

## Standards, Audit and Risk Committee

Committee Room 2, Floor 5, Fife House, North Street,  
Glenrothes / Blended meeting



Thursday, 28 September, 2023 - 10.00 a.m.

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### AGENDA

Page Nos.

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 the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee meeting of 17 August 2023. 3 – 5
4. **BEST VALUE THEMATIC REVIEW OF LEADERSHIP** Report by the Chief Executive. 6 – 33
5. **INFORMATION REQUESTS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23** – Report by the Head of Customer and Online Services. 34 – 49
6. **COMPLAINTS UPDATE** – Report by the Executive Director – Communities. 50 – 73
7. **2023/24 ISSUED AUDIT REPORT SUMMARIES** – Report by the Service Manager - Audit & Risk Management Services. 74 – 76
8. **INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT** – Report by the Service Manager - Audit & Risk Management Services. 77 – 92
9. **FIFE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD (IJB) 2023/24 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN** – Report by the Service Manager - Audit & Risk Management Services. 93 – 95
10. **STANDARDS, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME** – Report by the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services. 96 – 100

**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.**

Lindsay Thomson  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Finance and Corporate Services

Fife House  
North Street  
Glenrothes  
Fife, KY7 5LT

21 September, 2023

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## **BLENDED MEETING NOTICE**

This is a formal meeting of the Committee and the required standards of behaviour and discussion are the same as in a face to face meeting. Unless otherwise agreed, Standing Orders will apply to the proceedings and the terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct will apply in the normal way

For those members who have joined the meeting remotely, if they need to leave the meeting for any reason, they should use the Meeting Chat to advise of this. If a member loses their connection during the meeting, they should make every effort to rejoin the meeting but, if this is not possible, the Committee Officer will note their absence for the remainder of the meeting. If a member must leave the meeting due to a declaration of interest, they should remain out of the meeting until invited back in by the Committee Officer.

If a member wishes to ask a question, speak on any item or move a motion or amendment, they should indicate this by raising their hand at the appropriate time and will then be invited to speak. Those joining remotely should use the "Raise hand" function in Teams.

All decisions taken during this meeting, will be done so by means of a Roll Call vote.

Where items are for noting or where there has been no dissent or contrary view expressed during any debate, either verbally or by the member indicating they wish to speak, the Convener will assume the matter has been agreed.

There will be a short break in proceedings after approximately 90 minutes.

Members joining remotely are reminded to have cameras switched on during meetings and mute microphones when not speaking. During any breaks or adjournments please switch cameras off.

**THE FIFE COUNCIL - STANDARDS, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE – BLENDED MEETING**

**Committee Room 2, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes.**

**17 August 2023**

**10.00 am – 10.45 am**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Dave Dempsey (Convener), Al Clark, Graeme Downie, Gary Holt, Sarah Neal, Gordon Pryde, Ann Verner and Ross Vettraino (substituting for John Beare).

**ATTENDING:** Elaine Muir, Head of Finance, Pamela Redpath, Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services; Lindsay Thomson, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Helena Couperwhite, Manager, Committee Services, Wendy MacGregor, Committee Officer and Fiona Smyth, Data Protection Officer, Legal and Democratic Services.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors Tom Adams, Lesley Backhouse and John Beare.

**51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No.22.

**52. MINUTE**

The committee considered the minute of the meeting of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee meeting of 30 June 2023.

**Decision**

The committee:-

- (1) noted in relation to para. 45(2), that members had received a briefing note on issues and challenges with the operation and maintenance of hybrid (hydrogen/diesel) vehicles and that the Convener of the Environment, Transportation and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee had agreed to include hybrid vehicles as a future scrutiny item; and
- (2) agreed to approve the minute.

**53. DATA PROTECTION REPORT ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

The committee considered an annual report by the Data Protection Officer, Legal and Democratic Services highlighting key data protection statistics for Fife Council, major developments in relation to data protection law and practice and Fife Council data protection priorities, for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

**Decision**

The committee:-

- (1) noted the work undertaken across the council to ensure continued compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018;
- (2) acknowledged the work of the Data Protection Team, providing continued support to services across the council to develop processes and embed systems which would comply with the councils data protection obligations;
- (3) noted the performance detailed in the report; and
- (4) noted that a training package was being considered for all elected members on Data Protection (including responsibilities and roles as a data controller) and Freedom of Information and would be delivered by Legal and Democratic Services in the future.

**54. 2023/24 ISSUED AUDIT REPORTS**

The committee considered a verbal update by the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services, on the formal follow up audit report on Safeguarding, which would be issued to members once finalised.

The fieldwork for the follow-up audit, highlighted that significant improvement had been made. All recommendations from the original audit report had been fully implemented, with the exception of one outstanding element relating to the updating of relevant role profiles, which was partially implemented. The management action was, to explore options around the most efficient way to update the role profiles by 31 May 2023, which had been completed.

The Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services advised members that the outstanding element was not a significant issue, given enhanced controls implemented and that job adverts included the requirement to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Once finalised, the formal audit report would be submitted to the committee for consideration at it's next committee meeting.

**Decision**

The committee noted the verbal update from the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services.

**55. AUDIT SCOTLAND'S FRAUD AND IRREGULARITY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

The committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services providing a summary of the national report compiled by Audit Scotland for public bodies and auditors.

**Decision**

The committee noted the contents of Audit Scotland's 2022/23 Annual Report on Fraud and Irregularity detailed at Appendix A to the report.

**56. FIFE IJB 2022/23 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services for information only, on the Fife Integration Joint Board (IJB) 2022/23 Annual Internal Audit Report.

**Decision**

The committee noted the contents of the Fife Integration Joint Board (IJB) 2022/23 Annual Internal Audit Report detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.

**57. STANDARDS, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The committee considered the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee forward work programme.

**Decision**

The committee:-

- (1) noted the contents of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee Forward Work Programme; and
- (2) noted that the Annual Accounts were expected to be submitted for consideration to the committee meeting on 28 September 2023 by the external auditors and that confirmation would be issued to members in the event that the meeting on 30 October was not required and would be cancelled.

28 September 2023

Agenda Item No. 4

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## **BEST VALUE THEMATIC REVIEW OF LEADERSHIP**

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**Report by:** Ken Gourlay, Chief Executive

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**Wards Affected:** N/A

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### **Purpose**

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Reporting on best value is changing. This report on Leadership is the first of the best value thematic reports which will be undertaken each year as part of the annual audit of Council.

### **Recommendation(s)**

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Members are asked to note the report from the External Auditors, Azets on the effectiveness of leadership arrangements at Fife Council

### **Resource Implications**

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None

### **Legal & Risk Implications**

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There are no legal and risk implications.

### **Impact Assessment**

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An EqlA is not required as this report does not propose any changes to policies or services.

### **Consultation**

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Consultation is not required as the report does not propose a change to existing policies and practices.

# 1.0 Background

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- 1.1 Best Value was introduced on a voluntary basis in 1998 and became a statutory duty following the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. The Act places a duty on all Councils to secure Best Value, which is defined as the delivery of continuous improvement in the performance of all the Council's functions and activities.
- 1.2 Best Value matters because it focuses on:
  - Ensuring good governance
  - Managing resources effectively
  - Focusing on improvement
  - And, delivering the best possible outcomes for local people.
- 1.3 From 2022, reporting on Best Value is changing. Auditors will be reporting annually to the Commission on specific themes. It is hoped that this will facilitate the exchange of ideas and performance data, as well as offering a detailed analysis of a specific aspect of the work of all councils.
- 1.4 Azets have been appointed by Audit Scotland as the external auditor for Fife Council for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27.
- 1.5 Over the next two years, Audit Scotland's Best Value reporting will focus on two key themes - leadership (2022/23) and workforce (2023/24).

# 2.0 Best Value Thematic Review of Leadership

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- 2.1 Leadership is the focus of this year's annual Best Value thematic work, covered in all council Annual Audit reports published in Autumn 2023.
- 2.2 The approach notes the growing scale of the challenges facing local government and the requirement for leaders to make decisive and fundamental changes to how councils will operate in future, and for that change to be delivered at pace.
- 2.3 As part of the annual audit process, Fife Council was asked to undertake a self-assessment of how well it is doing in terms of leadership of the development of new strategic local priorities against the following areas
  1. How clear is the new council vision and its priorities?
  2. How effectively have the views of citizens and communities been reflected in the priorities and decisions taken by the council?
  3. How effectively do the council priorities reflect the need to reduce inequalities and climate change?
  4. How good are the delivery plans and is there alignment of financial, workforce, asset and digital plans with the council's priorities?
  5. Overall, how effective has the leadership been (political and office) in setting clear priorities and a sustainable approach to delivering them?

- 2.4 The report from the external auditors, Azets, concludes that Fife Council has appropriate arrangements in place to demonstrate Best Value under each reported area of the 2022/23 thematic review.
- 2.5 However, gradings reflect the point of time of reporting and how this aligns to the development of several of the Council's key arrangements to demonstrate best value.
- 2.6 Azets will continue to monitor the progress that the Council makes on the development and implementation of key developments (see timeline at end of main report) and will use this to assess the pace of change in future reporting.
- 2.7 The full report - **Fife Council: Leadership of the development of new local strategic priorities** – is appended.

## 3.0 Looking ahead

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- 3.1 Over a five year period, Audit Scotland will publish Best Value Audit Reports focusing on specific councils. It should be noted that Fife Council is not included in the list of councils that have been identified for review in either 2022/23 or 2023/24
- 3.2 In 2023/24 workforce will be the focus of the Commission's annual Best Value thematic work, with the review scheduled for the first half of 2024.

### REPORT CONTACT:

Val Millar [val.millar@fife.gov.uk](mailto:val.millar@fife.gov.uk)

## Appendix

Report by Azets (September 2023)

**Fife Council: Leadership of the development of new local strategic priorities**

Best Value thematic work in councils 2022-23





# Fife Council

**Leadership of the development of new  
local strategic priorities**

**Best Value thematic work in councils 2022-23**

September 2023



# Table of Contents

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Key messages	3
Scope of the audit	7
Council vision and priorities	9
Citizen and community engagement	13
Reducing inequalities and tackling climate change	16
Alignment of delivery plans	19
Leadership	21
Appendix 1	24

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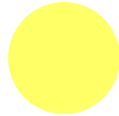

# Key messages

## Overall Conclusion

We are satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to demonstrate Best Value under each reported area of the 2022/23 thematic review. However, our gradings reflect the point of time of our reporting and how this aligns to the development of several of the Council’s key arrangements to demonstrate best value. We will continue to monitor the progress that the Council makes on the development and implementation of their ongoing developments which are further detailed in Appendix 1.

<b>How clear is the new council vision and its priorities?</b>	<b>Auditor judgement</b>	
	Risks exist to the achievement of operational objectives	
	<p>The Council has established a clear vision and ambitions as set out in Plan4Fife; its first combined partnership and council plan.</p> <p>Despite changes in political arrangements following the local government elections in 2022 and the appointment of a new Chief Executive in July 2023, the Council has committed to the vision, priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife.</p> <p>The Council and its partners are currently working towards the delivery of the plan for the next three years and preparations for the next ten year plan. During this period the Council will experience a significant amount of change.</p>	

<p><b>How effectively have the reflected in the priorities and decisions taken by</b></p>	<p><b>Auditor judgement</b> Effective and appropriate arrangements are in place </p> <hr/> <p>The Council’s methods for consulting and involving citizens are appropriate and effective.</p> <p>Community empowerment, wealth and wellbeing are reflected in the strategic priorities underpinning the Plan4Fife. To support these priorities, the Council is continuing to actively seek to design operating models and services that strengthen the community voice and bring decision making into the heart of communities.</p> <p>The Council gives citizens a greater say in budgeting through participatory budgeting and has developed a number of consultation and participation tools including a Local Development Plan, Place Plans and a Fife People’s Panel.</p> <p>The Council has embedded a culture of community engagement where engagement is a continuous process embedded within services instead of being used for specific consultation purposes only.</p>
<p><b>How effectively do the council priorities reflect the need to reduce inequalities and climate change?</b></p>	<p><b>Auditor judgement</b> Effective and appropriate arrangements are in place </p> <hr/> <p>The Council’s priorities have a focus on the need to reduce inequalities.</p> <p>The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Addressing the climate emergency is a key priority within the Partnership’s Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021-24.</p>

<p><b>How good are the delivery plans and is there alignment of financial, workforce, asset and digital plans with the council’s priorities?</b></p>	<p><b>Auditor judgement</b></p> <p>Risks exist to the achievement of operational objectives </p> <hr/> <p>Work is ongoing to develop change plans which support the wider ambitions outlined in the Plan4Fife.</p> <p>Change plans were re-introduced by the Council during 2022/23 with a shift of focus to a three-year planning horizon to ensure initiatives move away from ‘salami slicing’ and focus on service redesign and transformation in line with the Plan4Fife priorities. Change programme proposals are in development and are expected to be presented to the Cabinet Committee in November 2023.</p> <p>We acknowledge that the change plans have not been fully developed and as a result we will continue to monitor the implementation and delivery of the change plans to fully assess the impact which these are having on contributing towards transformation and redesign of the Council’s services.</p>
<p><b>Overall, how effective has the leadership been (political and officer) in setting clear priorities and a sustainable approach to delivering them?</b></p>	<p><b>Auditor judgement</b></p> <p>Effective and appropriate arrangements are in place </p> <hr/> <p>The Council has in place an appropriate governance framework in place to support member / officer relationships. Member and officer working relationships are effective.</p> <p>The Council is experiencing a period of change at senior leadership level. Work is ongoing to review the organisational structure to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver the Council’s ambitions.</p>

## Definition

We use the following gradings to provide an overall assessment of the arrangements in place as they relate to best value. The text provides a guide to the key criteria we use in the assessment, although not all of the criteria may exist in every case.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Our overall judgements have not considered the pace and depth of improvement as part of this review. The Council is currently going through a substantial period of change. We will consider the Council's progress in implementing its change programmes during the course of our appointment and will apply judgement as to the pace and depth of improvement as part of this work.

# Scope of the audit

When discussing the Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022, William Moyes, Chair of the Accounts Commission said: “Councils are operating in a complex and increasingly volatile, unprecedented and unpredictable environment. Strong leadership from councils is needed now more than ever, with new and returning councillors being able and willing to make difficult decisions about where and how to spend highly pressurised resources.”

This report concludes on the effectiveness of the council’s leadership of the development of the council’s strategic priorities, following the recent local government elections.

The Accounts Commission’s [Strategy \(2021-26\)](#) sets out its priorities to focus on inequalities, funding, communities and recovery. The Code of Audit practice sets out the Best Value work required to report on these priorities.

## Code of Audit Practice 2020 Best Value reporting requirements

### **Best Value reporting – extract from the Code**

87. The Accounts Commission’s approach to Best Value involves reporting on individual local government bodies and thematically across the local government sector through performance reports:

- As part of their integrated wider-scope annual audit work appointed auditors use a risk-based approach to assess and report whether the audited body has made proper arrangements for securing Best Value and is complying with its community planning duties, including reporting progress against previous Best Value findings and recommendations.
- The Accounts Commission also requires the Controller of Audit to report to the Accounts Commission on each council or Integration Joint Board (IJB) at least once over the five-year audit appointment on the body’s performance on its Best Value duty. This enables the Accounts Commission to make findings for improvement where appropriate. <sup>2</sup>
- The Accounts Commission reports nationally on thematic aspects of local government bodies’ approaches to, and performance in, meeting their Best

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<sup>2</sup> The Controller of Audit will report the first tranche of council BV reports to the Commission between October 2023 and August 2024 on Moray, Falkirk, Dundee City, Orkney Islands, South Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire.

Value and community planning duties. Local government appointed auditors report locally on any such Best Value thematic work prescribed by the Accounts Commission.

This report covers the thematic aspect of the Best Value audit requirements. The Commission has directed auditors to report on the effectiveness of the leadership of the development of the council's strategic priorities.



In carrying out the work auditors have considered the following questions:

- How clear is the new council vision and its priorities?
- How effectively have the views of citizens and communities been reflected in the priorities and decisions taken by the council?
- How effectively do the council priorities reflect the need to reduce inequalities and climate change?
- How good are the delivery plans and is there alignment of financial, workforce, asset and digital plans with the council's priorities?
- Overall, how effective has the leadership been (political and officer) in setting clear priorities and a sustainable approach to delivering them?

The coverage of the work is in line with the expectations for council's arrangements for the seven Best Value themes in the [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, Best Value Statutory Guidance 2020](#).



# Council vision and priorities

A council focused on achieving Best Value in how it operates will be able to demonstrate that elected members and officers have a clear vision and priorities for their area.

The Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022 says that Scotland's councils have had a pivotal role in supporting and working with communities as they respond to the impacts of Covid-19. Following the council elections in May 2021, council's will have reviewed their priorities.

**The Council has established a clear vision and ambitions as set out in Plan4Fife; its first combined partnership and council plan.**

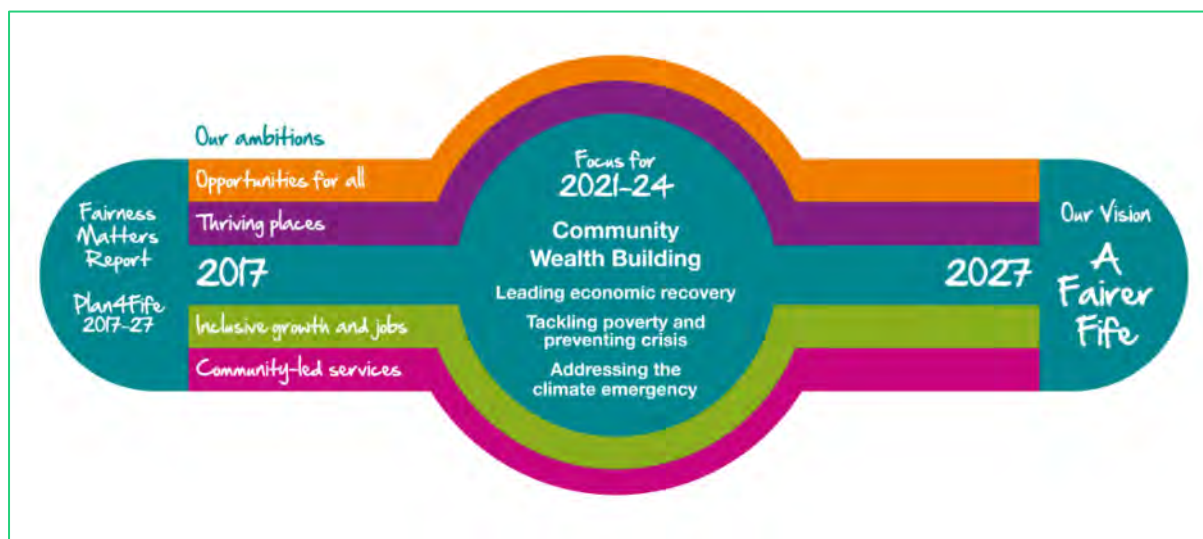
Fife Council and its community planning partners (the Fife Partnership) have a clear strategic ambition. The overall vision is for "A Fairer Fife".

*"By 2027 we want Fife to be a place where all residents lead good lives, make informed choices, and have a sense of control so that they can reach their full potential, and where all children are safe, happy and healthy. We also want Fife to be a place where it makes best use of its assets and facilities, while sustaining them for future generations"*

**Our vision for Fife – A Fairer Fife; Plan4Fife, Local Outcome Improvement Plan June 2019**

Fife Council set out its vision and ambitions in its ten-year local outcomes improvement plan (LOIP), 'Plan4Fife', which was first published in November 2017. The Plan4Fife 2017 - 2027 was developed through the Fife Partnership and is the first combined partnership and council plan. A LOIP Development Group was established to oversee the development of the Plan4Fife and partners were involved in agreeing outcomes, actions and performance measures.

The Plan was reviewed and a three-year update, 'Plan4Fife Recovery and Renewal', was agreed in August 2021. As well as being the three-year update of the Plan4Fife, the updated Plan is also Fife's recovery and renewal plan following the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Recovery and Renewal, Plan4Fife 2021-2024 Update August 2021

As part of an overall community wealth building approach, the Plan sets out three recovery renewal priorities:

1. tackling poverty and preventing crisis;
2. leading economic recovery, and
3. addressing the climate emergency.

The priority themes: Opportunities for All; Thriving Places; Community-Led Services; and Inclusive Growth and Jobs have been translated into thirteen “ambitions”, with addressing the climate emergency added. The recovery and renewal priorities are being taken forward in the context of the ambitions for Fife.

Four Strategic boards oversee the progress against the ambitions: Leading Economic Recovery, Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis, Addressing Climate Emergency and Community Wealth Building. Each of the community planning partners in Fife has committed to these and are responsible for planning, scrutinising, and reporting on performance and delivery to the partnership, the public and other key stakeholders.

