00%	0.00%
Environmental Services	Domestic Waste	Bulky Uplift	16532	88.41%	11.59%
		Calendar Request	18	4.69%	95.31%
		Container Damage	10007	87.85%	12.15%
		Container Delivery	6982	81.57%	18.43%
		Container Delivery - New Build	189	41.54%	58.46%

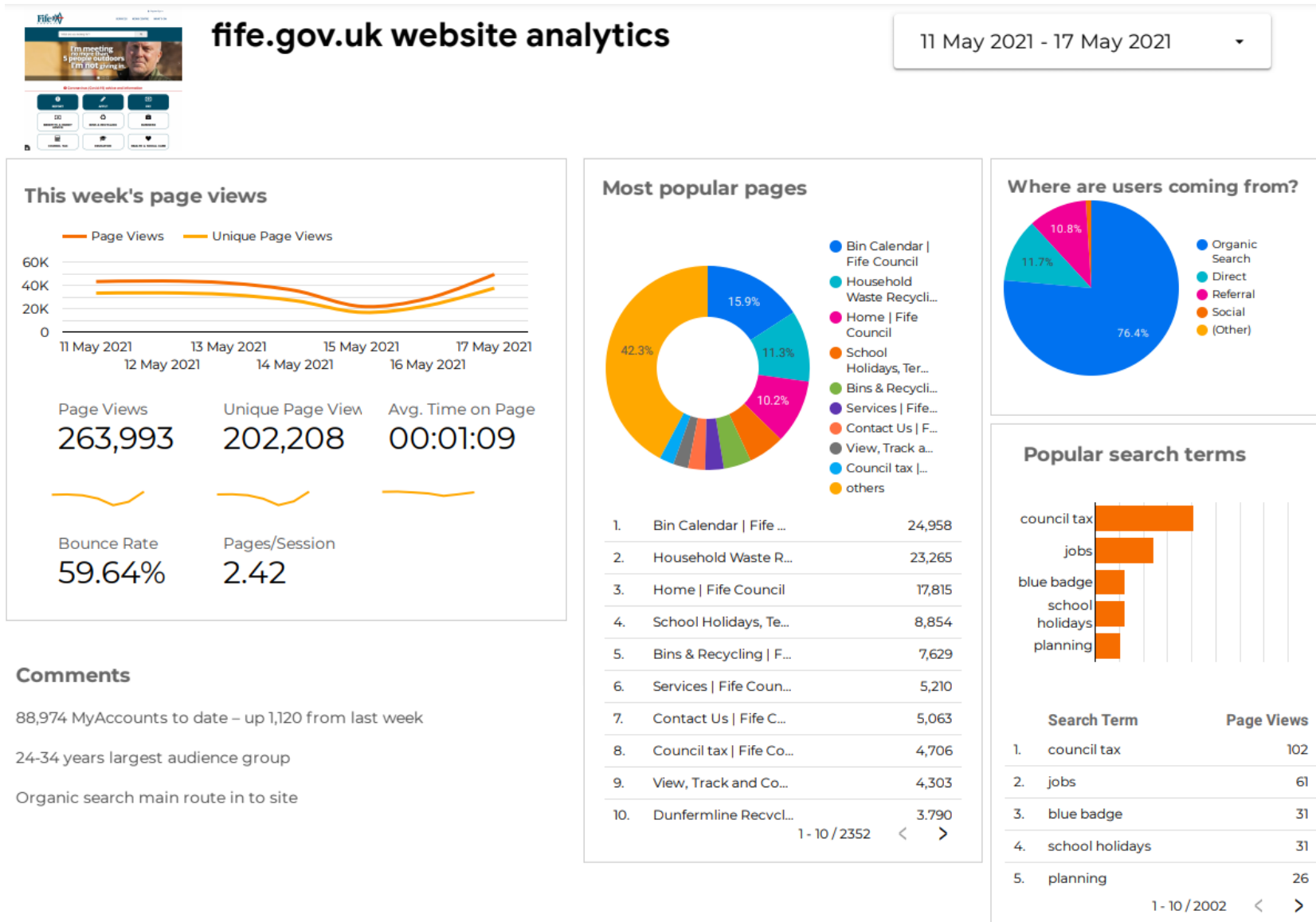
		Container Removal	522	64.13%	35.87%
		Customer Request for Service	2503	62.25%	37.75%
		Missed Collection	10020	67.00%	33.00%
		Missed Collection - Bulky	1385	86.83%	13.17%
	Environmental Health	General Complaint	1141	30.57%	69.43%
		Pest Complaint	262	8.04%	91.96%
	Recycling Advice	Additional Capacity Refused	28	17.83%	82.17%
		Request Advice	552	33.33%	66.67%
		Resident Bins Contamination	48	47.06%	52.94%
		Resident Using Bins Incorrectly	94	56.63%	43.37%
Finance	Business Rates	Business Rates - Change of Tenancy	880	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Day Nursery Relief	8	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Empty Property	252	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Fresh Start Relief	31	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - New Improved Property Relief	51	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Rural Relief	2	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Small Business Bonus	1742	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Statutory Rating Relief	12	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Change of Owner	163	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Mandatory Discretionary	50	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Rates Refund	45	100.00%	0.00%
		Business Rates - Retail Hospitality and Leisure	1468	100.00%	0.00%
		Coronavirus Business Support Fund	2634	100.00%	0.00%
		Council Tax Business Support Grant	54	100.00%	0.00%
	Council Tax	Arrange a Payment	185	N/A	N/A
		Council Tax Enquiry	6081	N/A	N/A
		Set up or amend an existing Direct Debit	211	100.00%	0.00%
	Council Tax Discount	Apprentice Youth Trainee or Skillseeker	7	100.00%	0.00%
		Careworker	27	100.00%	0.00%
		Child Benefit	1	100.00%	0.00%
		Disablement Relief	177	100.00%	0.00%
		Hospital/Care Home	46	100.00%	0.00%
	Income Recovery	Dispute an Invoice	87	100.00%	0.00%
		Income Recovery Change of Address	4	100.00%	0.00%
		Income Recovery Enquiry	111	100.00%	0.00%