The ambitions are tracked through 3-year strategic assessment and annual ambitions, annual performance and scrutiny reports with delivery plans in place to focus on the delivery of defined 3-year priorities.

## Despite changes in political arrangements following the local government elections in 2022 and the appointment of a new Chief Executive in July 2023, the Council has committed to the vision, priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife

The Local Government elections held in May 2022 resulted in the re-appointment of 42 councillors and the appointment of 33 new councillors. The elections also led to a change in council leadership from joint administration to a minority administration with Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative councillors voting together to agree a governance structure. Despite changes in political arrangements, the Council has committed to the vision, priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife. Elected members were provided, as part of their induction programme, briefings on Plan4Fife.

The former Chief Executive retired from the Council in July 2023 and the former Executive Director, (Enterprise & Environment) was appointed to the role. The new Chief Executive has also committed to the delivery of Plan4Fife. Work is however underway to explore, as a council, the organisational structure it has in place to deliver the vision, priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife.

## The Council and its partners are currently working towards the delivery of the plan for the next three years and preparations for the next ten year plan. During this period the Council will experience a significant amount of change.

The three recovery and renewal priorities remain the Council's focus with attention in 2022-23 primarily on exploring its leadership approach to strategic change and reform to help leaders consider the future of services and the changes required to respond to Fife priorities, national shifts, and social and financial pressures. The Council's ambition is to ensure public services are fit for the future, sustainable and delivered with communities if it is to address inequalities and boost life chances for all.

In the autumn of 2022, a series of Our Fife Leadership Summits were arranged to discuss in detail the vision and priorities, focusing on four strategic change priorities emerging from the plan: no wrong door, working for place, community wealth building and health and wellbeing. Over 100 leaders from across the Council and Fife Partnership were involved at various stages throughout the process. Thematic workshops explored:

- the intent behind our vision for Fife
- our common purpose
- the practical steps we need to take over the next three years to turn that vision into reality

The output from the leadership summits has informed the next phase of change development work for both the Council and the Fife Partnership. Work has been underway to explore how it can harness some of the culture shifts evidenced during the pandemic and apply those to achieve better outcomes for Communities in Fife.

The Leadership Summits evidenced both an appetite for change together with consensus around its direction. This was the first stage in the process that will lead partnership services through a three-year programme of public service reform – laying the ground for the next 10-year plan in 2026-27. Work continues to shape the strategic direction for recovery and reform and will be the basis for organisational change in the Council over the medium term.

Change continues to be actioned through the Plan4Fife partnership delivery arrangements. The Council set a balanced budget position for 2023-24 which recognised the need for change activity in future years. Longer term change work is ongoing, building on the Plan4Fife Leadership summits and focused on the themes of community wealth building, place making, no wrong door and health inequality and these summits will form the basis for the Council's future change activity.

All council services are engaged in change planning. Change is likely to focus on place, people, digital and productivity. An approach to advancing change has been agreed and will progress throughout 2023-24. This change planning work will be supported by Our People Matter and the Council's workforce strategy. Priority areas for action across all directorates have been agreed and workforce planning activity will be a focus of 2023-24 to support change.

# Citizen and community engagement

Recovery from the pandemic will require councils to work alongside their local communities. There must be a focus on getting the services people need in place as pressures and stresses escalate and impact the day to day lives of individuals and communities.

Councils, with their community planning partners, have a responsibility to ensure that people and communities are able to be fully involved in the decisions that affect their everyday lives.

Early and meaningful engagement and effective collaboration with communities to identify and understand local needs, and in decisions that affect the planning and delivery of services should be a core part of determining a council's vision and priorities.

## The Council's methods for consulting and involving citizens are appropriate and effective

Community empowerment, wealth and wellbeing are reflected in the strategic priorities underpinning the Plan4Fife. To support these priorities, the Council is continuing to actively seek to design operating models and services that strengthen the community voice and bring decision making into the heart of communities.

In the autumn of 2022, a series of Fife Leadership Summits were arranged to unpack the Plan4Fife vision and priorities further, focusing on strategic change priorities emerging from the plan including No Wrong Door. The No Wrong Door initiative represents the Council's response to advancing community empowerment at a whole system level by providing a landscape of support to services that is easy to navigate with no barriers to access.

### Decentralisation

Fife Council operates a decentralised structure based around seven Area Committees. This type of governance structure allows the Area Committees to focus on specific local area issues and opportunities and have delegated responsibility for some revenue and capital budgets.

Area Committees have responsibility for the development, delivery and monitoring of Local Community Plans (LCPs). LCPs are developed through strategic assessments and consultation with community groups in order to reflect the local needs and opportunities alongside the challenges and ambitions set out in the overarching Plan4Fife. During 2023, work has been ongoing to update LCPs to

reflect the Council's recover and renewal priorities, post pandemic position and Plan4Fife.

The Council has committed to further review areas where the decentralised structure could be expanded. This work is ongoing and includes a review of services including Housing, Green space and Property and Facilities Management to identify ways to improve consistency in how different service areas work with local areas.

### Community engagement

The Council has developed a variety of consultation and participation tools that have been used to increase effective community empowerment across services and local areas. These include:

- The Community Engagement Toolkit- an online tool which supports, plans, delivers and evaluates support services and organisations' work to run community engagement.
- Local Development Plans (LDPs) and Place Plans- LDPs takes into account the needs of local communities to set out the long-term future of land use and through consultations with communities identify opportunities for communities to shape where they live. Fife Council has also invited communities to prepare Local Place Plans in order to play active role in defining the future of their local areas. Local Place Plans are used to influence the content of LDPs.
- Community Led Action Plans- The Coalfields Regeneration Trust have worked with communities and the Community Development Team to develop and implement local plans through their coalfields-community-futures programme.
- Fife People's Panel- in operation since 2006 and consisting of volunteers, with up to four consultations a year.
- Community involvement resources for staff have been extended to include a new advice centre on the Council's intranet.
- Digital tools to support hybrid and online consultation, including Microsoft Forms and social media platforms. The Council also has an online public consultation diary which shows current opportunities to contribute.

The Council utilise voluntary organisations to actively engage with communities and have embedded a culture to community engagement where engagement is a continuous process embedded within services instead of being used for specific consultation purposes. We are satisfied that these arrangements allow services to effectively operate in ways which reflect community views and needs.

Fife Council worked with Fife Voluntary Action to organise a workshop in February 2023 as an introduction to co-production in relation to the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. The event was targeted at members of the community who used children and families' services in Fife. The focus of the event was to allow those who receive services to be involved in the planning, design and delivery of that services and to

acknowledge that the approach to co-production of services should shift away from community feedback and consultations to communities with real-life experience working together with professionals to help create meaningful change.

### Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting in Fife has involved communities pitching ideas for how Council funding can be spent in their area, and then voting on how the money should be spent. Several participatory budgeting events have been held during 2022/23.

The Forward West Fife participatory budgeting exercise was run by a community-led steering group who allocated £170,000 to local organisations who could deliver benefits to five villages in West Fife. This was supported by officers and local elected members and allowed communities to generate ideas for how the money can be spent.

All proposals which aligned to the Plan4Fife's ambitions were considered for funding. Following presentations on the proposals, a vote saw 28 of them receive funding. The projects that received funding included:

- New eco floodlighting for the Valleyfield Community Sports Hub
- Battery storage for The Stables in Culross
- A sustainable garden kitchen for Grow West Fife
- Solar lighting for Valleyfield Community Club
- Funds towards a Remembrance Garden organised by the Remembrance Society of High Valleyfield, Low Valleyfield, Torryburn and Newmills.

Community involvement in budgeting is also demonstrated through the Council's approach to agreeing rent increases as part of the budget setting process. This is an annual exercise where tenants are consulted on the potential rent increase proposal, asked to vote on their preferred option and provide feedback on their housing service priorities.

# Reducing inequalities and tackling climate change

Council priorities are expected to reflect the Best Value expectations that all activity should contribute to tackling poverty, reducing inequality and promoting fairness, respect and dignity for all citizens, alongside a focus on sustainable development, including climate change.

The Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022 report says that the impact of the pandemic and service disruption have been felt most strongly by those already experiencing inequality. Councils have worked hard and adapted to maintain service delivery but those most in need of support are still being affected. Councils must evaluate these impacts so that recovery and renewal supports those most affected and addresses inequalities.

Around two-thirds of councils have formally declared a climate emergency, and COSLA's Blueprint for Local Government states that climate change is a 'greater threat than COVID'. The Scottish Government has recently published guidance on public sector leadership on the global climate emergency to help public bodies in leading climate action. Addressing the climate emergency and setting actions to achieve net zero will need to be a key element of councils' recovery and renewal from the pandemic.

## The Council's priorities have a focus on the need to reduce inequalities.

The Fife Partnership's overarching vision is for "a fairer Fife". The Plan4Fife has a strong focus on addressing inequalities through the four key themes of council and partnership work:

### **Opportunities for All**

Ensuring that no-one is left behind. The aim is to ensure that everyone can access opportunities in education, training, jobs and wider society, and have equal access to the support and advice they might need to support a fulfilling and decent life.

### **Thriving Places**

Safe, well designed and maintained places that promote wellbeing, where people are proud to be, and where they have access to the services and facilities they need at different stages of their lives.



### **Inclusive Growth and Jobs**

Inclusive growth and jobs in the local economy should benefit everyone, and shouldn't pass people and places by. Based on assessments of need, the focus is on improving investment, growth and participation by businesses, people and communities, particularly in the Mid-Fife area. We aim to support businesses to grow and to make sure that communities benefit from new investment.

### **Community Led Services**

Putting communities and service users at the heart of how we design services, and building on the strengths and assets we have in our workforce and in our communities, to deliver valued services that meet the real needs of real people.

A range of community organisations, including Fife Centre for Equalities, were involved in strategic assessments and consultations that informed the Plan4Fife and subsequent local community plans.

From summer 2020 the Council and its partners began a collaborative process to identify recovery and reform priorities. Sub committees of the former Policy & Co-ordination Committee and member officer working groups were established to develop; immediate recovery, policy choices and longer term recovery. Areas of focus were identified as: poverty and crisis prevention, leading economic recovery, climate change and green recovery, education recovery, sustaining services through new ways of working, transport, sport and leisure recovery. In June 2020, the Council identified a number of priorities for reform and recovery as a routemap through and out of the crisis. This led to focused work on a number of issues: including leading economic recovery, attainment, employability, homelessness and passenger transport.

The Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021-24 sets out the equality gaps, opportunities and improvements the Fife Partnership aim to achieve. The Tackling Poverty & Preventing Crisis (TPPC) Board is responsible for leading and coordinating the delivery of activity to tackle poverty and prevent crisis. The Board is multi-agency with representation from key Fife Council Services, NHS Fife Public Health, Fife Voluntary Action, CARF and Fife Gingerbread.

## **The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Addressing the climate emergency is a key priority within the Partnership's Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021-24.**

Fife Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Climate Fife strategy sets out the local issues and how these will be addressed. One of the three key priorities within the Recovery and Renewal Plan is "Addressing the Climate Emergency". A new ambition was added as part of the Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021-24

declaring a council and partnership commitment to work towards lower carbon emissions in Fife, in line with national targets.

The targets and actions are set out in Climate Fife. Fife Council provides an annual Public Body Duties Report which is required in compliance with climate change duties established under S44 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and in accordance with subsequent orders.

# Alignment of delivery plans

Making the best use of public resources is at the heart of delivering Best Value. With clear plans and strategies in place, and with sound governance and strong leadership, a council will be well placed to ensure that all of its resources are deployed to achieve its strategic priorities, meet the needs of its communities and deliver continuous improvement.

## Work is ongoing to develop change plans which support the wider ambitions outlined in the Plan4Fife

The development and implementation of Fife Council's annual service change plans was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. These were re-introduced during 2022/23 with a shift of focus to a three-year planning horizon. Fife Council has acknowledged that the change in approach is to ensure change programme initiatives move away from 'salami slicing' and focus on service redesign and transformation in line with the Plan4Fife priorities, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and workforce plans. The Council is working closely with the Digital Portfolio Board to reflect the expectation that the approach to change will be achieved through digitalisation.

The Council is committed to embedding a culture of openness and transparency to the communication of change. This is demonstrated through clear communication channels including continuous engagement with Trade Unions in relation to the direction of travel for people changes, Fife Leadership Summits and Chief Executive blogs to communicate areas of key change.

The Council's revised approach to change planning is being developed through the following phases:

- Phase 1- Work focused on understanding the current position, wider policy propositions and identifying and prioritising areas to focus change effort. This included digitally enabled productivity, data and insight driven change, potential organisational change linked to the No Wrong Door and place-based delivery/decentralisation ambitions set out in the strategic change priorities in the Plan4Fife. This stage ran from April to June 2023.
- Phase 2- Work is focused on policy and outcome alignment, changes to operating arrangements and digital and data opportunities. This includes work on the business cases behind strategic change and includes significant leadership investment in terms of development, support and challenge. This stage is running from June to September 2023.
- Phase 3 - Work will be focused on outlining and consider proposals for organisational and structural change required to respond to the challenges and

opportunities identified in phase 1 and the outline propositions coming through phase 2. The output from this phase is expected to be considered by the Cabinet Committee in November.

We are satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place to oversee the development of the Council's three year change plans. However, we acknowledge that the change plans have not been fully developed and as a result we will continue to monitor the implementation and delivery of the change plans to fully assess the impact which these are having on contributing towards transformation and redesign of the Council's services.

# Leadership

Effective leadership from councillors, chief executives and senior officers, is key to councils achieving their objectives and providing clear strategic direction. The complex local government environment means collaborative leadership, working with partners, communities and citizens to improve outcomes is more important than ever.

Leaders need to be skilled in effective strategic thinking, decision-making and collaborative working and able to learn lessons from new ways of working. Councillors and officers must be clear on their roles in setting the vision and planning for its delivery.

Leaders should demonstrate behaviours and working relationships that foster a culture of cooperation, and a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation. Good conduct and behaviours when working together are crucial. Working relationships between members and between members and officers should be constructive and productive. Councillors should show a commitment to agreed council priorities and work together to achieve them.

**The Council has in place an appropriate governance framework in place to support member / officer relationships. Member and officer working relationships are effective.**

Following the Local Government elections held in May 2022, the councillors voted for a new system of governance based on a Cabinet structure. The Cabinet Committee is responsible for strategic policy decisions and membership of the Cabinet consists of the Leader of the Council (Chair), six strategic spokespersons and ordinary members up to a total of 21 members.

Cross party working groups are established as required to explore issues, strategic direction or areas of policy development. For example a cross party group developed the council position on community wealth building.

The Chief Executive meets regularly with the Leader of the Council and the leaders of other political parties. The Chief Executive, Executive Directors and service managers also meet regular with cabinet spokespeople about their portfolios.

Various structures promote collaborative working between local councillors and officers. These include the formal area committee work programme, mega ward meetings, elected member workshops, development of Local Community Plans and directing spend of decentralised budgets on priorities such as community recovery fund, anti-poverty, roads and transportation.

Political leaders meet regularly as the Cross Party Leadership Group to discuss items of interest, including governance arrangements.

Following the Local Government elections in 2022, the Council delivered a comprehensive induction process for all members, which was well received. A councillor information hub has been created on the intranet to provide a central induction resource for councillors to consult. Some of the training sessions, were recorded so members can revisit those training sessions in their own time.

Members regularly receive in-house training and they also are kept up to date with briefings.

All elected members were recently surveyed about their training needs. Almost 80% felt that they were satisfied with the training sessions delivered to date. A programme for training is due to be considered by group leaders and rolled out in 2023/24. It will support elected members to undertake their policy setting, scrutiny, and regulatory roles more effectively.

The Code of Conduct for Councillors forms the basis of the principles and values for elected members. The Member/Officer protocol was revised to reflect the recently updated Code of Conduct and administration changes. The Council has recognised an opportunity to revisit its protocol to ensure it continues to remain up to date and widely accessed.

Effective working relationships exist between senior officers and councillors with positions of responsibility. Outside of formal committee meetings, councillors are regularly briefed on major projects, developments or issues that arise. Services run workshops to raise awareness of important pieces of work or to engage local members at the early stages of a project, for example on decentralisation work.

**The Council is experiencing a period of change at senior leadership level. Work is ongoing to review the organisational structure to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver the Council's ambitions.**

The Council's senior leadership team (CLT) is a mature team comprising officers with many years' experience, who are skilled leaders and professionals.

The Council has however experienced a level of turnover, predominantly in the Council Executive Team. It has recently recruited an Executive Director of Place, following the appointment of the former Executive Director to the post of Chief Executive. One other Executive Director has retired and a Head of Service has moved to a new role in another Council. Temporary arrangements have been agreed for both roles pending a decision on the organisation's future structure.

Earlier this year workforce planning discussions were held with all members of the senior team and this work has confirmed their future plans and allowed the Council Executive Team to consider where succession and development plans need to be

put in place. No significant risks have been identified by the Council in terms of capacity or skills but there are many challenges, pressures and competing priorities which stretch resources.

Digital leadership is a skill area, the Council has identified as being key to progressing its ambitions. The Council has created a Digital Portfolio Board to provide strategic digital leadership and governance across the council. Digital Leaders for all Services and development options for digital leadership skills are being explored. As well as digital leadership skills, cultural change is also required to develop more sustainable and joined up approaches to digital public service delivery, breaking down traditional "limited horizon" planning and silo-based approaches, to develop much more impactful opportunities and proposals for digitally-enabled transformation.

# Appendix 1

## Key developments across the Council in 2023/24

Key development	Timeline
Review of the Council’s organisational structure to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver the key priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife	April 2024
Plan4Fife refresh 2024	August 2024
Development of 3 year change plans which support the wider ambitions outlined in the Plan4Fife.	April 2024
Review of areas where the Council’s decentralised structure could be expanded	December 2023
Development of a revised approach to elected members on-going professional development and training. This includes consideration of the identification and expansion of mandatory areas of training.	December 2023



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28 September 2023  
Agenda Item No. 5

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## Information Requests Annual Report 2022-23

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**Report by:** Diarmuid Cotter, Head of Customer and Online Services, Communities

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**Wards Affected:** All

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### Purpose

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This is the annual report detailing requests for information received in terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA): the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (EIR) and the GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

### Recommendation(s)

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That the Committee: -

- Note the workload arising from managing information requests.
- Comment on the performance detailed in this report.

### Resource Implications

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This report does not have any resource implications.

### Legal & Risk Implications

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Failure to comply with the relevant statutory provisions in relation to Information Requests leaves the Council exposed to reputational damage, and potential enforcement action from regulatory bodies including monetary penalty notices.

### Impact Assessment

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An IA Checklist is not required as this is a performance report and does not recommend changes to Council policy and does not require a decision.

### Consultation

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none

# 1.0 Background

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1.1 Anyone has the right to ask the Council for information that is held by the Council. Once received, each Information Request will be processed in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements. To assist in understanding the following performance information, please find an explanation of the various types of requests received and managed by IMRT.

- FOI - Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 – all requests for information received by Fife Council fall in scope of FOI.
- EIR - Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 – requests for information that is held relating to the environment, such as building, roads, health etc
- (SAR) General Data Protection Regulations 2018 – Subject Access Requests – Data subject requests personal information about themselves.
- Other – There are various requests received under this heading:
  - Pupils' Educational Records (Scotland) Regulations 2003 – information parents/carers can request in relation to their child Education.
  - Child Disability Payments (CDP) – Requests received from Social Security Scotland for information to assist parents with claims for their children. (Previously Disability Living Allowance)
  - Adult Disability Payments (ADP) – Requests received from Social Security Scotland for information to assist adults applying for disability allowance (Previously PIP)
  - Data Protection Act 2018 exemptions –
    - S2 – Crime & Taxation – In the main these requests are received from Police Scotland but can be made by authorities investigating fraud.
    - S5 – Information required to be disclosed by law etc or in connection with legal proceedings – These requests are received from other authorities who have legislative power to access personal information an example would be court orders.

## 2.0 Developments – 2022/23

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- 2.1 Two consultations have taken place relating to the Freedom of Information Act. One has been carried out by Scottish Government and the other is a Private Members Bill that was raised by Katie Clark MP.

The outcome of these consultations is not yet known; however, it is likely that it will mainly concern the following areas:

- Publication Code of Practice, which will replace the current Publication Scheme.
- Improving enforcement
- Changes to exemptions to include the public interest test is carried out for all.
- Section 5 Powers – this allows additional bodies to be brought into scope of the Act.
- Transfer of requests between authorities.
- Introducing a statutory role of Freedom of Information Officer
- Requirement to provide agility and clarity in defining duties and ensuring access to information rights in the face of changing modes of information use, such as WhatsApp etc.

- 2.2 Further changes are expected to be made in relation to subject access requests. These changes have not been confirmed at this time.

- 2.3 A new process to the application and claims for Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments have been implemented by Social Security Scotland and Scottish Government. Part of this process includes data sharing between Scottish Authorities and Social Security Scotland.

A request was made to authorities to identify a Front Door Team to manage requests being received by the Council from Social Security Scotland. IMRT were identified as the appropriate team and have taken the lead to embed the process into Fife Council.

The program went live for CDP requests in November 2021. This allowance replaced the previous Disability Living Allowance. These applications relate to families with children who have disabilities, and they request information on the day to day needs of the child which is mainly sought from Teachers and Social Workers.

ADP replaces the allowance previously known as Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and the new process was implemented in Fife Council in July 2022. These requests are mainly directed to Social Workers within Adult Services for information they can provide on the day-to-day needs of the applicant.

- 2.4 Funding was provided by the Scottish Government for the implementation of the Front Door Team and IMRT have recruited additional staff to assist with this workload.
- 2.5 The additional staff within IMRT has allowed for a restructuring of team roles and changes applied to the tasks that are being carried out by each member of the team. Processes have also been updated to assist with these changes.
- 2.6 Training has been provided to all new staff and IMRT are now all working to full capacity.
- 2.7 All employees working for the council have a duty to understand their role in the request process. A training program for all services has been set up and is being rolled out by IMRT. This training program aims to address culture and awareness concerns that have been identified by IMRT staff during the progression of requests and reviews.
- 2.8 Further changes have been made to the review process for FOI/EIR & SAR requests. In the past all reviews had been carried out by Solicitors within Legal Services. The new process now includes the Lead Officer and Co-Ordinator's within IMRT to carry out reviews where the applicant refers to a dissatisfaction due to a failure to be provided with all the information requested. These currently account for 90% of the reviews received by the council.

### 3.0 Information Requests – 2022/23

This section provides the following information:

- data and performance of all types of requests
- request performance of FOI/EIR and SAR
- details of escalation that has been required to be carried out by IMRT to access the required data.
- information relating to the reason for lateness. This identifies whether the late response was due to IMRT, Service or Other

#### 3.1 Overall Requests Received and Performance

3.1.1 5,572 Information Requests were formally logged between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. This total is made up of:

- 1,541 Freedom of Information Requests (FOISA) – 28% of total requests received
- 780 Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) – 14% of total requests received
- 709 Subject Access Requests (SAR) – 13% of total requests received
- 2,542 Other requests including S2 and BAU – 46% of total requests received

3.1.2 Figure 1 below highlights the number of requests by type received between 2019/20 and 2022/23.

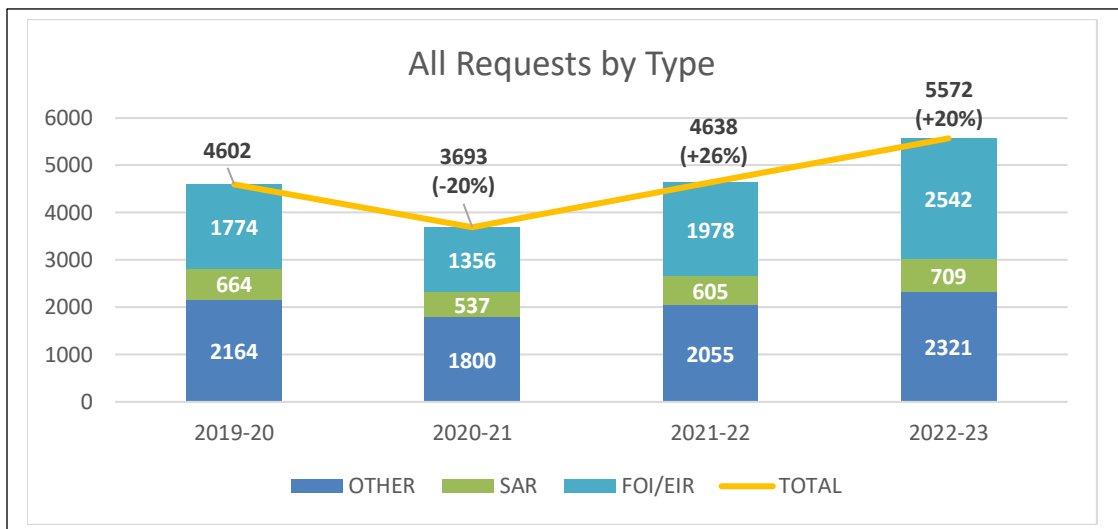


Figure-1 –shows all requests received

3.1.3 2022/23 has identified a rise in all types of requests being received. CDP and ADP requests contribute to 3% of the rise shown above.

3.1.4 Figure 2 below shows the performance of all types of requests received. This shows that performance fell by 2% overall during 2022/23.

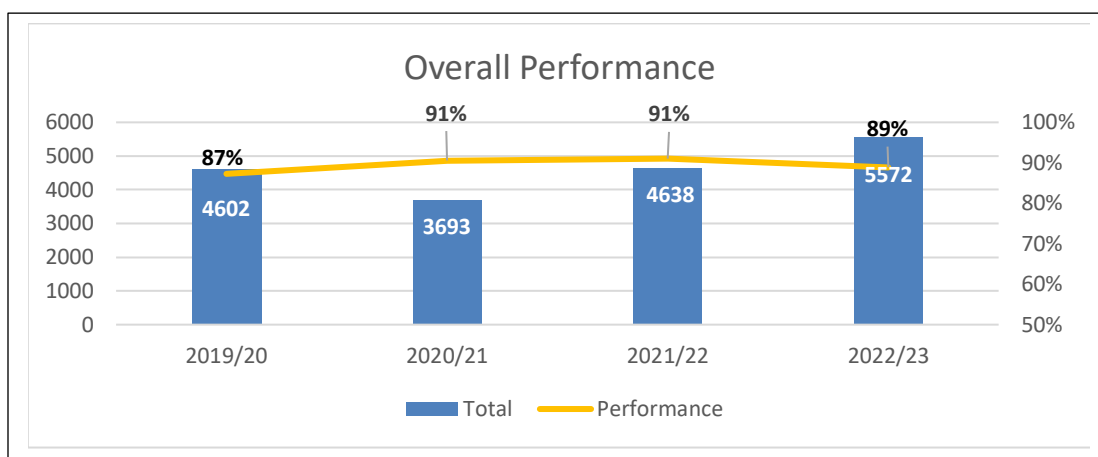


Figure-2 –Overall Performance

3.1.5 The number of requests received monthly can be unpredictable and varied. Figure 3 below shows requests received by month over a three year period. The broken line with the comparable colour shows the numbers of requests responded to.

3.1.6 Requests during the last quarter of 2022/23 rose consistently high, which has also continued into 2023/24.

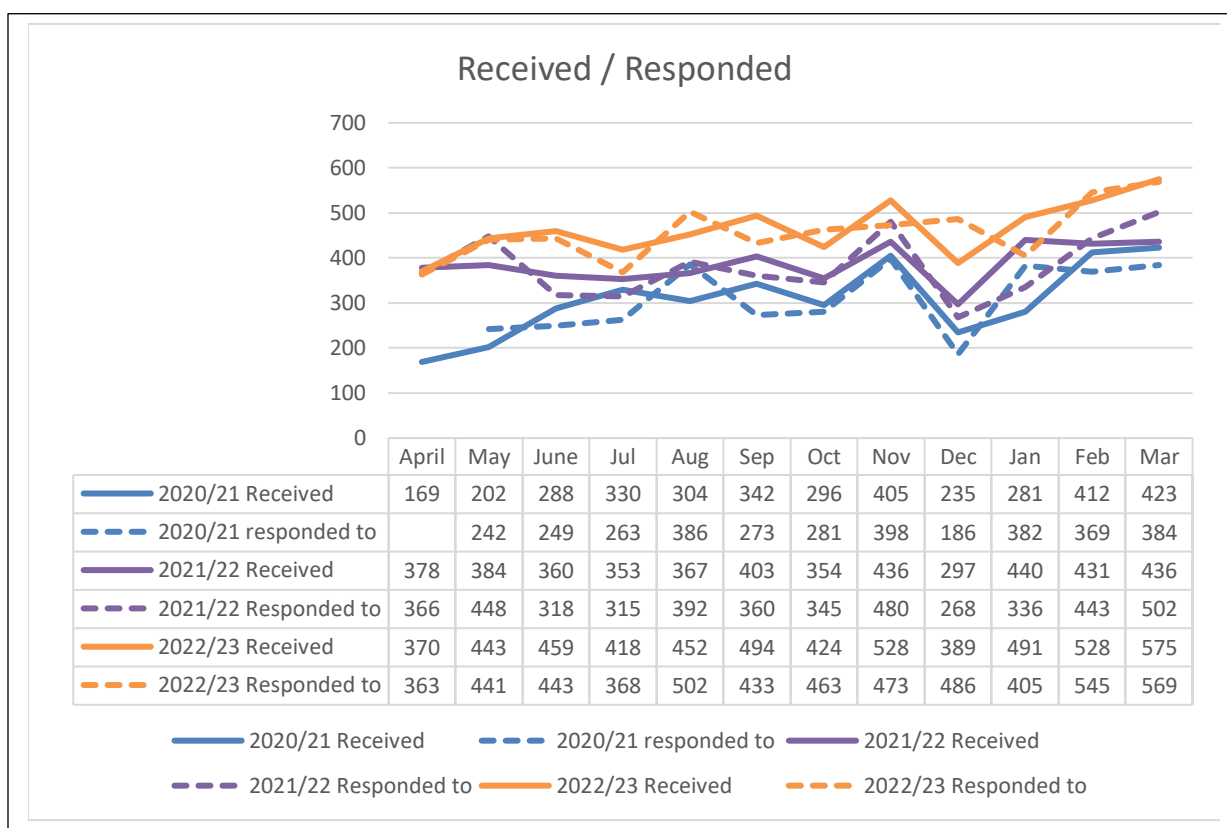


Figure 3 – Information Request Monthly by Request type

3.1.7 All requests are individual, and although some requests can be dealt with speedily, a large number of requests are complex and time consuming. There are various reasons for this, such as the number of questions within each request, the sensitivity of the subject, or the number of services/locations required to be contacted for information.

### 3.2 FOI/EIR Requests and Performance

3.2.1 Figure 4 below shows the number of FOISA/EIR requests received during 2019/20 – 2022/23 and the performance of these request types during this time.

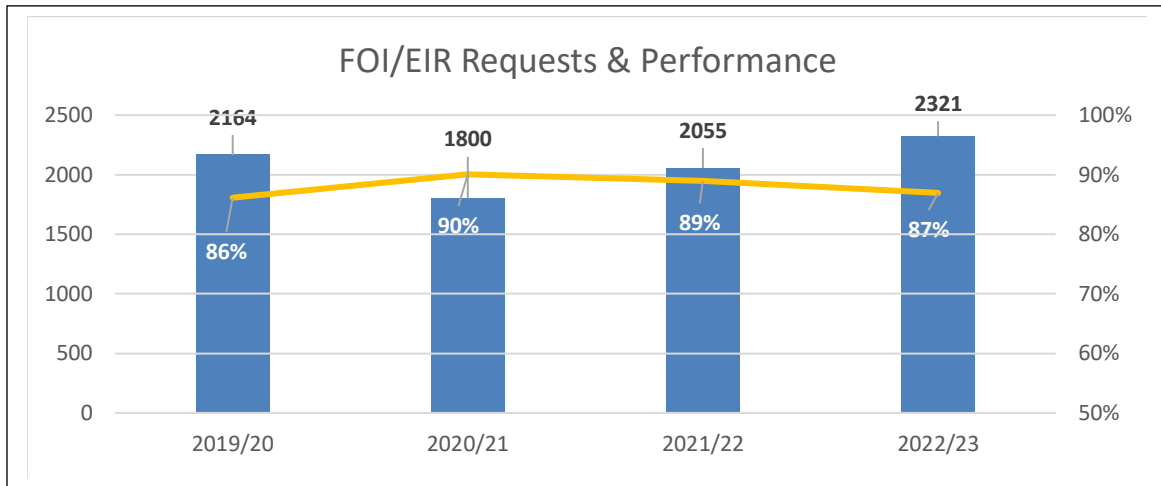


Figure 4 –FOI/EIR received and performance

3.2.2 The above figures show a slight drop in performance of 2 % during 2022-23 compared to the previous year. Please note over this time requests rose by 13%.

### 3.3 SAR Received and Performance

3.3.1 Below figure 5 shows details for SAR’s received by the Council and the performance between years 2019-20 to 2022/23.

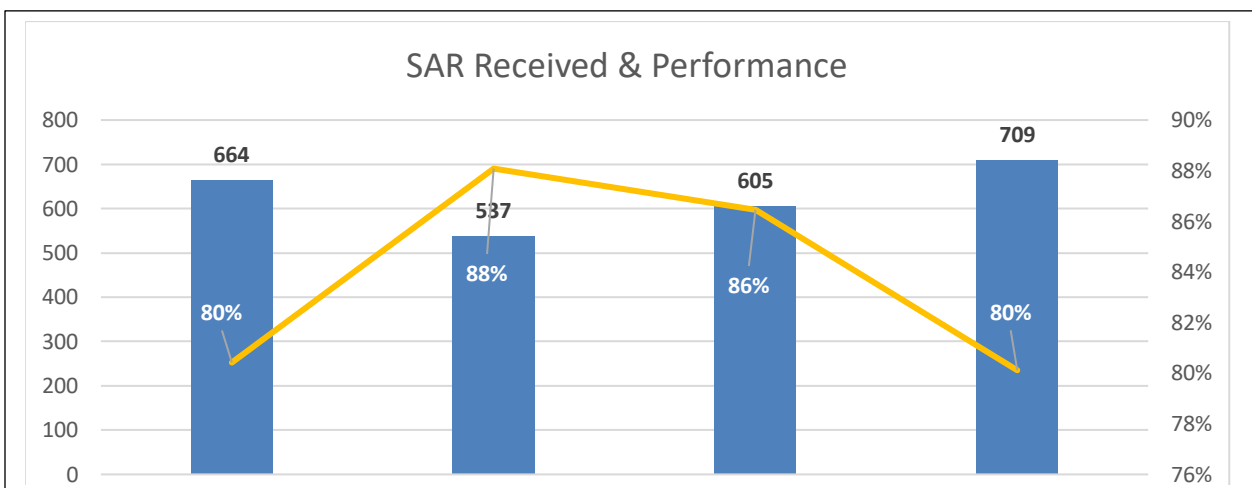


Figure 5 – SAR received and performance



3.3.2 Although the performance of SAR's dropped by 6%, the numbers of requests received also rose by 17% during 2022/23 compared to the previous year.

3.3.3 SARs are particularly time consuming to manage. Improvements in managing these types of requests is continuing, in particular how to manage the large amount of duplicate data held and transferring completed requests to the Applicants.

### 3.4 CDP/ADP

3.4.1 As previously advised, these types of requests are reasonably new to IMRT. IMRT are currently working alongside Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland while implementation of the process and new systems is ongoing.

3.4.2 Figure 6 shows the numbers being received, the performance and the predicted numbers of requests for the Council.

3.4.3 Performance has been affected by various factors. An example of this would be that a request requiring a response from a teacher can be received while schools are closed. Other factors have mainly been due to technical issues that are out with the Councils control.

3.4.4 ADP has been slow to progress. It has been found that requests are being incorrectly directed to GP surgeries. Changes have been implemented into the application form to address this and it is expected that these will rise over the coming months.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2028/29
<b>CDP Actual</b>	57	261	95	0	0	0	0
<b>Performance</b>	89%	86%					
CDP Predicted (mean)	40	130	150	150	150	160	160
% received	143%	201%	63%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>ADP Actual</b>	0	14	10	0	0	0	0
<b>Performance</b>	0	93%					
ADP Predicted (mean)	0	70	180	180	140	140	140
% received	0	20%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%

### 3.5 Service Requests & Performance

3.5.1 The number of requests and the percentage of the total number of requests received by the Council is shown below in figure 7. This is broken down by the Service areas available on aspire.

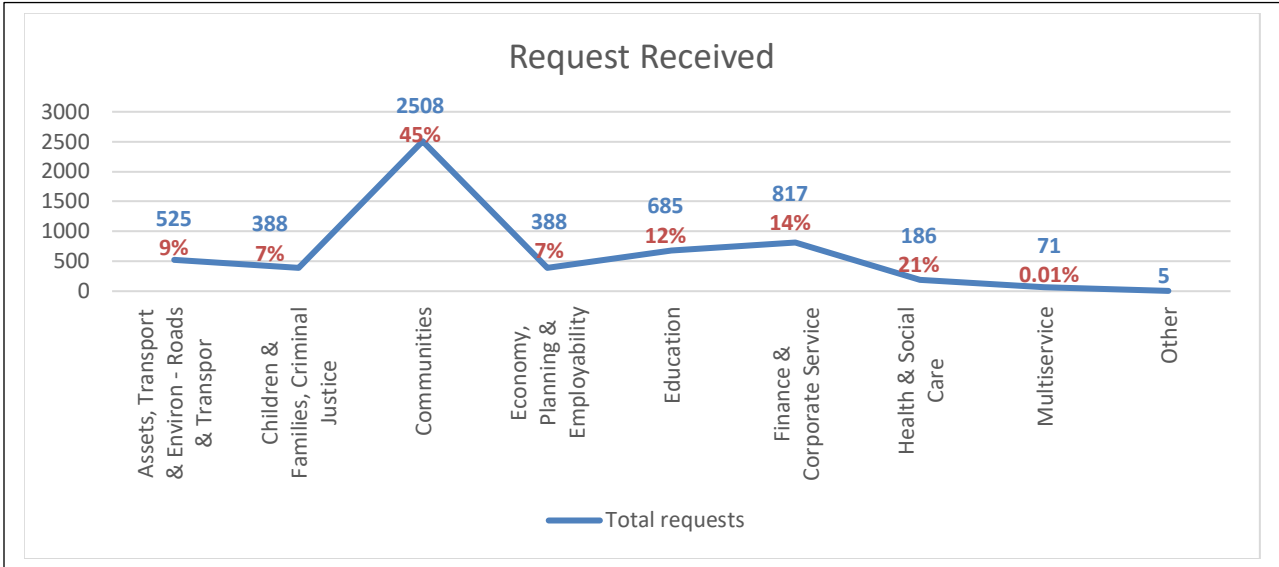


Figure 7 - above shows the requests received by each Service/Directorate for 2022/23.

3.5.2 The largest volume of requests shown in figure 7 relate to Community Services. This is due to the large number of s2 requests that are dealt with by Revenue Assessment Team and Housing Services.

3.5.3 Figure 8 shows the performance of the individual services and the reason for lateness. Lateness is recorded as being caused by IMRT, the Service, or another Service having caused a delay.

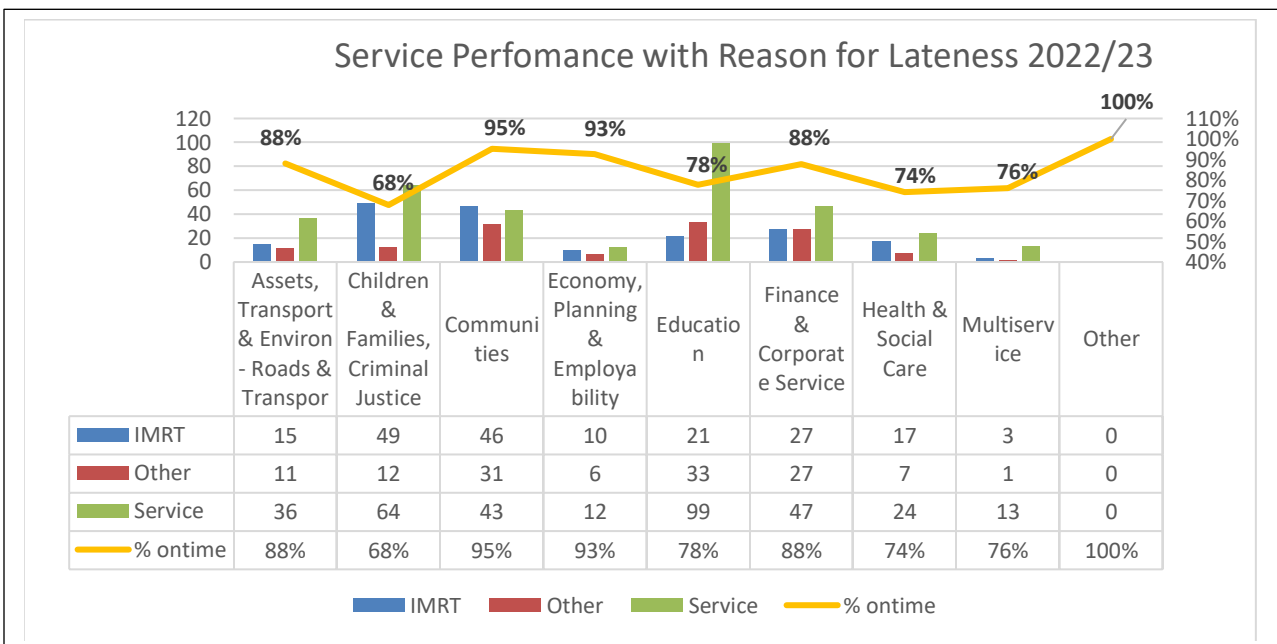


Figure 8 – shows the performance for each Service/Directorate along with the reasons for lateness for 2022/23.