		Income Recovery Refund	22	100.00%	0.00%
	Universal Credit	Universal Credit Enquiry	69	100.00%	0.00%
Housing	Emergency Repair	Emergency Repair Request	1158	N/A	N/A
	Garage Site	Garage Site Application	351	100.00%	0.00%
	Lock Up	Lock Up Application	2244	99.96%	0.04%
	Register for Fife Housing Register	FHR - Application	491	N/A	N/A
	Request Contact	Housing Officer	1203	99.92%	0.08%
Housing & Safer Communities Service	Fife Cares Visit	Child Safety Visit	61	100.00%	0.00%
		Home Safety Visit	6	100.00%	0.00%
		Home Security Visit Domestic Violence	82	100.00%	0.00%
Housing Private Sector	HMO Licence	Report Unauthorised HMO Landlord	17	100.00%	0.00%
	Landlord Licence	Report Unauthorised Landlord	49	100.00%	0.00%
Licensing	Animal Licences	Animal Boarding Licence Application	11	100.00%	0.00%
		Dog Breeding Licence Application	9	100.00%	0.00%
		Exotic Dangerous Wild Animals Licence Application	3	100.00%	0.00%
		Fish Exhibitors / Auctions Licence	2	100.00%	0.00%
		Performing Animal Licence Application	1	100.00%	0.00%
		Pet Shop Licence Application	3	100.00%	0.00%
		Registration for Mixing Food Stuffs	2	100.00%	0.00%
		Riding Establishment Licence Application	6	100.00%	0.00%
		Venison Dealers Licence Application	1	100.00%	0.00%
	Community Life	Charity Collections Notification	9	100.00%	0.00%
	Fife Licensing Board	Occasional Licence Application	153	100.00%	0.00%
	Other	Indoor Sports Entertainment Licence Application	10	100.00%	0.00%
		Late Hours Catering Licence Application	17	100.00%	0.00%
		Market Operators Licence Application	33	100.00%	0.00%
		Public Entertainment Licence Application	30	100.00%	0.00%
		Secondhand Dealer Licence Application	51	100.00%	0.00%
		Skin Piercing and Tattooing Licence Application	38	100.00%	0.00%

		Street Traders Licence Application	149	100.00%	0.00%
		Window Cleaners Licence Application	39	100.00%	0.00%
	Taxi and Private Hire Licences	Apply for Taxi/Private Hire Car Driver Licence	910	100.00%	0.00%
MFT Cards	Card Management	Apply for a new Disabled MyFife Card	246	N/A	N/A
		Apply for a new Disabled MyFife Card Approved	1	N/A	N/A
		Apply for a new Over 60s Card	2200	N/A	N/A
		Apply for a renewal of Disabled MyFife Card	2796	N/A	N/A
		MFT Myfife Online Change or Replace - Someone else	963	N/A	N/A
		MFT Myfife Online Change or Replace - Myself	5073	N/A	N/A
Parks Streets & Open Spaces	Allotment	Allotment Waiting List	668	100.00%	0.00%
Registration	Extract Request & Fee Payments	Pay for a registrar ceremony	194	N/A	N/A
		Pay for a religious or faith-based ceremony	111	N/A	N/A
		Request a birth certificate	1324	71.49%	28.51%
		Request a death certificate	309	60.71%	39.29%
		Request a marriage/civil partnership certificate	260	70.27%	29.73%
	Registration Enquiry	Any other Registration enquiries	86	3.98%	96.02%
		Request information on planning a ceremony in Fife	920	100.00%	0.00%
Reporting A Fault	RAF VOF Road Faults	Bus Shelters and Stops	6	50.00%	50.00%
		Damaged or Loose Manhole Covers	9	52.94%	47.06%
		Flooding	11	78.57%	21.43%
		Gritting and Snow Clearance	10	71.43%	28.57%
		Mud or Debris on Road	14	87.50%	12.50%
		Non-illuminated Road Signs and Bollards	37	68.52%	31.48%
		Permanent Safety Barriers	5	62.50%	37.50%
		Road and Pavement Defects	704	79.73%	20.27%
		Road Drainage or gully	68	57.14%	42.86%
		Road Markings and Cat's-eyes	19	73.08%	26.92%
		Roadside Trees and Vegetation	31	83.78%	16.22%
		Roadside Walls and Embankments	20	74.07%	25.93%
	RAF VOF Streetlight Fault	Bollard Damaged	1	N/A	N/A
		Column Damaged	6	N/A	N/A
		Door Off	3	N/A	N/A