3.5.4 Figure 9 shows data that has been gathered showing requests that required to be escalated due to lack of response to IMRT. This graph shows the number of requests received by the service/directorate and the % requiring escalation.

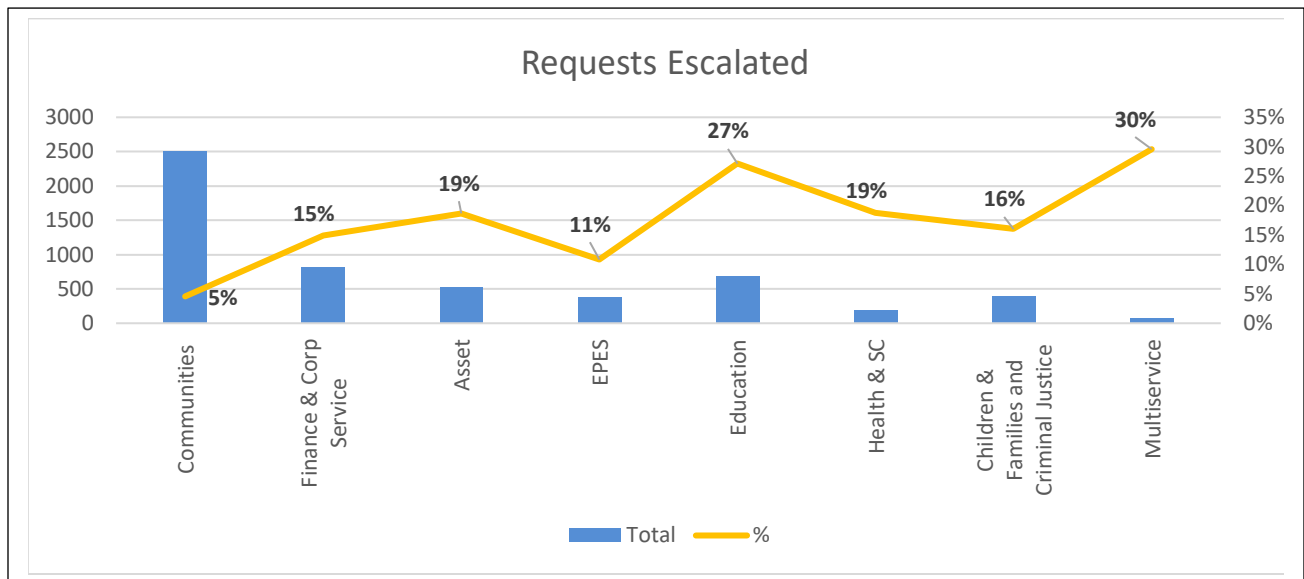


Figure 9 – Number of requests received and % escalated

# 4.0 Reviews & Applications 2020/21

## 4.1 Reviews

4.1.1 If an Applicant is either dissatisfied with the response, or the response has not been provided within timescale, then in terms of Section 20 of FOISA and Article 15 of GDPR (SAR) they are entitled to request that a review is carried out by the Council. Reviews are mostly triggered because the requestor is unhappy with:

- The content of the response.
- The way in which the request was processed.
- A breach of the statutory timescales.

4.1.2 A change to the internal review process has been undertaken during the past year. Previously Legal Services carried out all reviews received by the Council. The new process incorporates the IMRT Lead Officer and Co-Ordinator’s to carry out reviews on behalf of the Head of Legal. All reviews are carried out by staff who have not been involved in the decisions taken for the original request response.

4.1.3 Figure 10 below shows the number of requests received and the percentage that required a review to be carried out over the past 3 years.

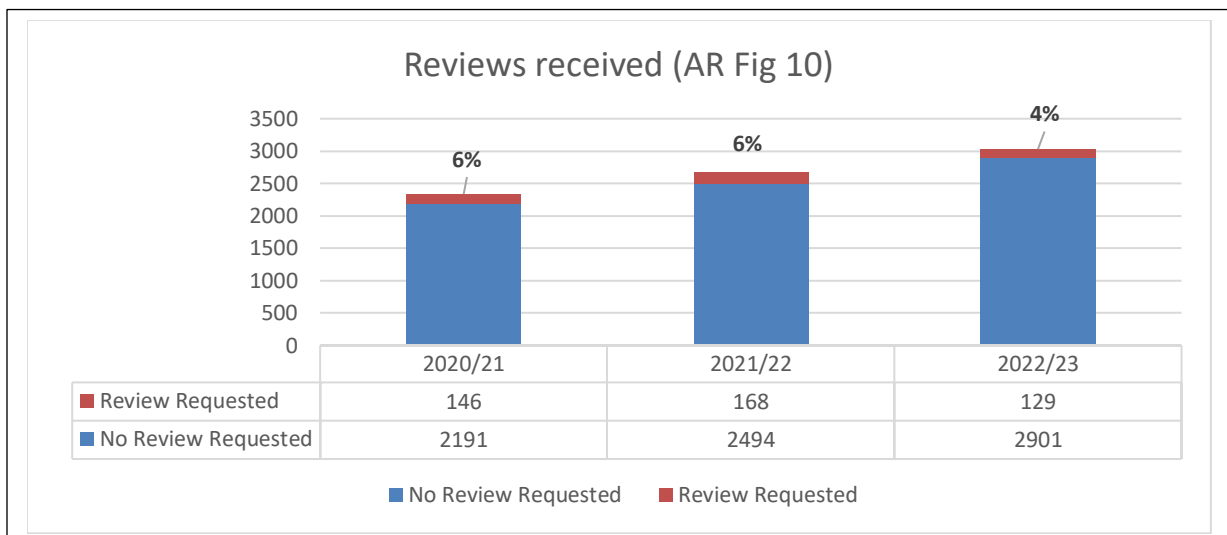


Figure 10 - FC Request for Reviews by Month 2021/22

4.1.4 Figure 11 below shows the comparison of reviews by type received over a 4 year period.

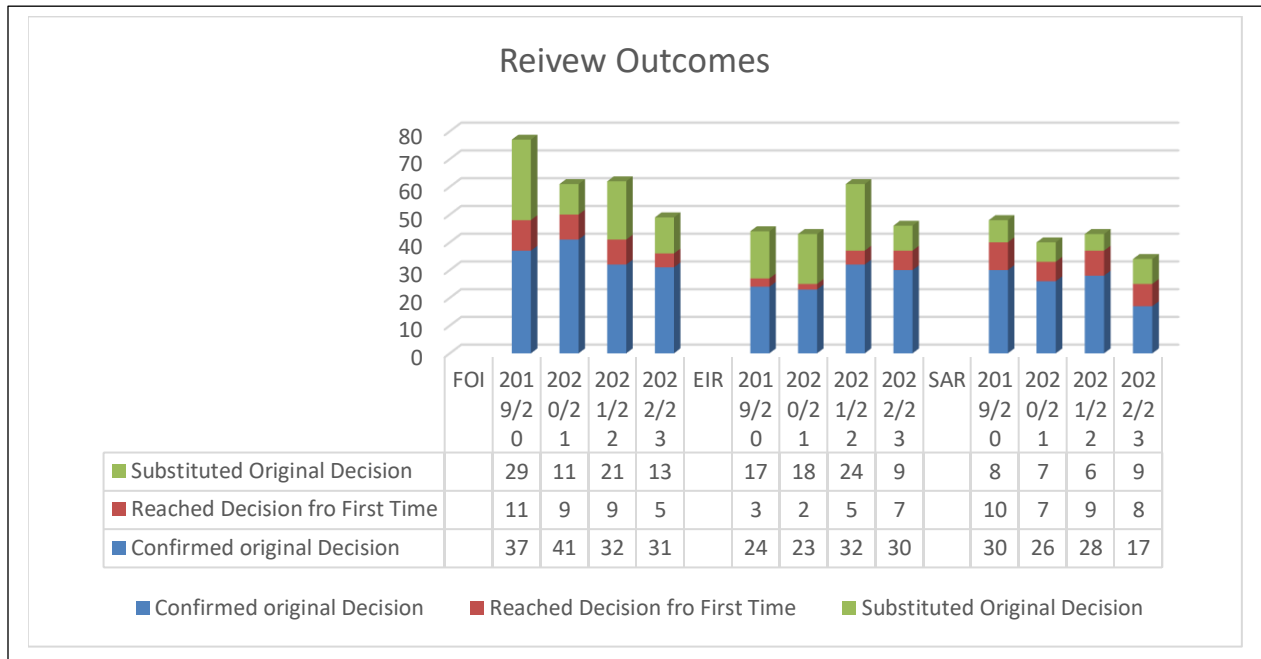


Figure-11 Review Outcomes

## 4.2 Appeals and Complaints

4.2.1 If an Applicant remains dissatisfied with the way the Council has responded to their request for review under FOISA/EIR, they can refer their case to OSIC and apply for a Decision on how their request was dealt with and the decisions taken.

4.2.2 If an applicant remains dissatisfied with the result of a SAR review, this falls under the remit of the ICO.

4.2.3 Figures 13 & 14 below show a breakdown of the applications/appeals received and the outcomes from OSIC. Outcomes given are different between ICO and OSIC. The outcomes from ICO investigations all reached satisfactory conclusions.

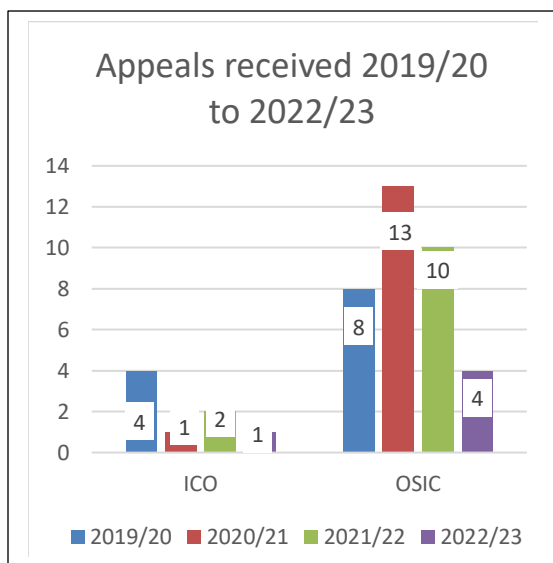


Figure-13 shows number of applications/complaints received

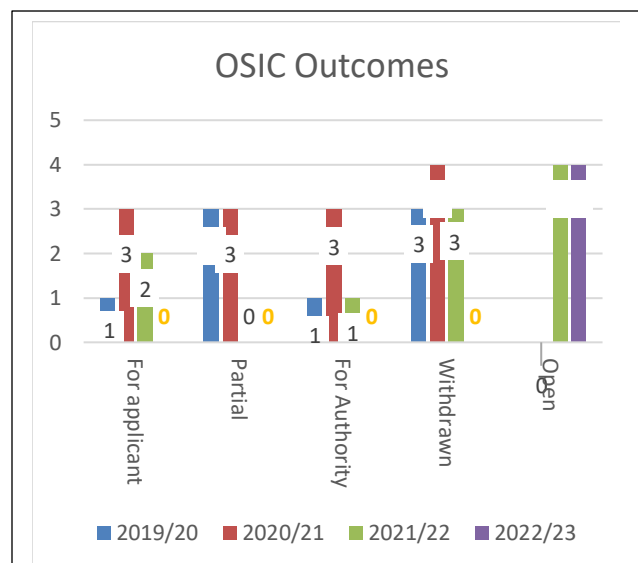


Figure-14 shows outcome of OSIC applications

## 5.0 Scottish Local Authority comparison 2021/22

5.1 All public authorities are requested to report statistical information to OSIC quarterly. Using this data, figure 15 shows the total number of FOI/EIR's received by all Scottish Local Authorities by population and the performance achieved by each during 2022/23.

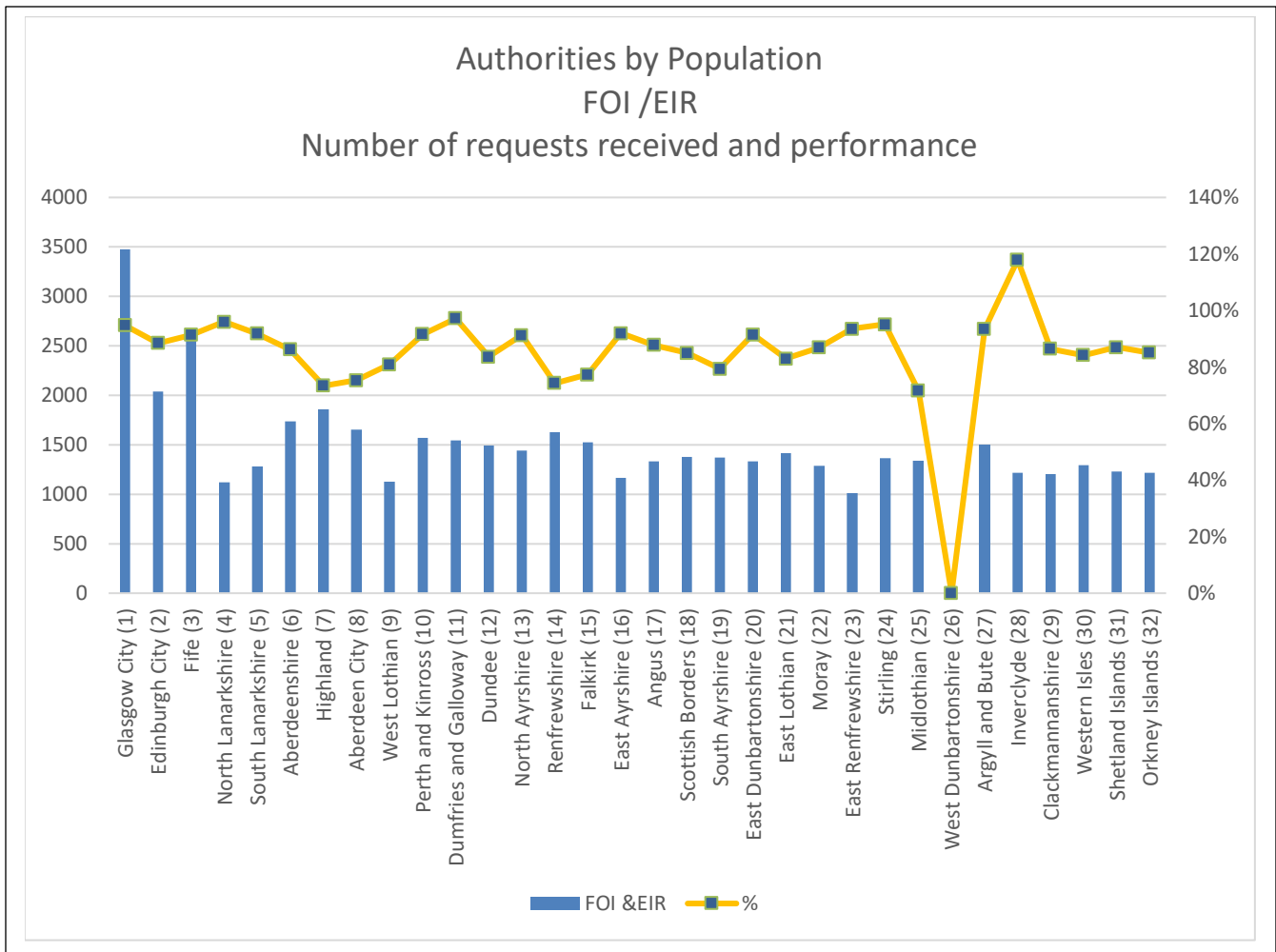


Figure 15 – Scottish Local Authority Information Requests 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

5.2 The chart above and the one below shows the number of requests being received does not always relate to the size of the authority. There could be various factors for this such as how requests are managed and recorded, or events taking place in their local areas.

5.3 Figure 16 below shows the comparison in number of SAR's received by each local authority. Again, this information is taken from the Scottish Information Commissioners website. Data relating to performance is not available on-line and some Authorities have not provided data for the numbers of SARs received.

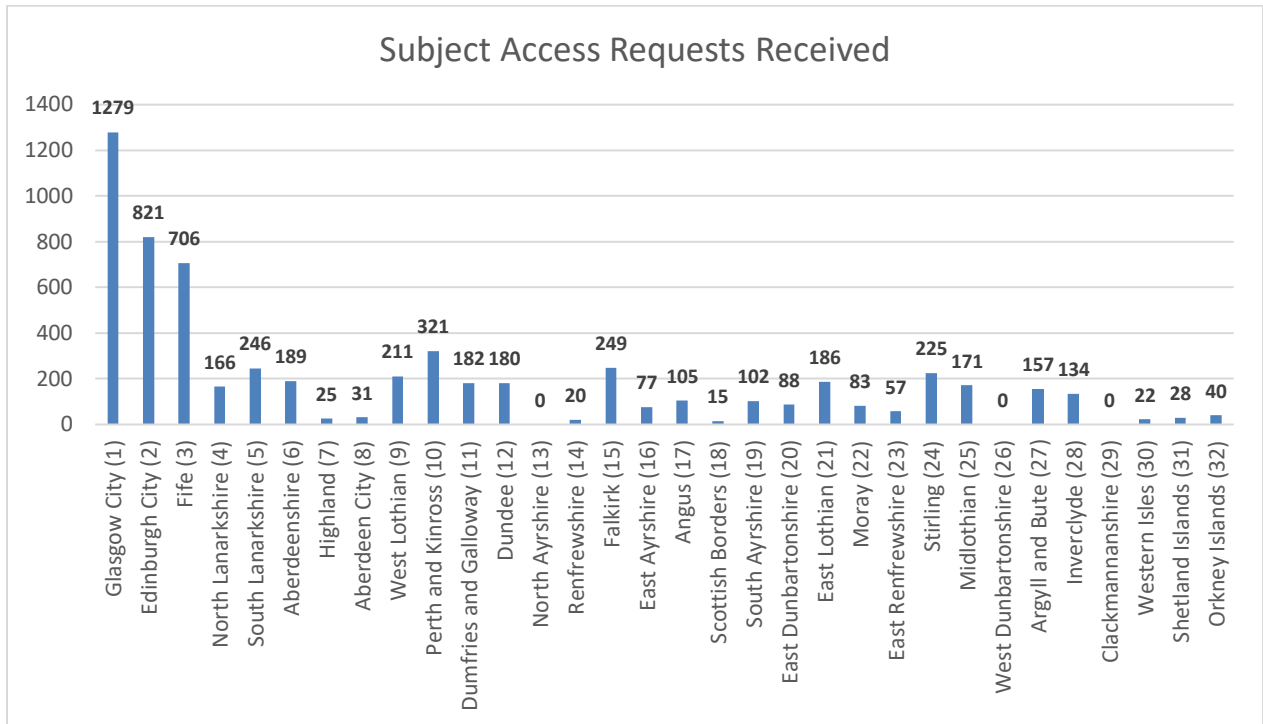


Figure 16 – Scottish Local Authority SARS received 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

5.4 Figures 17 and 18 below show the number of requests received by type, broken down by the number of requests received by the authority for each 10,000 people living within the authority area. Included are the number of requests received / 10000 residents for 5 largest authorities (FC highlighted in red).

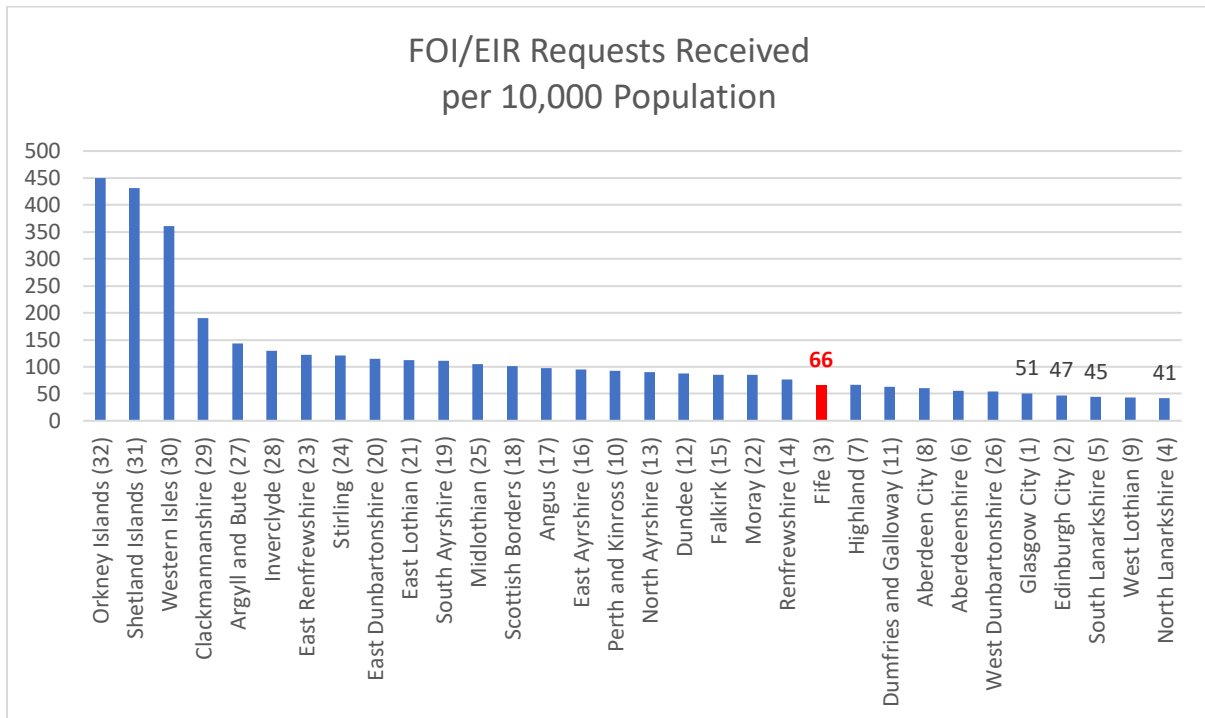


Figure 17 – shows the number of FOI/EIR received by each authority per 10,000 of the population during 2022/23

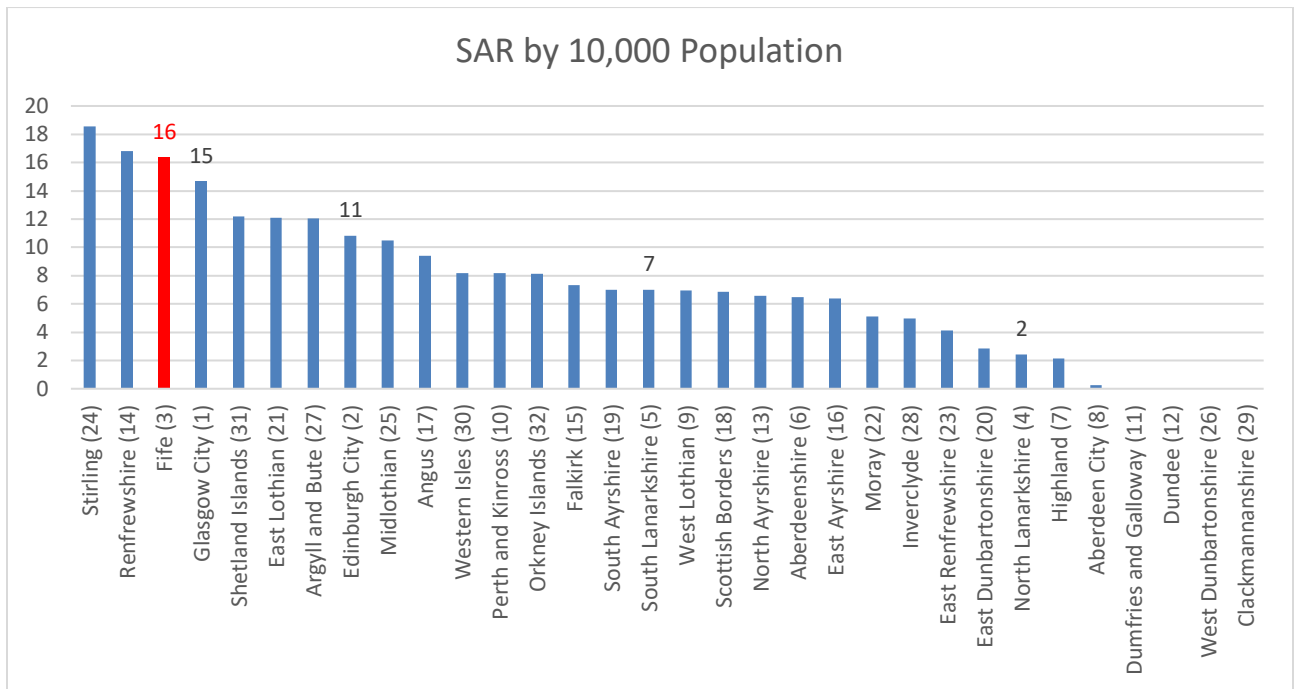


Figure 18 – shows the number of SAR's received by each authority per 10,000 of the population during 2022/23

5.5 To provide an explanation in relation to graphs 17 and 18 and the difference in the numbers being received for each type:

- FOI & EIR requests are often received from out with the Authority and there are a high number that are received by all Authorities from reporters, researchers, and political parties etc.
- SARs are more likely to be received from Applicants living within the Authority.



## 6.0 Conclusions

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- 6.1 All types of requests continue to rise. Measures have been undertaken to address this and a restructuring of IMRT and training of staff has been undertaken.
- 6.2 Legislative changes to both FOI and SAR are expected to be received in 2023/24.
- 6.3 Continual work is being carried out within services identified who have a lack of awareness of their employee roles and responsibilities in relation to information requests.
- 6.4 The CDP/ADP request process is now operating and further work will be carried out to ensure that Fife's performance remains high.

## 7.0 Glossary

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The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

<b>FOI:</b>	Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
<b>EIR:</b>	Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004
<b>DPA:</b>	General Data Protection Regulations/Data Protection Act 2018
<b>SAR:</b>	Subject Access Request
<b>OSIC:</b>	Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (responsible for FOI/EIR for Scotland)
<b>ICO:</b>	Information Commissioners Office (responsible for DPA throughout the UK)
<b>IMRT:</b>	Information Management & Request Team
<b>BAU:</b>	Business as Usual
<b>CDP:</b>	Child Disability Payments
<b>ADP:</b>	Adult Disability Payments
<b>Aspire:</b>	Information Request Management System

### Report Contact

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28 September 2023  
Agenda Item No. 6

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## Complaints Update

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**Report by:** Mike Enston Executive Director - Communities

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**Wards Affected:** All

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### Purpose

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To provide an update on complaints closed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 (performance and information)

### Recommendation(s)

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That the Committee:

1. The Committee is asked to consider the report on complaints received noting the complaints responded to in target timescales and the proportionality of Service complaints.

### Resource Implications

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There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

### Legal & Risk Implications

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There are no direct legal and risk implications arising from this report.

### Impact Assessment

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An EqIA has not been completed and is not necessary as the report does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

### Consultation

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No specific consultation has been carried out in relation to this report however there is continuous consultation with Services through weekly status updates that provide a RAG status of open cases, further responsiveness information is uploaded quarterly to Pentana (the Council's performance management system) through the Performance and Information Team and several areas receive bespoke and ad hoc reporting as requested.

## 1.0 Background

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- 1.1 The Council responds to over 7 million contacts from customers across Fife every year. This figure then puts into context the comparatively small number of corporately defined complaints received. When we do receive complaints, we aim to resolve these quickly, and to learn from feedback to improve future services.
- 1.2 Reports on customer complaints made to the Council are presented annually to this Committee. We also publicly report complaints performance information quarterly online and benchmark with other local authorities.
- 1.3 The area highlighted for improvement from the 2021/22 report:
  - Improving upon current responsiveness rates, such as targeting poorer performing Services (more effective queue management and professional administrative support).
- 1.4 Scottish Councils must follow the model complaint handling procedure developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The model was designed to provide a simpler, more consistent process for customers to follow and encourages local authorities to make best use of lessons learned from complaints. A revised version of the procedure with minor changes was launched in April 2021.

## 2.0 Performance and Issues Arising from Complaints

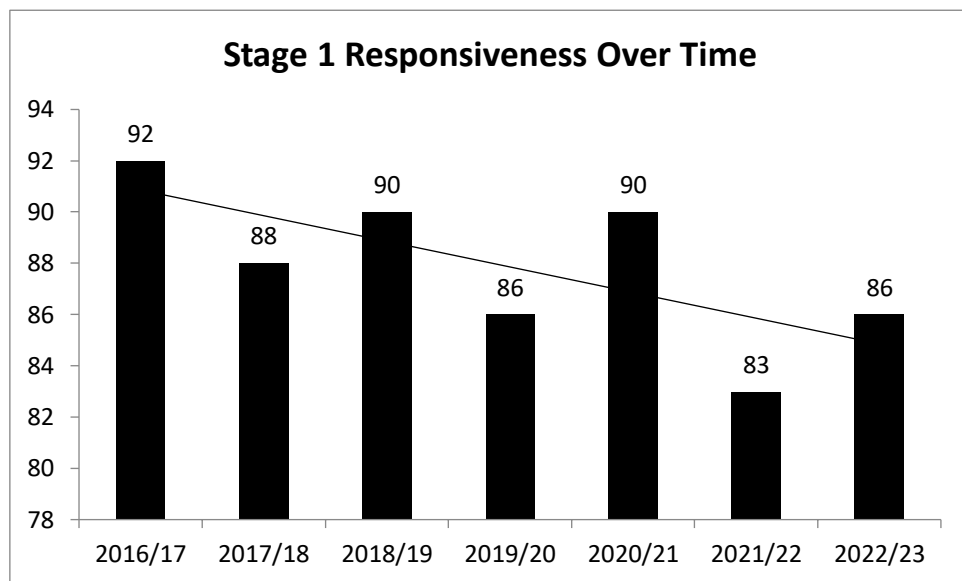
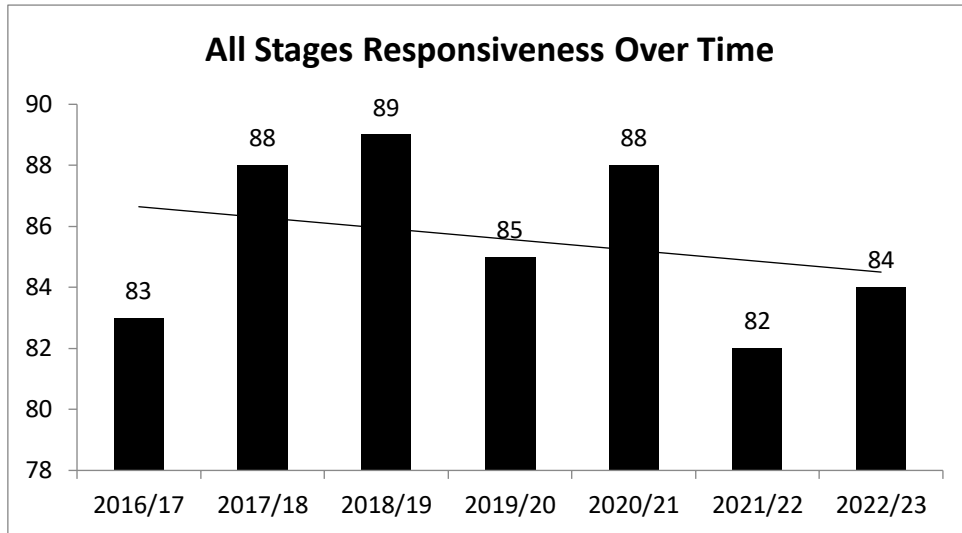
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### Volume & Responsiveness

- 2.1 From the 2,971 complaints received from 1st April 2022 to 31 March 2023, 2,970 of these were closed (the remaining complaint rolled into the next fiscal year). This is an 11% increase on the same period last year when 2,667 complaints were received. The volume of complaints had generally been reducing however this increase is greater than the 2,425 complaints received before the pandemic. There is evidence that some of this period's volume remain attributable to issues post Covid such as availability of parts.
- 2.2 To improve customer satisfaction and reduce costs, we aim to complete 80% of complaints at Stage 1, and within 5 working days and the remaining 20% at Stage 2, within 20 working days. 85% of complaints were successfully handled at stage 1 in period, 86% of which were handled in target timescale.

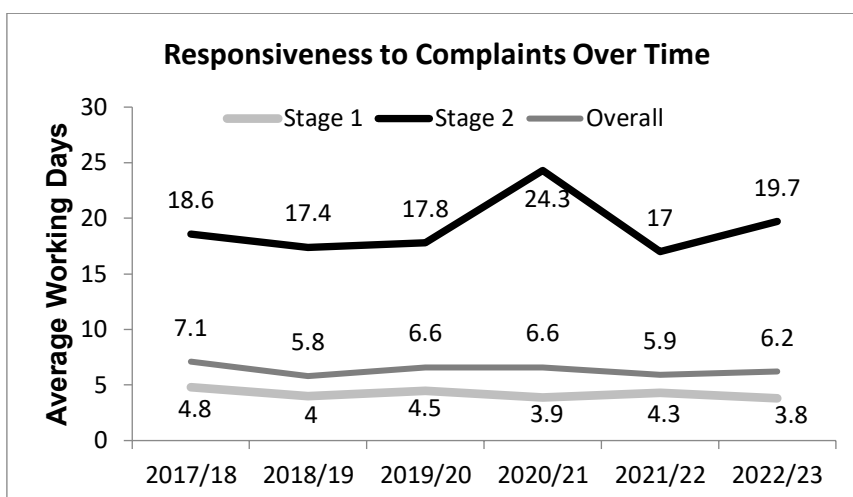
Stage	Total No. of complaints closed	No. closed in target timescales	% closed in target timescales
	2,970	2,497	84% (82) in 21-22
Stage 1 (5 days)	2,521 (85%)	2,157	86% (83 in 21-22)
Stage 2 (20 days)	449 (15%)	340	76% (76 in 21-22)

2.3 The graphs below show our performance over the last 7 years. The general trend would appear to be one of performance worsening over time despite the spike of 2020/21 caused by high volumes of readily addressable complaints made about service provision during the pandemic. This year sees an upturn in the responsiveness performance of stage 1 cases (5 working days) and therefore the overall performance in terms of responding to all complaints in timescale.



2.4 This period sees improved performance with most Services better than the year before (see 2.8). This is likely due to Services having extra focus back on complaints following the anecdotal evidence reported in last year's report that less priority was being given to complaints during and into recovery from the pandemic.

2.5 The following graph shows the average working days to close a complaint and that from 2018 we have generally become quicker at responding to most complaints received (overall and stage 1).



2.6 The following table provides a breakdown of the average working days at each stage by respective Services including complaint volume. The Volume Context offers some scale between the volume of complaints against an indicative number of Service activity. It is based upon indicative figures from 2018/19. It should be recognised that these volumes may no longer be quite as representative. The table is ordered by working days all, from longest to shortest. The table shows selected Services in receipt of greater than 90% of all Council complaints. Red indicates above the target timescales of 5 and 20 working days and amber reflects a count above the Council average.

Service	W days St 1	W days St 2	W days All	Total Volume	Volume Context (from 2018-19 data)
Education	5.4	25.3	15.3	236	170 schools and establishments serving >56,000 pupils
Protective Services	3	17.9	13.1	25	Food and workplace safety alone has 4500 annual jobs
Planning	4.8	25.6	12.1	63	>700 planning enforcement investigations per annum
Children & Families	5.5	25.9	10.5	94	1000 looked after children and another 2000 families on a voluntary basis per annum
Catering Cleaning & Facilities Management	5.8	81	7.5	44	Regularly clean 600 buildings and provide 22,000 meals a day
Housing	4.2	17.8	6.4	781	>30,000 households managed
Grounds Maintenance	4.2	23.5	6	121	>4500 job requests per annum (grass, street cleaning etc.)
Roads & Transportation	4.8	18.3	5.9	308	Filled >22,000 potholes, fixed >5,000 street lights, provided >110,000 passenger journeys

Service	W days St 1	W days St 2	W days All	Total Volume	Volume Context (from 2018-19 data)
Sustainability	3	16.7	4.7	115	480,000 recycle centre bookings since July 2020
Benefits / C-Tax	3.2	15.5	4.1	115	>64,000 calls relating to the assessment of housing benefit per annum
Building Services	3.3	10.3	3.8	343	>170,000 repairs per annum
Contact Centre	2.5	16.3	3.1	66	Over 600,000 calls offered per annum
Domestic Waste	2.3	6.9	2.5	489	13 million bins serviced
<b>Total (includes remaining Services)</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>2,970</b>	

2.7 Complaints that necessarily run into extra time (procedural extensions) are counted for statistical purposes as having not met timescale (did not hit target). Customers are however generally informed when an extension becomes strictly necessary. The procedure allows for such extensions. Overall, 53% of cases detailed in this report as out of timescale were procedurally given extensions. Therefore 92% of all complaints were completed in either target, or procedurally compliant timescales. There is evidence that longer working days to complete is commensurate with the complex and serious nature of complaints arising.

2.8 The table shows complaint responsiveness by the Services / departments in receipt of approximately 95% of FC complaints. Ordered by percentage all in timescale, worst to best. Please note that 3% of all complaints were attributed to sub-contractors (83 out of the total of 2,970. Mostly supporting Housing and Building Services however also Roads & Transportation).

Service	Vol Stage 1	% Stage 1 in Timescale	Vol Stage 2	% Stage 2 in Timescale	Total Vol 22/23	Total Vol 21/22	% Complaints upheld /partially upheld	% All in timescale 2022/23	Adjusted for Extension	% All in timescale 21/22	Change from last year
Children & Families	71	63.4%	23	56.5%	94	96	31.9%	61.7%	92.6%	65.6%	-5.9%
Education	119	78.2%	117	58.1%	236	125	41.1%	68.2%	87.3%	65.6%	4.0%
Planning	41	78.0%	22	59.1%	63	82	42.9%	71.4%	88.9%	61.0%	17.0%
Grounds Maintenance	110	79.1%	11	72.7%	121	108	62.8%	78.5%	81.8%	81.5%	-3.7%
Roads & Transportation	283	78.4%	25	88.0%	308	208	38.0%	79.2%	81.8%	61.1%	29.6%
Housing	653	80.2%	128	82.8%	781	517	39.6%	80.7%	92.8%	79.5%	1.5%
Catering Cleaning & Facilities	43	83.7%	1	0.0%	44	63	65.9%	81.8%	81.8%	79.4%	3.0%
Sustainability	101	91.1%	14	78.6%	115	146	23.5%	89.6%	96.5%	81.5%	9.9%
Building Services	319	90.0%	24	95.8%	343	294	64.4%	90.4%	95.9%	86.4%	4.6%
Bereavement Services	23	91.3%	0	100.0%	23	35	78.3%	91.3%	91.3%	97.1%	-6.0%
Protective Services	8	100.0%	17	88.2%	25	37	40.0%	92.0%	96.0%	81.1%	13.4%
Benefits C/Tax	104	95.2%	11	90.9%	115	185	40.0%	94.8%	96.5%	93.5%	1.4%
Contact Centre	63	95.2%	3	100.0%	66	68	71.2%	95.5%	97.0%	95.6%	-0.1%
Domestic Waste	462	97.4%	27	96.3%	489	497	70.8%	97.3%	98.4%	95.6%	2.9%
<b>Total FC Overall (includes remaining Services)</b>	<b>2,521</b>	<b>85.6%</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>75.7%</b>	<b>2,970</b>	<b>2,610</b>	<b>49.9%</b>	<b>84.1%</b>	<b>92.0%</b>	<b>82.3%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>

NB: Grey areas highlight a reduction over the previous year and overall responsiveness worse than the Council average.

- 2.9 From the greyed figures in the “% All in timescale 2022/23” column against paragraph 2.8 the comparative performance allowing for agreed extensions is as follows:

<b>Service</b>	<b>% Cases out of target timescale with procedural extension</b>	<b>% in timescale where extensions are included into responsiveness calculations</b>
Children & Families	86%	93%
Education	64%	87%
Planning	67%	89%
Grounds Maintenance	15%	82%
Roads & Transportation	14%	82%
Housing	66%	93%
Catering Cleaning &	25%	82%

- 2.10 The type of service provided by Children & Families, Education, Planning and Housing often generates more complex cases to be investigated and therefore require using the procedural extensions to respond fully and cover the necessary complexities. Other Services may benefit from the extension when they become a necessity however there is evidence that some Services simply need to improve in their ability to respond within the target timescales of 5 and 20 working days (stage dependent).
- 2.11 Escalation & Resolution continued to support Services including providing information, procedural support, qualitative review, and information around performance. They are also engaged daily in reminding Services of due dates in advance of their deadlines, weekly RAG status on cases, and supporting the administration of extensions and maintaining compliance with process and procedure.
- 2.12 Further in-depth complaint performance information remains in development using Power BI (see 5.3) and consequently quarterly information on performance available to Services has generally lacked fuller detail this period, limited to timescale information uploaded to Pentana (performance management software) unless Services proactively sought fuller details. The ambition is to maintain a Power BI dashboard from which Services can apply relevant filters (e.g., geographic areas, team, or departments) to gather insight.