		Group Outage	10	N/A	N/A
		Lamp Dim	3	N/A	N/A
		Lamp Flashing	2	N/A	N/A
		Lamp Lit During Day	7	N/A	N/A
		Lamp Out	39	N/A	N/A
		Traffic Light Out	7	N/A	N/A
Research	Peoples Panel	Peoples Panel Register	13	100.00%	0.00%
Room Bookings	Customer Services	Blue Badge Application	70	6.39%	93.61%
		FHR Application New	683	44.70%	55.30%
		FHR Housing Options Non-Council	275	64.86%	35.14%
		Myfife	19	0.68%	99.32%
		Proofs - general	24	88.89%	11.11%
Safer Communities	Antisocial Behaviour	Antisocial Behaviour Report	3221	N/A	N/A
Scottish Welfare Fund	Scottish Welfare Fund	Scottish Welfare Fund Appeal	801	N/A	N/A
		Scottish Welfare Fund Contact Us	559	N/A	N/A
Social Work	Community Alarms	CA Community Alarm Referral	2000	61.01%	38.99%
	Meals on Wheels	Meals on Wheels Amendment to Service	1550	30.63%	69.37%
		Meals on Wheels New Request	646	46.14%	53.86%
Transportation	Parking	Apply for a Long Stay Car Park Season Ticket	158	100.00%	0.00%
		Apply for Disabled Parking Bay	222	96.10%	3.90%
		Apply for Dropped Kerb	204	100.00%	0.00%
		Apply for H Bar	1	100.00%	0.00%
		Parking Dispensation or Suspension	116	100.00%	0.00%
	Roads	Apply for a Skip Permit	391	100.00%	0.00%
		Apply for Permission to Execute Roadworks	74	100.00%	0.00%
		Apply for Road Construction Consent	12	100.00%	0.00%
		Apply for Scaffold Road Occupation	140	100.00%	0.00%
			124,285		

Appendix 2



Appendix 3

Online service	Number of submitted forms
Domestic Waste	554
Secondary	438
Card Management	434
Council Tax	234
RAF VOF Road Faults	205
Register for Fife Housing Register	151
Environmental Health	95
Complaint	89
Antisocial Behaviour	77
Early Years	63
Business Rates	58
Extract Request & Fee Payments	55
Community Alarms	44
Meals on Wheels	44
Coronavirus	35
Parking	35
Roads	33
Customer Services	30
Fife Licensing Board	28
Lock Up	26
All other services	279
Total	3016

Agenda Item No. 6**Environment, Finance & Communities Scrutiny Committee****Forward Work Programme as of 24/05/2021 1/2**

Environment, Finance and Communities Scrutiny Committee of 31 August 2021			
Title	Service(s)	Contact(s)	Comments
Compact - How this will be delivered at local level	Communities and Neighbourhoods Service	Sharon Douglas	
Update on Environmental Health Service	Enterprise and Environment	Nigel Kerr	
CAT Working Group Report	Communities	Zahida Ramzan	

Environment, Finance and Communities Scrutiny Committee of 2 November 2021			
Title	Service(s)	Contact(s)	Comments
Agency Workers/Overtime	Human Resources	Anne-Marie Cardle, Jacqui Laing, Tracy Hirst, Donna Grieve	
Commercialisation Programme - Procurement Transformation Project - Update	Finance and Corporate Services	Les Robertson, Stuart Fergie	
Managing for Health, Wellbeing and Minimised Absence (Post Corporate Absence Project)	Human Resources	Barbara Cooper	
Employment Services	Economy, Planning and Employability	Gordon Mole	

Environment, Finance and Communities Scrutiny Committee of 1 February 2022			
Title	Service(s)	Contact(s)	Comments
Parks, Streets & Open Spaces Savings 2013-2021 - Update	Assets, Transportation and Environment	John Rodigan	

Agenda Item No. 6**Environment, Finance & Communities Scrutiny Committee****Forward Work Programme as of 24/05/2021 2/2**

Unallocated			
Title	Service(s)	Contact(s)	Comments
Climate Change Update	Assets, Transportation and Environment	Ross Spalding	
Commercialisation Programme - Procurement Transformation Project - Update	Finance and Corporate Services	Les Robertson, Stuart Fergie	
Tackling Poverty - Funding Analysis - Update	Communities	William Penrice	
Pressures on Roads & Transportation Services	Assets, Transportation and Environment	Derek Crowe	