## **3.0 Learning from Complaints**

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- 3.1 One key element of handling complaints is using customer feedback to rectify or improve upon the service provided. Every upheld or partially upheld complaint presents an opportunity for the Council to address the failings identified and this is also a requirement of the procedure.

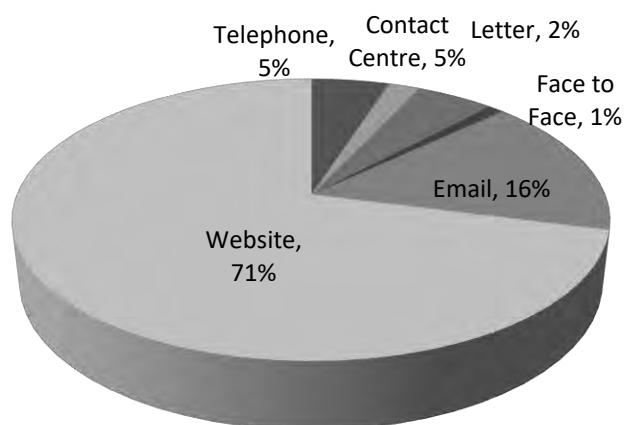


- 3.2 Corrective action statements required by the procedure remain challenging where there remain instances where recorded statements refer simply to the outcome of the complaint rather than specific actions that would potentially prevent future reoccurrence. Ideally upheld complaints should contain details of effective counter measures or plans that would attempt to eradicate failures within the limits of resources available. This topic could be adequately addressed with internal benchmarking as a future improvement (see 5.2)
- 3.3 There are examples when the Council gets listens to customer feedback and makes improvements to future service provision. Where complaints were about the actions of employees (behaviour, poor driving, wrong information provided, process / procedure not followed etc.) the complaint has been addressed directly with employees, so they are aware of the impact on their customers. Examples of introduced changes are evident in Appendix 1 e.g., process changes such as making diary appointments (embrace technology), extra enhanced scrutiny of sub-contractors, adding a resource to better maintain a public convenience and simpler solutions such as adding updated signage.
- 3.4 One of the reasons for creating the new Communities Directorate was to increase customer responsiveness and this included setting up the Escalation and Resolution team.
- 3.5 Over 2022-23 the team have focussed upon:
- Impacting current responsiveness rates, such as targeting poorer performing Services (more effective queue management and professional administrative support).
  - Improving compliance to the procedure and supporting Services
  - Supporting the Council's Unacceptable Actions Policy and providing advice on how to use the policy and how to approach customers whose behaviours fall foul.
- 3.6 The approach to consider the quality of complaint handling includes surveying complaints that the organisation did not uphold. This presents a challenge as it is accepted that it may be difficult for complainants to separate out any redeeming features in how this was handled when the Council did not uphold their substantive matter. See section 4 Complaint Satisfaction.

3.7 The following tables provide the details of complaint decisions.

<b>FC Overall</b>	<b>Not Upheld</b>	<b>Partially Upheld</b>	<b>Resolved</b>	<b>Upheld</b>
Overall	40%	16%	10%	34%
Stage 1	39%	14%	11%	36%
Stage 2	47%	28%	2%	22%

3.8 The majority of complaints remain being entered from the online form on our website, the following graph and table provides the proportion of complaint by channel and displays the shift over time towards electronic, best value channels. Social media policy dictates that we do not accept complaints made over this medium however when posts escalate towards a complaint users are signposted to the way they can appropriately make one.



**% Complaints Received by Channel**

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Website</b>	55%	78%	73%	71%
<b>Contact Centre</b>	11%	3%	3%	5%
<b>Letter / Form</b>	2%	1%	3%	2%
<b>Telephone</b>	3%	3%	6%	5%
<b>Email</b>	21%	14%	14%	16%
<b>Face to Face</b>	7%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Social Media</b>	1%	0%	0%	0%

## 4.0 Complaint Satisfaction

- 4.1 In historic reports to this Committee before 2021-22 the data used to provide satisfaction with complaint handling was obtained from a more generic transactional survey of four questions emailed out on a four-weekly basis. Following changes to both the Council's website and the customer management system this transactional survey became obsolete with a replacement pending development.
- 4.2 The complaints procedure requires that complainants are surveyed so the previous generic survey was replaced in January 2022 with a bespoke version that covers standard questions as agreed by the SPSO and the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network. These questions will ultimately allow benchmarking amongst network members.
- 4.3 The replacement complaint satisfaction survey methodology remains from last year and has us ask customers how much they agree or disagree with the following statements generally 4-6 weeks after their complaint has closed.
- Information about the complaint procedure was easily accessible.
  - I found it easy to make my complaint.
  - I was happy that the person considering the matter fully understood my complaint.
  - I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint.
  - The points of my complaint were identified and responded to.
  - The response to my complaint was easy to understand.
  - Overall, I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint.

- I was told if the response was going to take longer than the set timescales (five working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2).
- I was clearly told what the next stage of the complaints process was for me.

4.4 This replacement survey now requires a manual issue of these questions by email however has the added benefit over the previous generic transaction survey as the text from a complainant's actual complaint is given in the invitational email as a reminder to make the survey more focussed.

4.5 There were 587 responses, and a breakdown of some general comments included the following. It is worth noting that around 10% of comments in some manner referenced the council's failure to respond or matters remaining unaddressed. Given the methodology used to gather this information (see 4.8) it is impossible to decide on the accuracy of such statements however their presence remains concerning.

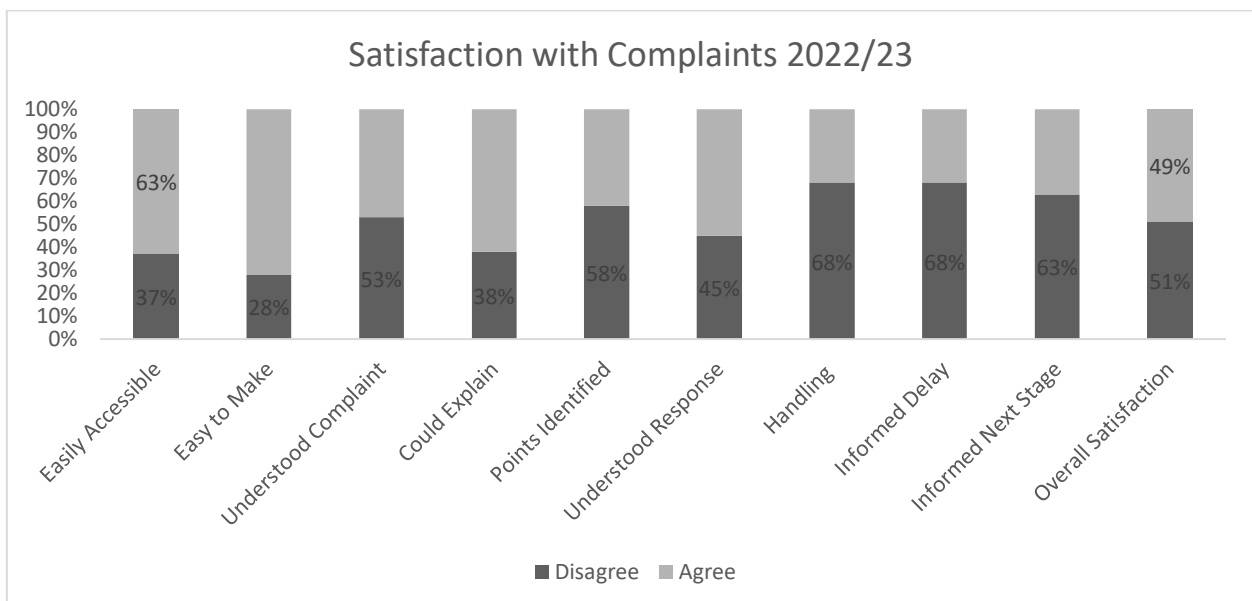
### Positive

- I was very pleased with the outcome, thank you.
- I received excellent help by email relating to follow-up of my complaint.
- I was very pleased by the Council's response on this matter.
- Settled to my satisfaction.
- My complaint triggered an immediate fix for the problem I complained about.

### Negative

- Complaint not listened to, understood, or acted upon.
- Fife council should have a better understanding to disabled people and help them more despite what is signed.
- Long winded, idiotic, and still no report or response from Fife Council. Utter waste of time.
- They didn't care.
- I found the whole process tiring. I wasn't listened to (as usual) and complaint was not dealt with correctly.

4.6 Overall satisfaction was 49% and is slightly below last year's figure of 50% noting that the response volumes are much higher than the previous year where only 127 surveys were returned (survey in 2021-22 started late in the year). Satisfaction with each question is as shown on the following graph.



- 4.7 It would appear from the graph that improvement is required in carefully identifying the full complaint made from a complainant and thereafter adequately addressing those. We would also benefit from being more effective with extensions (when necessarily required), expressing potential delays as soon as possible and stage 1 email responses detailing what the next steps for a complainant would be should they remain dissatisfied following a stage 1 response. Based upon the comments received Services should take particular care that responses are provided and delivered accurately and carefully cover the substantive matter raised in the complaint.
- 4.8 The methodology used for the survey does not align a complaint reference number back to any responses received. This is due to GDPR, and the storage method used for satisfaction as the data is captured using Microsoft Forms against a single officer's account. It would not be considered secure or an appropriate place to store a customer's personal data. The survey is therefore fit for wider organisational learning in contrast to the previous version where Services could see satisfaction with their own complaint handling.

## 5.0 Other Customer Issues

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- 5.1 The complaints procedure includes a clear definition of a complaint which means that some issues are recorded as fault reports or requests for service rather than as complaints.
- 5.2 Missed bins are generally considered as complaints however given the complexity and volumes, these are logged outside of the complaints system unless there is clear evidence of repeated failures or broader issues that are more than a missed collection.

Enquiry Type	Volume 2018/19	Volume 2019/20	Volume 2020/21	Volume 2021/22	Volume 2022/23	Remarks
Missed Bins	9,574	9,434	10,223	9,894	7,042	Actual complaints around missed bins will overlap with service requests

- 5.3 Historically (until Oct 2022) the table above included data on street cleaning requests, reports of illegal dumping, dog issues and abandoned vehicles amongst others. Data provided has always come with the caveat that this was a very simple database extract and likely different data from what would be expressed by owning Services. The difference would be in terms of job sheets issued or capturing requests through other channels made directly into Services. Annual figures for all of Fife Council such as illegal dumping, grounds maintenance requests etc. are available. Committee members are likely to have seen annual update reports from Safer Communities at Local Area Committees where data around these enquiry types is provided at the local level. Additional information may be available from the Enterprise and Environment Directorate Section/Service Performance Reports.

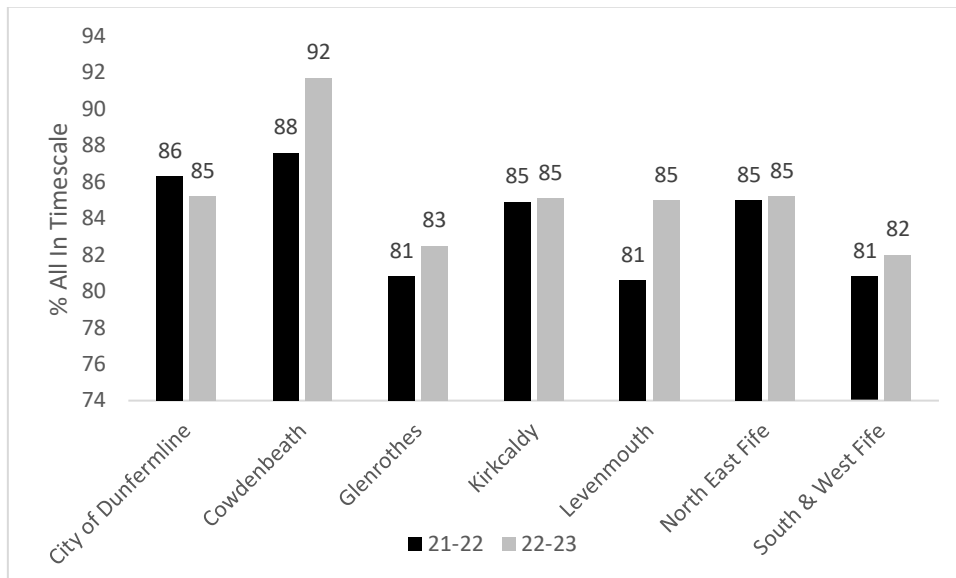
## Area Comparison

- 5.4 The following table provides the latest comparison of the volume of main Service complaints by area (presented per million of the population to provide better readability). Note that complaints made anonymously or from outside of Fife are not attributed to any Area Committee (therefore the grand total will not sum to 2,970 complaints). Population information copied over from last year's report.

Table x

Area Committee	Dunfermline	Cowdenbeath	Glenrothes	Kirkcaldy	Levenmouth	North East Fife	South West Fife
Population Volume	56,832	41,288	50,257	60,214	37,288	74,674	49,777
Service Complaints by 1Million Population	Per 1M	Per 1M	Per 1M	Per 1M	Per 1M	Per 1M	Per 1M
Benefits - C/Tax	334	266	239	233	161	295	261
Bereavement	18	48	40	17	54	13	40
Building Services	633	<b>969</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>1395</b>	<b>1153</b>	562	522
Catering & Facilities	88	24	40	50	54	54	141
Contact Centre	158	121	298	233	134	67	80
Domestic Waste	<b>1865</b>	<b>1405</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>1098</b>	<b>984</b>
Education	264	315	279	183	161	201	181
Housing	<b>1812</b>	<b>2640</b>	<b>1930</b>	<b>2508</b>	<b>2575</b>	<b>1272</b>	<b>844</b>
Grounds	229	266	279	282	215	228	281
Planning	35	73	60	50	54	295	100
Protective	53	48	20	100	27	40	0
Sustainability	246	339	239	133	375	214	100
Roads & Transport	<b>739</b>	630	338	482	644	<b>576</b>	<b>824</b>
<b>Total</b>	6898	7581	6029	6909	7321	5236	4801

- 5.5 The table identifies in bold the top 3 Committee area complaints received by Service. Domestic Waste and Housing are in the top 3 for each area with the biggest percentage of complaints concerning bin issues. Housing's main complaint category is failure to respond to previous complaint / request for service / enquiry / reported fault (11% of complaints categorised by Housing). Roads & Transportation complaints reflect in the main potholes or poor condition of roads (15% of their complaints) and Building Services is poor communications - poor regarding work being/to be undertaken (17% of their complaints).
- 5.6 There is some variation in area responsiveness to complaints. This ranges from 92% (up from 88% in 2021/22) of all complaints responded to in timescale in the Cowdenbeath area down to 82% (up from 81% in 2021/22) of all complaints responded to in timescale in the South & West Fife area.



## 6.0 Progress and Future Improvements

6.1 In the October 2022 Complaint Update paper there were 4 areas of continual improvement detailed:

1. Service sharing (internal benchmarking) of their approach to using complaint information for improvement.
2. Power BI development – complaint dashboard
3. Engagement with Services (particularly Education) to support improvement, e.g., procedure, performance, and process.
4. Transfer of H&SC complaint administration from Business Support to the Escalation & Resolution Team

6.2 The Service sharing was suspended given the pandemic and Service's other priorities. There will be an opportunity to look at the planning of an approach to internal benchmarking from 2024 as this could align with another workstream including the introduction of the SPSO's child friendly complaint procedure currently being developed and trialled over a small number of other local authorities.

6.3 Power BI development has stalled as this passed from BTS to the data owner to develop a working dashboard. BTS remain with an open call from H&SC for a complaint dashboard for this area and it is anticipated that this final product could be suitably modified to suit the wider Council. It is anticipated that the deeper insights available from this tool will support Service improvements such as area-based information and differences in complaints by Service in different areas of Fife. This then allows a self-serve approach for Services seeking to make local changes in service delivery.

6.4 Direct Service support has been successful particularly with Education. Over 2022-23 they have been proactively building relationships with Escalation & Resolution and outcomes include:

- Improved understanding of the complaints process within the Service
- Improved data analysis, leading to trend identification.
- Improvement planning and actions associated with data analysis.
- Targeted work as a direct result of complaint outcomes

The portfolio approach to team members providing administration for their areas has allowed for individual advice on issues arising. Several Services receive bespoke weekly reports of pending and due cases supporting better responsiveness.

- 6.5 Escalation & Resolution have successfully transferred the administration of H&SC complaints over from Business Support staff and remain refining this process. Some areas within H&SC are starting to benefit from complaint reporting and holistically H&SC benefits from a weekly RAG status of cases supporting responsiveness.
- 6.6 Plans into 2024 include a project to introduce the SPSO's Child Friendly Complaint Procedure following an enhanced draft guidance document produced by this organisation in June 2023. Essentially new guidance for the organisation will be required so we provide a complaint service that meets children's rights and needs. It is anticipated that this work will be complex and reach many areas of the Council as it covers more than complaints made by children and extends into complaints that concern children. Further reading available from <https://www.spsso.org.uk/news-and-media/child-friendly-complaints>

## 7.0 Conclusions

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- 7.1 Responsiveness (complaints in target timescales) has broadly improved over last year and when figures are compiled to include extensions valid under the procedure the Council responds to 92% of complaints within target or extension agreed timescale.
- 7.2 From Appendix 1 the issues customers complained about are generally the same as other years with Housing, Domestic Waste, and Building Services in receipt of the bulk (>50%) of the complaints raised with the Council.
- 7.3 Opportunities remain pending for future improvements, these stemming from internal benchmarking, introducing the Child Friendly Complaint procedure and finalisation of Power BI.

### List of Appendices

1. Appendix 1 Details of complaints and compliments received
2. Summary of SPSO cases and decisions made in reporting period

### Background Papers

SPSO revised model complaint handling procedure – [Link](#)

### Report Contacts

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## Appendix 1: Complaints and compliments (from Services / departments collectively in receipt of >90% of Fife Council complaints)

Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
<b>Benefits &amp; Council Tax</b>	<p><b>Received:</b> 4% of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Procedures/Policy (27%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I have paid the bill up to the end point so there is no actual debt. I also do not understand why you won't allow me to set up a direct debit and move to electronic communication, this would avoid any issues in future. I really don't understand why the council would behave like this, we are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, and you are trying to increase the amount we have to pay and are effectively demanding that I pay everything immediately. So overall I am not satisfied and would like to escalate the issue to the next step. In terms of the specifics, a). I do not follow your logic; it seems that your position is that the bills you say were sent out were not returned therefore they must have been delivered. I have no idea why we have this problem again, however in terms of delivery there are many possibilities you haven't considered. b) My position on your debt collectors is unchanged, I didn't receive the bill, therefore it's not appropriate to pass the bill to them. c). I am unsure of the point you are making on last year's bill, and I am not sure why it's relevant.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint partially upheld, and apology offered for the small issue with respect to the Council Tax account. Corrective actions falling from the complaint is that officers will diary appointments with customers to ensure this issue does not reoccur.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> I would just like to pass on some feedback about one of your employees in the benefits team who I spoke to on the phone about my mums Council tax reduction. He was polite and cheerful and very helpful. Very often you come across people in the other end of the phone who sound like they 'can't be bothered' but he was a credit to your organisation. I hope this can be passed onto him.</p>
<b>Building Services</b>	<p><b>Received:</b> 12% of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Poor communications - poor regarding work being/to be undertaken (17%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> Hi wasn't sure if this was the correct way to contact you but I couldn't find an appropriate selection. I had a new kitchen fitted and remain with issues, 1 socket still to be fitted cable taped up, 2 Plastering not done which in my knowledge should have been done before units were installed' 3 Plastic clips holding shelves are all breaking, 4 Small leak under sink which was reported and 5 Decorator over a week ago called to arrange a date to decorate. Which could not be done as plastering was not done, he said he would contact someone to get it done. Still no contact. I hope you appreciate we feel that we have been forgotten about. We cannot get our flooring done etc which is not ideal. I know you have a contractor for the work but as you can see the cut-off date may pass. I'm sorry to have to write this but as a full rent payer of over 30 years I do feel a bit let down.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered for works not complete. Remaining works scheduled with contractor and site visited with contractor supervisor and Building Services. Additional scrutiny of contractor introduced, and customer given a direct contact with Building Services in the event of further delays or issues.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> I am very happy with Martyn, Mobile working electrician who visited my property to deal with a small electrical repair. Martyn was very professional and had an excellent attitude. Martyn is a credit to Fife Council.</p>
<b>Catering &amp; Facilities</b>	<p><b>Received:</b> 1.5% of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Standard / condition of council buildings including toilets (23%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I visited Burntisland on Friday with my family. We used x2 of the public toilets near the fair ground. I am disgusted. The fact that toilet tissue and paper towels tell me the toilets are attended to which makes the issue even more disgusting. These toilets were utterly filthy! The floors were totally unclean. The actual lavatory seats had not been cleaned in God knows how long. The second block of toilets we used were a health hazard. There was an overflowing bin with used nappies and excess waste gathering in the corner. It was clear that was not a day's collection of waste. Again, the toilets were disgusting as were the floors and the sinks.</p> <p>My extended family and I spent the day in your gorgeous town. You have completely let yourself down to tourists with the toilet facilities. If you are opening your town to tourists, please don't treat us so disgustingly! Would your council members be happy to use these toilets? Everything else about our day was perfect. I look forward to your response and not just an apology. I would like an explanation as to how your public toilets are so abysmal.</p>



Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
		<p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. As corrective action the Service is looking at more visits and top up cleans particularly on busy weekends and events.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> Customer wanted to let the Meals on Wheels Service know that she really enjoys the driver's company, she appreciates that no matter the weather or what might be going on at the time, they're always cheerful and pleasant to talk to. She's very grateful for what they do and appreciates the Service.</p>
<p><b>Children &amp; Families</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 3.2%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Inappropriate staff attitude / behaviour (29%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I am writing in regards to the way I was spoken to by a social worker called **** who I believe works for children &amp; young people in New city house, Dunfermline, she appeared at my door unannounced and proceeded to let herself in and claimed that I appeared scared whilst I was trying to talk to her she then claimed that this was non-engagement with social services even though she does not deal with our case. I am not happy with the way I was spoken to and how she presented herself to me I would like for her not to be involved in my children's cases as I feel she isn't supportive or beneficial and I feel she is quite patronising when she talks to myself and approaches me.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Social Work acknowledged some aspects of the customers complaint, talking it through also alerted the customer to realising why this worker may have acted the way she did in context to the concerns.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> On behalf of my family, I would like to acknowledge the amazing support we have received over the past few days everyone has been forward thinking and proactive, helping to make things much less stressful for us at a difficult time. We all too often hear the negative experiences, but the team have provided my family with support, compassion and understanding for which we are so grateful.</p>
<p><b>Contact Centre</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 2.2%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Inappropriate staff attitude / behaviour (20%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> Called Adult Protection line at time to log an urgent ASP concern. Thirteen minutes on hold then the worker refused to pass me onto anyone to make an ASP report - I asked various questions about who should field ASP information to be told that Fife has no ASP officer or staff for such an event. I was given the allocated SW extension and then, after not giving me her supervisor's details the lady told me she was called "name" and hung up after 19 minutes and 46 seconds. I was unable to pass on urgent details. I was shouted at and chastised by a worker. The lady wouldn't answer various queries nor pass me onto a relevant worker. She said I was "holding up the line" when I asked her why she wasn't answering my queries. I said I was glad the call was being recorded and she agreed then hung up. She refused to give me her supervisor's name but gave her name (which I hadn't asked for) as "name". If somebody can call me back my number is number, but I would prefer to pass on the ASP details first, this complaint is less important but the circumstances are just ludicrous.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Behaviour issues discussed and addressed with CSA and knowledge gap identified. A skill gap was identified for the team and addressed in training.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> Customer was looking to pass on his thanks after calling in previously and speaking with an advisor whom he advised was extremely helpful, very good at her job and went above and beyond for him.</p>
<p><b>Domestic Waste</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 17%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Dissatisfaction with policy / collection arrangements e.g., number of bins;</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> Our brown bins were missed. Checked online and no mention of any disruption to our service so reported the missed collection. A neighbour has now spoken to someone online who informed us that waste operations had not informed them of any missed collections so there was nothing they could do. That isn't really good enough. We reported it and we know a few others reported it yet we are now being told there is no information on our collection being missed. It isn't really good enough.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. High number of absences at the time and vehicle issues (shortage of spares for repair). Crews on weekend overtime to attempt to clear the backlog and complainants bin was ultimately serviced.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> Well done on great service for extremely speedy replacement to damaged blue bin lid. Thank you.</p>

Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
	frequency of collection etc (35%)	
<b>Education</b>	<p><b>Received: 8%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Dissatisfaction with policy / current arrangements (25%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint:</b> My understanding is that this is a fire alarm that is being tested once a week before the nursery opens. Why can this not be done during the day at lunch time or at end of day as this would be more considerate of the local residents to the nursery or do what the local supermarkets do which is state that a fire alarm is going off during the day while the nursery is open thus giving the staff and children present a functioning knowledge of fire alarms noise. When I initially made a complaint about this. I was told to contact the nursery/ school but as I have no dealings with this facility and there is nobody in the building apart from janitorial staff usually at time then I refer back to the owners of the facility which is Fife Council. This is a residential area and not everyone has young children that go to an educational establishment. As for the excuse "During school holidays, this does not have to be carried out quite so early in the day. This did not to my knowledge happen every week during the school holidays as I have been at home during this time due to health issues but did note that the nursery roof was being climbed on by older children. All I ask for is a bit of consideration for residents who live close to the nursery/ school of when they activate alarm systems. In short please can you move the test time to end of nursery day when the building is empty and less lightly to disturb residents. Also, the fact that the email referenced the parking (which is being access by the people at the bungalow) and the external lighting (which now goes off at time) at the nursery which is not why I complained today. I have emailed this to school and Escalation Resolutions to keep them in the loop on this matter. Your swift response in resolving this matter would be greatly appreciated.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Service have changed the external sounder to a strobe, therefore removing the external noise element and the lights are being changed over to lights with a sensor function.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> I would like a submit a compliment to my son's primary school and the PSA, my son has been struggling for quite some time now and as being in P7 he is missing out so much e.g., leavers assembly's, trips, gala floats etc as he just cannot cope and will not attend. After speaking with the PSA this morning, she actually suggested to get paper sent home to me so my son could design his own poster and it will then be included on the gala float, I am so touched with this idea and am overwhelmed that this lady took it upon herself to ensure my son is still included in some way! Much appreciation from all our family, I have been feeling a little sad lately at the thought of all the wee things he's missing out on, and this has just put a big smile on my face! Thank you with all my heart, you have made an anxious mum very happy</p>
<b>Housing</b>	<p><b>Received: 26%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Failure to respond to previous complaint / request for service / enquiry / reported fault (11%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I have an ongoing and lengthy noise complaint against one of your tenants who resides below me at address. I have attempted to make contact with Fife Council with regard to sound insulation and no one has replied. My neighbour is under investigation by <i>name</i> who has been fantastic, and the noise monitoring equipment report shows the noise is at a nuisance level and that sound proofing may be a contributing factor. Despite numerous warnings from <i>name</i> your tenant continues to breach her tenancy agreement with anti-social behaviour, constantly arguing with her partner, singing and screaming at unsocial hours. <i>name</i> has emailed the housing and I have also had <i>name</i> from your mutual owner team email housing and yet I have had no direct contact.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Staff reminded of cover for vacant patches, and who covers this street, and where to find this information as this is available.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> My wife and I would like to express our thanks to Andrea of the Ukraine Refugee support team. She has been an absolute star and a great support. She made us feel like we had a helping hand all the way and a person who was readily available to offer advice and having great knowledge on the subject. We cannot praise her enough and were grateful that we were able to have been dealt with by her during the whole of our Ukraine Super Sponsor dealings.</p>
<b>Grounds Maintenance</b>	<b>Received: 4.1%</b> of FC complaints	<b>Complaint example:</b> I phoned to report an area of my garden missed by the gardeners. This was rectified but left in a mess. As I pay for this Service it is unsatisfactory to have cut it badly and grass left lying. I am elderly and rely on this Service.

Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
	<p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Grass Cutting (28%)</p>	<p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Staff member made aware of standards and grass area maintained again to that expected standard.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> Today a young man was weeding and tidying. Unfortunately, I don't know his name or anything. I would just like to say that despite the heat he did an amazing job, and the lane looks brilliant! Did a great job tidying up at the end too. Please pass on my thanks to him, he worked really hard.</p>
<p><b>Planning</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 2.1%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Dissatisfaction with policy / delivery arrangements (33%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I have been advised to submit a complaint regarding this matter after emailing the service. Neighbour notification does not appear to have been carried out for this planning application. Of 31 neighbours listed on the NN sheet, not one of those people made any comment. I know of at least 7 neighbours did not receive a letter. Additionally, no planning advice was posted at the site either on area 1 or area 2. As NN is a statutory requirement in the planning process and appears to have been missed, I suggest the approval given on <i>date</i> is invalid until proper NN takes place. It is especially disappointing seeing that this application has been approved and no site visit has taken place considering the number of objections that were lodged with previous plans on this site.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint partially upheld and relevant section apologised for. No evidence that notifications had been processed by mail system. Corrective action is that evidence from mail system to be uploaded on to each case file where neighbour notification has been issued and officers reminded to include brief reference to evidence submitted in their reports of handling.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> My wife &amp; I have recently been told that a planning application has been submitted for a new build house virtually touching our home. As we have no experience with anything like this in our lives we made contact with Brian Forsyth, the Fife Council planner in charge of the case to help us get through the process as to what we could &amp; couldn't do. From the outset Mr Forsyth has been courteous, responded in excellent time to our questions &amp; has been an absolute pleasure to deal with, he is an absolute credit to Fife Council.</p>
<p><b>Recycling Centres</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 3.9%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Dissatisfaction with policy / current organisational arrangements including opening times (32%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> Recycle centre Cowdenbeath, can you inform the public when the recycling centre is not open. It is closed Sundays as well. There must be someone who can open the gates for the busy day of the week. There must have been eight to ten cars waiting.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. The centre had no signage and a sign will now provide closure day information.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> Recycling centre staff were very helpful on my last visit and whilst they appeared extremely busy so I'd like to extend my thanks.</p>
<p><b>Roads &amp; Transportation</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 10.4%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p>	<p><b>Complaint:</b> I have emailed the Transportation Services Department three times about the above reference asking the outcome of the intended inspection they told me would be carried out. I received a reply saying an inspection was due to be carried out but I still have not received a reply despite asking three times. I find this totally unacceptable and ignorant when I have taken the time to report the road defect and followed it up with three emails. An *** ***** who I asked to either call/email me still has not responded and again totally unacceptable and ignorant. I called last week and was told to make a complaint on the way this is being handled with the sheer lack of customer service from Fife Council. So I would like to know what is happening with this defect and why I have no response.</p>

Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
	<p>Potholes / poor condition of road surface (15%)</p>	<p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Unable to give the customer an exact date as the programme is continually being altered due to different factors, however, confirmed that this scheme will go ahead within the financial year.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> After only approximately 25 minutes after reporting this online the team arrived to unblock the drain. My wife and I were astounded that they were there so quickly. So much so that I went out and thanked the guys for such a quick response. On previous occasions the response has been quick but this was the quickest.</p> <p>The three guys were there for approximately 20 minutes and seemed to give the drain a really thorough clean.</p> <p>We would like to say a big thank you to everyone involved after receiving the fault report, from office through to the drain cleaning team.</p>

## Appendix 2 – Summary of SPSO Decisions

A2.1 The final stage for complainants is the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and the following tables present the cases considered by this office in 2022-23

Service	Vol	%
Area Services	4	6.3%
Benefits & Council Tax	4	6.3%
Bereavement Services	2	3.2%
Building Services	2	3.2%
Children & Families	5	7.9%
Customer Service Improvement	1	1.6%
Education	6	9.5%
Grounds Maintenance	2	3.2%
Housing	14	22.2%
Planning	15	23.8%
Protective Services	1	1.6%
Risk Management	1	1.6%
Roads & Transportation	4	6.3%
Sustainability	2	3.2%

SPSO Decisions Taken	Vol	%
Not taken forward for investigation	48	76.2%
Not Upheld	5	7.9%
Partially upheld	1	1.6%
Pending	9	14.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>63</b>	

A2.2 Not taken forward for investigation typically means that the SPSO decision was that these complaints were either, out of their jurisdiction, the complainants' outcome is unachievable or that in the opinion of the SPSO they can add nothing further to the decision already reached. The SPSO remain obliged to alert the Council of these cases under their governing Act. Pending means that the case remains under consideration by the SPSO at the time of this report.

A2.3 The overwhelming decision to not take cases forward for investigation may suggest that resolutions provided are the correct ones. The decision from the one case where the SPSO did uphold some element of the complaint investigated referred solely to the complaint handling and not the substantive matter (Planning – right of way).

A2.4 Additionally the SPSO made decisions on cases opened in previous years. These decisions were received in 2022-23. Details of these upheld decisions are in the following table, and all are available from the SPSO website.

Case Ref	Subject	Outcome
202000443	Child services and family support	Upheld (see A2.5)
201909723	Policy / administration	Not Upheld
202003119	Child services and family support	Upheld (see A2.6)

#### A2.5 Case 202000443

C complained on behalf of their client (A). Following an incident at A's home, A agreed with the council's Child Protection Team that their two children should be placed in the care of a relative. This was a voluntary placement under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. C emailed the council's social work team to inform them that A would withdraw their consent to the placement if no progress was made in their case.

A attended their youngest child's school and attempted to take custody of their child, but was prevented from doing so by social workers and the child left in the custody of relatives. Later that day, A attended their relatives' house and A was prevented from taking custody of the child. Social workers were not present, but police attended and then refused to intervene after speaking to the social workers.

A then agreed to the voluntary placement again. C advised A that they should withdraw their youngest child from the placement and attend their school to collect them and C informed the social workers of this advice. In response, social workers obtained a Child Protection Order (CPO). C complained to the council that they had

failed to respond to A's wishes regarding the placement. The council did not identify any substantive failings.

C complained that the council's response was inadequate and inaccurate and that the council had failed to obtain a CPO timeously. We took independent advice from a children's social work adviser. We found that A had tried to end the voluntary placement twice and that A had been prevented from exercising their parental rights. We found that the council had failed to obtain a CPO timeously and that they had failed to adequately investigate or respond to C's complaint. We upheld C's complaint.

### **Recommendations**

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to A for their failure to take A's parental rights into consideration and their failure to administer the placement of A's children adequately. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets>.
- Apologise to C for their failure to investigate and respond adequately to C's complaint. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets>.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Council staff should be aware of and take into account relevant guidance and legislation in a situation like this including parental rights and carrying out timeous checks of voluntary placements of children under section 25 of the Act.
- Staff dealing with complaints should be familiar with the council's Complaint Handling Procedure, understanding the importance of communication and the need to demonstrate thorough investigation of the points raised.

#### **A2.6 Case 202003119**

C and B complained to the council about their child's (A) move to a residential placement under a section 25 arrangement (Children (Scotland) Act 1995). They said that the placement had been highly inappropriate and had not met A's complex needs. C and B further complained that they had felt pressurised into agreeing to the move and had been given inaccurate information by social workers about the resource.

In response the council said that the placement had been made on an emergency basis and in good faith that it would meet A's needs. They disagreed that it had been

highly inappropriate. Although at the time they had been unaware of the provider's personal search practices, they agreed as a result of the complaint to request this information from all residential providers moving forward.

We took independent advice from a social worker. We found that the council had taken reasonable steps to find the best possible resource to meet A's complex needs within the limited timeframe available. Although we agreed that the council should have been made aware of their provider's personal search practices, we concluded that the council had acted reasonably in terms of their communications with C and B regarding the suitability of the resource and the information given to them and found no evidence to support that C and B had been pressurised into agreeing to the move. As such, we did not uphold these aspects of the complaint.

C and B further complained that the council had failed to explain to them that it had been their intention to move A to secure accommodation and social workers had relied on inaccurate health reporting to inform this decision. C and B explained that they had been invited to a meeting with social workers but had been unaware it would be to discuss secure measures. As such, they had been denied the opportunity to have legal representation to challenge the council's decision and to prevent the move.

We were unable to reach a finding on what information had been given to C and B about the purpose of the meeting. While we acknowledged that having legal representation may have aided their understanding of the process, we found that this would not have had any bearing on the decision to move A to secure care. We concluded that the council had provided C and B with all the appropriate information leading to the decision, including the legal process and their rights of appeal. As such, we did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

C and B further complained that the council had failed to respond appropriately to their concerns that A may be self-harming during their placement.

While we found that overall the incidences of A's self-harm had been taken seriously, one particular incident had not been considered as thoroughly as it should have been and there had been a failure to report A's injuries to C and B at the time. Therefore, on balance, we upheld this aspect of the complaint.



## Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C and B, and to A, for failing to give appropriate consideration to an incident where A had self-harmed. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).
- In situations where a young person is at risk of self-harm, there should be clarity in the council's contract with external care providers about the reporting of such incidents to the family/carers and to the council themselves.

A2.7 For clarity all recommendations were met in these decisions with evidence provided of our actions to the SPSO.

28 September 2023

Agenda Item No. 7

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## 2023/24 Issued Audit Reports

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**Report by:** Pamela Redpath, Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services

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**Wards Affected:** All

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### Purpose

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To submit to Members of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee a summary of findings from the Internal Audit Report that has been finalised since the last meeting of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee. The report highlights any areas of concern and, if applicable, instances where Services are not taking appropriate action.

### Recommendation(s)

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Members are asked to note the contents of this report, including the summary of findings at Appendix 1.

### Resource Implications

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None.

### Legal & Risk Implications

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Without suitable internal controls, there is an increased risk that Services and / or the Council will not achieve their objectives.

### Impact Assessment

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An Equality Impact Assessment is not required because the report is not proposing a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

### Consultation

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Audit Services has consulted all subjects of the audit reports.

## 1.0 Background

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- 1.1 Audit Services provides an assurance function that gives the Council an independent and objective opinion on the control environment by evaluating its effectiveness in achieving its objectives. It examines, evaluates and reports objectively on the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.
- 1.2 This report provides a summary of audit reports issued since the last report to this Committee. It describes key findings and highlights areas of concern.

## 2.0 Analysis of Issued Audit Reports

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- 2.1 To enable the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee to form an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control environment, to provide assurance where internal controls are working well and to highlight areas for concern, the Service Manager – Audit and Risk Management Services, prepares a report which provides a summary of the audit reports issued by Audit Services.
- 2.2 There has been one Internal Audit Report finalised since the last meeting and it is the formal Follow-up Review of Safeguarding. A short outline of the report is contained in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 Following each completed internal audit / fraud risk report, Services are asked to complete a Post Audit Review (PAR) exercise. This indicates:
  - the Service's progress in implementing agreed actions;
  - reasons for non-implementation; and
  - explanations for redundant recommendations.
- 2.4 The results of all PAR exercises are reported to Standards, Audit and Risk Committee.

## 3.0 Conclusions

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- 3.1 This is a positive report, communicating that there has been significant improvement made to the internal control framework since the original Safeguarding audit was carried out. The findings do not pose a significant risk to the Council.

### List of Appendices

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1. Summary of Audit Reports Issued

Report Contact:

Carolyn Ward

Audit Team Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services

Email – [Carolyn.Ward@fife.gov.uk](mailto:Carolyn.Ward@fife.gov.uk)

SERVICE, REPORT AND PURPOSE	SUMMARY OF FIFE COUNCIL AUDIT REPORTS
<p><b>1. Finance and Corporate Services, Education and Children’s Services and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)</b></p> <p>Follow-Up to Report 14/22, Safeguarding (Report 01/23)</p>	<p>The 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan contains an allocation of days for Audit Services to carry out formal follow-up reviews for a planned portfolio of audit reports. This allocation is used to assess, through the consideration of evidence, the extent to which recommendations previously agreed with management have been implemented.</p> <p>This audit is a follow-up review of Report 14/22, Safeguarding which was issued on 11 May 2023.</p> <p>The Audit Opinion in the original internal audit report concluded that the system of controls scored a Grade 3 and the materiality of the area audited scored a Grade 5, making the overall risk High. A number of areas for improvement were identified and five recommendations, which the services agreed to implement by 30 June 2023, were made to address them.</p> <p>A summary of progress made towards implementation of the five recommendations previously agreed with management is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four recommendations (2,3,4 and 5) have been fully implemented;</li> <li>• One recommendation (1) has been partially implemented.</li> </ul> <p><u>Audit Opinion:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of Assurance                      Grade 1</li> <li>• System Materiality                      Grade 5</li> <li>• Overall Risk                                      Low</li> </ul> <p><u>Findings:</u></p> <p>Further action is required as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relevant Role Profiles within Education &amp; Children’s Services and HSCP that do not include the requirement to be registered with SSSC within six months of the employee’s start date should be updated to include those requirements.</li> </ul> <p>Satisfactory action has been agreed to address the 1 partially implemented audit recommendation (1 Moderate) in the report by 30 April 2024.</p>

28 September 2023

Agenda Item No. 8

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## Internal Audit Plan Progress Report

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**Report by:** Pamela Redpath, Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services

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**Wards Affected:** All

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### Purpose

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To submit to Members of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee an update on the progress towards delivering the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 Internal Audit Plans.

### Recommendation(s)

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Members are asked to note the update on progress towards delivering the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 Internal Audit Plans at Appendix C, B and A respectively. Appendices B and C have been updated to show the movement in status for each assignment since the last progress report was presented to Committee on 18 May 2023.

### Resource Implications

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None.

### Legal & Risk Implications

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Without suitable internal controls, there is an increased risk that Services and / or the Council will not achieve their objectives.

### Impact Assessment

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An EqIA has not been completed and is not necessary as the report does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

### Consultation

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None.

## 1.0 Internal Audit Plans – Progress Report

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- 1.1 Standard 2060 of the PSIAS entitled Reporting to Senior Management and the Board states that “the chief audit executive must report periodically to senior management and the board on...performance relative to its plan” and that “reporting and communication to senior management and the board must include information about the audit plan and progress against the plan”. In addition, Standard 1110 of the PSIAS entitled Organisational Independence supports this requirement, stating that “examples of functional reporting to the board involve the board receiving communications from the chief audit executive on the internal audit activity’s performance relative to its plan”.
- 1.2 At a senior management level, this requirement is discharged by the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services through established direct reporting channels to the Chief Executive, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Head of Finance (to whom the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services reports administratively) and the Finance Management Team. This is the second report submitted to Committee during 2023/24 that provides a progress update against individual assignments contained within the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Internal Audit Plans and the first progress report for the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan. See Appendices A, B and C. Appendices B and C have been updated to show the movement in status for each assignment since the last progress report was presented to Committee on 18 May 2023.
- 1.3 The 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan is now complete; the one outstanding assignment at 18 May 2023 was finalised and reported to Committee on 30 June 2023. The vast majority of the revised 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan is now complete, leaving one assignment at draft report stage, four at review stage and three at fieldwork stage. In relation to progress towards delivering the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan, 18 (53%) of the 34 individual audit assignments and three (50%) of the six formal follow-ups within it have commenced and are at various stages of the internal audit process. For further information in relation to progress towards delivering the 2022/23 and 2023/24 Internal Audit Plans and the assignments within them, see Appendix B and Appendix A respectively.

## 2.0 Conclusions

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- 2.1 The 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan is now complete. Updates towards delivering the revised 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan will continue to be submitted to the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee until its completion, along with updates towards delivering the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan.

### List of Appendices

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- A. 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan – Progress Report
- B. 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan – Progress Report
- C. 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan – Progress Report

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## 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan – Progress Report

Not Yet Commenced	Planning	Fieldwork	Reviewing	Draft Report Issued	Complete / S,A&R Committee Date
2023/24 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN		Proposed Coverage			Status 28/09/23
<b>Governance Reviews</b>					
Plan for Fife	Review of the governance arrangements in place to support delivery of the new Plan for Fife, including performance management and reporting arrangements.			Not Yet Commenced	
Project Management	Review of the Council's project management arrangements to ensure the efficient and effective planning, initiation, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the key capital and revenue projects.			Not Yet Commenced	
Partnership Working	High level review of the governance arrangements, including resource contribution policies, in place for partnerships with other local authorities to deliver a shared vision.			Not Yet Commenced	
Fraud Governance	To assess the robustness of the framework in place within the Council to identify potential risks arising from fraud and the measures in place to mitigate these			Not Yet Commenced	
Corporate Governance	Review of governance assurance arrangements in place at a corporate and directorate level, including ALEO assurance, against CIPFA's Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework.			Not Yet Commenced	
Risk Management	High level review of the Council's risk management arrangements at a corporate and service level against recognised good practice.			Not Yet Commenced	
Third Sector Funding	High level review of the Council's funding and governance arrangements in place for third sector against best practice principles, including the Accounts Commission's Following the Public Pound.			Planning	
<b>ICT Reviews</b>					
Adelante	Review of the new cash receipting system, Adelante. Coverage to be agreed during 2023/24 once the system is fully implemented.			Not Yet Commenced	
Liquidlogic	Review to assess the effectiveness of the deployment of the new children and adults case management system procured by the Council.			Not Yet Commenced	
User Access Levels	High level review of the appropriateness of user access levels and associated permissions for a sample of the Council's critical IT systems.			Planning	
Data Centre	Review of the arrangements in place to ensure uninterrupted service delivery at the new data centre, including security arrangements, environmental controls, incident management and disaster recovery.			Planning	

2023/24 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 28/09/23
<b>Systems Reviews</b>		
Care in the Home	Contracts with, and payments to, care providers for clients' care in the home.	Not Yet Commenced
School Transport	Review of the school transport policy in place for children with additional support needs, as well as the effectiveness of supporting processes and procedures developed to help ensure compliance.	Planning
Dangerous Buildings and Public Safety	High-level review to ensure that the Council is discharging its statutory duties in relation to dangerous buildings under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.	Planning
Assessors	Review of the processes and procedures introduced, following implementation of the new Evalu8 system, to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.	Not Yet Commenced
GDPR - Data Breach Management	Review of the arrangements in place for data breach management to ensure Fife Council meets its GDPR obligations, including data breach detection, reporting, investigating and monitoring.	Planning
Incident Management	Review of the arrangements in place to manage and monitor health and safety incidents within Education and Children's Services, including recording / reporting processes and procedures.	Planning
Induction	High-level review of the Council's revised induction process, developed to ensure staff have the necessary information / skills to perform their role effectively and in line with the Code of Conduct.	Not Yet Commenced
Attendance Management	Coverage to be agreed with the Head of HR during 2023/24, once ongoing developments in this area have progressed further.	Not Yet Commenced
Discretionary Housing Payments	Review of the arrangements in place to administer Discretionary Housing Payment applications, determinations and awards in line with relevant Scottish guidance and regulations.	Planning
<b>Procurement / Contract Reviews</b>		
Procurement Cards	Corporate review of the internal controls in place to manage and monitor the use of procurement cards, including the authorisation of card transactions.	Not Yet Commenced
Purchase Ordering	Review of the requisition, approval and ordering arrangements in place within Oracle for non-contract spend below £5,000.	Planning
Regulated Procurement	Review of governance arrangements in place to ensure regulated procurement activity complies with relevant legislation, regulations and statutory guidance, including areas of delegated procurement.	Planning



2023/24 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 28/09/23
<b>Procurement / Contract Reviews (cont'd)</b>		
ICT Contract Management	Review of ICT contract management arrangements to ensure that specifications are successfully delivered and, if required, remedial actions taken / escalation procedures are efficient and effective.	Planning
COMIS Replacement	Ongoing advice and guidance surrounding the COMIS replacement system, including attendance at the COMIS Replacement Board.	Ongoing
<b>Financial Reviews</b>		
Devolved School Management (DSM)	Review of the Council's DSM scheme against the Scottish Government and COSLA's DSM Guidelines and supplementary Common DSM Framework.	Not Yet Commenced
Financial Assessments	End-to-end review of the financial assessments process in place to calculate contribution levels for long term care residents.	Not Yet Commenced
Income Collection	Review of the income collection, recording and reconciliation arrangements in place to ensure data integrity and income maximisation for halls, centres and community use schools.	Planning
Pupil Equity Funding	Review of the framework in place to administer pupil equity funding and ensure that it is being effectively invested in line with the Pupil Equity Fund: National Operational Guidance.	Fieldwork
Salary Overpayments	Review of Council's salary overpayments policy, processes and procedures in place to manage, monitor and mitigate salary overpayments, including recovery and write off procedures.	Fieldwork
Reconciliation Framework	Review of the Council's reconciliation framework in place to help ensure financial integrity, including procedures, reconciliations register, timetables, responsibilities and monitoring arrangements.	Not Yet Commenced
UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)	In line with the Cabinet Office Government Functional Standards and UKSPF guidance, provide the third line of defence assurance function.	Planning
<b>Audits for External Organisations</b>		
FSLT – Membership Process	End-to-end review of the membership processes and procedures in place at FSLT, including reconciliation process, with a view to identifying areas for improvement / potential efficiencies.	Planning

2023/24 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 28/09/23
<b>Contingency</b>		
Advice and Guidance	Provision of ad-hoc support to assist services in respect of specific queries and contribute to the delivery of improvements in the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members Expenses</li> </ul>	Fieldwork
Follow-up Reviews	Specific reviews undertaken by internal audit staff to provide formal assurances to management and Elected Members that recommendations previously agreed have been implemented:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 83 - IT Disaster Recovery</li> </ul>	Fieldwork
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 86 - COBIT 5 Assessment Review Process</li> </ul>	Not Yet Commenced
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 91 - Recurring Payments</li> </ul>	Planning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 04/22 - Information Security Management</li> </ul>	Not Yet Commenced
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 07/22 - Gas Safety</li> </ul>	Not Yet Commenced
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 14/22 - Safeguarding</li> </ul>	28/09/23
Post Audit Reviews (PARs)	Completion of the PAR exercise whereby formal assurances are obtained from management that internal audit recommendations have been implemented.	Not Yet Commenced
PSIAS Self-assessment	To ensure conformance with the PSIAS, conduct a self-assessment of the Council's Internal Audit Service against the PSIAS utilising the revised external quality assessment framework.	Not Yet Commenced
External Quality Assessment Process	As part of the peer review process developed to ensure conformance with the PSIAS, deliver an external quality assessment of the internal audit service provided in another Scottish Local Authority.	Fieldwork
Specific Investigations	To respond to requests for advice and assistance as required in respect of cases of suspected fraud, corruption or malpractice.	Ongoing

## 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan – Progress Report

Not Yet Commenced	Planning	Fieldwork	Reviewing	Draft Report Issued	Complete / S,A&R Committee Date
2022/23 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN		Proposed Coverage		Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
<b>Governance Reviews</b>					
Corporate Governance & Best Value (Service Level)	Review Service arrangements for meeting Best Value obligations, including Management Structure, Scheme of Delegation, Planning & Performance Reporting, managing to Fife Excellence Model (FEM) and providing annual assurance.			Advice & Guidance	Advice & Guidance
Oversight of 'Trust' Companies (ALEOs)	Service oversight of arm's length 'trust' companies, including contractual and governance arrangements, agreed objectives, and performance management and reporting mechanisms.			25/05/23	25/05/23
Future Workstyles	Review of the governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements in place to support the deployment of future workstyles and ensure consistency of approach e.g., blended and flexible working.			Fieldwork	Fieldwork
Media Relations	Review of the arrangements in place within the Communications Service to manage and monitor media relations on behalf of the Council, including strategy, performance management and reporting.			Fieldwork	30/06/23
<b>ICT Reviews</b>					
Compliance with Information Security Policies	Review of Services' compliance with information security policies.			02/03/23	02/03/23
<b>Systems Reviews</b>					
Asset Management	Service level needs assessment, recording, maintenance and utilisation of assets, including housing stock, property, vehicles, equipment and IT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The scope of this review is Education laptops.</li> </ul>			02/03/23	02/03/23
Stock Control - Facilities	Review of the working practices and procedures in place for stock control within Facilities Management, with a view to identifying potential efficiencies and other improvement opportunities.			Draft Report Issued	30/06/23
Community Equipment Store	Review of the arrangements in place at the community equipment store, against recognised good practice, to help support delivery of an efficient and effective community equipment service.			Fieldwork	Reviewing
Safeguarding	Review of the arrangements in place to ensure the protection of vulnerable groups during the Council's selection and appointments process in line with relevant national policy and guidance.			25/05/23	25/05/23

2022/23 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (Cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
<b>Systems Review (cont'd)</b>			
Scottish Welfare Fund	Review of the arrangements in place to manage the Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants, Community Care Grants and Self-isolation Support Grants in line with Scottish Government guidance.	02/03/23	02/03/23
Gas Safety	High level review of the adequacy of the systems in place within Housing to ensure that it can meet its statutory obligations in respect of gas safety checks.	25/05/23	25/05/23
Homelessness	Review of the adequacy of the systems in place within Housing to ensure that it meets its statutory obligations in respect of homelessness and recording of associated outcomes.	Reviewing	30/06/23
Pool Cars	Review of pool car usage within Enterprise and Environment from a reform and climate change perspective.	Draft Report Issued	30/06/23
Impact Assessments	Review of the Council's Impact Assessment process and procedures, including staff guidance, in place for committee reports.	Fieldwork	Fieldwork
Lone Working	Assessment and deployment of the working practices and procedures in place to help ensure a safe working environment for employees through the provision of lone working fobs.	Fieldwork	Reviewing
Leavers Process	Review to assess the adequacy of the processes and procedures in place surrounding the notification and processing of leavers.	Reviewing	30/06/23
Works Orders	Review of the works orders process operating within Environment and Building Services for the commissioning of grounds maintenance services.	Fieldwork	Fieldwork
Vacant Properties	Review of the arrangements in place to ensure the effective ongoing protection of vacant Council buildings, including inspection regime and the identification / implementation of physical protections.	02/03/23	02/03/23
<b>Financial Reviews</b>			
Teachers Payroll	Review of the control framework in place to ensure ongoing accuracy of the Teachers payroll, including arrangements for confirming active employees, rates of pay, variations and deductions.	25/05/23	25/05/23
Arrangements for Cash Handling and Security (Education)	Focus on cash handling and security.	Fieldwork	Reviewing

2022/23 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
<b>Financial Reviews (cont'd)</b>			
Council Tax	Review of the arrangements in place within the Council to administer and monitor entitlements for Council Tax Reduction.	25/05/23	25/05/23
Capital Plan	To assess the monitoring and reporting arrangements in place at both a corporate and service level for the capital programme of works contained within the Capital Plan.	25/05/23	25/05/23
Stocks and Inventories	Review of arrangements in place to ensure that procedures and processes are in line with Council guidance and records are complete and accurate.	Fieldwork	Reviewing
Tell Us Once	Review of the processes, procedures and effectiveness of the national Tell Us Once service as it is operating within Fife Council.	02/03/23	02/03/23
<b>Audits for External Organisations</b>			
CIRECO - Data Protection	High level review of the arrangements in place to ensure its statutory duties surrounding Data Protection and GDPR are effectively discharged.	Reviewing	30/06/23
<b>Contingency</b>			
Advice and Guidance	Provision of ad-hoc support to assist services in respect of specific queries and contribute to the delivery of improvements in the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.	Complete	Complete
Follow-up Reviews	Specific reviews undertaken by internal audit staff to provide formal assurances to management and Elected Members that recommendations previously agreed have been implemented:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 46 - Information Governance</li> </ul>	25/05/23	25/05/23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 57 - Employability, Matrix Fife</li> </ul>	25/05/23	25/05/23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 58 - Performance Management</li> </ul>	Fieldwork	Draft Report Issued
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 62 - Asset Management, Land and Buildings</li> </ul>	Fieldwork	30/06/23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 71 - Risk Management &amp; Business Continuity</li> </ul>	To be presented 30/06/23	30/06/23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 75 - Common Good Fund Grants</li> </ul>	25/05/23	25/05/23	

2022/23 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
<b>Contingency (cont'd)</b>			
Post Audit Reviews (PARs)	Completion of the PAR exercise whereby formal assurances are obtained from management that internal audit recommendations have been implemented.	25/05/23	25/05/23
PSIAS Self-assessment	To ensure conformance with the PSIAS, conduct a self-assessment of the Council's Internal Audit Service against the PSIAS utilising the revised external quality assessment framework.	EQA 25/05/23	EQA 25/05/23
Specific Investigations	To respond to requests for advice and assistance as required in respect of cases of suspected fraud, corruption or malpractice.	Complete	Complete

## 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan – Progress Report

Not Yet Commenced	Planning	Fieldwork	Reviewing	Draft Report Issued	Complete / S,A&R Committee Date
2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN		Proposed Coverage		Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
<b>Governance Reviews</b>					
Emergency Resilience	Review the compilation and maintenance of the Council's plans for saving lives and property in the event of a major incident.			19/04/22	19/04/22
Complaints Procedure	That the Council's complaints procedures are being followed and are resolving customers' complaints, and that the information is used to improve services.			19/04/22	19/04/22
<b>Members</b>					
Electoral Registration	To ensure that the Council's Electoral Register is accurate and complete.			19/04/22	19/04/22
<b>Main Systems</b>					
Procure to Pay (P2P)	Controls over ordering, receipting and suppliers' payments through Oracle, including maintenance of the list of suppliers and cheque / BACS runs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The scope of this review is recurring payments.</li> </ul>			02/03/23	02/03/23
Payroll and Expenses – Central Processing	Central processing of payroll, i.e., gross to net, and payment of approved expenses. Over a 5-year period, cover all elements including standing data, statutory and non-statutory deductions and verification.			30/06/22	30/06/22
Payroll and Expenses (Service Level – Children's Services)	Processing of payroll up to gross, including checking and authorisation of expenses.			31/10/22	31/10/22
<b>Subsidiary Systems</b>					
Bank and Suspense Accounts Reconciliations	Reconciliation of the Council's main bank accounts and related suspense accounts, including the General Fund. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The scope of this review is payroll reconciliations.</li> </ul>			02/03/23	02/03/23

2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
<b>Staffing</b>			
Human Resources	<p>To review the recruitment process and the role of HR Direct / Recruitment Portal, PVG / disclosure checks, that there are proper procedures in place covering the role of HR Direct / Recruitment Portal, Recruitment, Code of Conduct, PVG / Disclosure Checks, Contribution Management and training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education &amp; Children's Services</li> <li>• Enterprise &amp; Environment</li> </ul>	<p>07/10/21 16/12/21</p>	<p>07/10/21 16/12/21</p>
<b>Purchases</b>			
Social Housing Agreements	To ensure that agreements with other social housing organisations in Fife are appropriate and operating effectively.	30/06/22	30/06/22
Repairs and Maintenance	Maintenance of the Council's administration buildings and council houses.	Fieldwork	30/06/23
Climate Change and Energy Management	Management of the purchases of energy and the monitoring and reduction of its use across the Council. Review processes for achieving outcomes on Climate Change.	31/10/22	31/10/22
<b>Health and Social Care</b>			
Direct Payment to Clients and Support for Carers	Management of direct payments to clients for care (Self Directed Support).	30/06/22	30/06/22
<b>Other Audits</b>			
Common Good and Trust Funds	Management and security of the common good fund for which the Council is responsible.	19/04/22	19/04/22
Social Media Investigation & Research	Compliance with legislation in relation to the Council's use of social media. This covers the social media policy, checking compliance and authorisation for investigations and confirming the privacy impact assessment is completed.	19/04/22	19/04/22



2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
<b>Information Technology Audits</b>			
Management of IT Operations, Knowledge & Quality	Review of the co-ordination and execution of activities and operational procedures required to deliver internal and outsourced IT services, including the execution of pre-defined operating procedures and required monitoring activities. Review whether there are quality requirements for all, processes, procedures and related enterprise outcomes, and whether knowledge is provided to support all staff in their work activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The scope of this review is Civica Cx.</li></ul>	30/06/22	30/06/22
<b>Mini Audits</b>			
Financial Check - Health and Social Care	IJB and Health & Social Care establishment(s) to undertake a financial check.	Advice & Guidance	Advice & Guidance
<b>Continuous Auditing / Grants</b>			
Monthly stock checks	Monthly stock checks to be carried out.		
External Grants Received (including EU) process	To review the Council's processes for identifying, claiming and recording external grants including compliance with conditions.		
Audit Certification* - Fitzgerald Trust, Grants, City Deals, INTERREG, Fife Education Trust Accounts, Clipper, Mutual Work - Clackmannanshire etc.  * Note – there is not always a formal output.	Certifying accounts and grant claims as necessary, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LEADER in Fife Programme</li><li>Bus Service Operators' Grant</li></ul>	16/12/21 07/10/21	16/12/21 07/10/21
<b>Post Audit Review and Follow Up</b>			
PAR Reviews	Issue and review of PAR action plans for all audits to check on implementation of agreed recommendations.	19/04/22	19/04/22

2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
Follow-up(s)	<p>Specific review undertaken by internal audit to provide formal assurances to management and Elected Members that recommendations previously agreed have been implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal Audit Report No. 6 – BTS Change Management</li> </ul>	07/10/21	07/10/21
<b>Planned Consultancy</b>			
Data Matching	Matching Council Tax and rent arrears and Council payrolls.		
<b>Non-Fife Council Internal Audits</b>			
Fife Sports and Leisure Trust	<p>Income, Expenditure, Fees and charges, HR, Purchasing, Health and Safety, Treasury Management, Revenue Budget Setting and Monitoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment and Training</li> <li>Payroll</li> </ul>	30/06/22 30/06/22	30/06/22 30/06/22
<b>Carry Forwards from 2020/21</b>			
Risk Management & Business Continuity (Housing)	Examine the arrangements in Services for managing risk and review the compilation and maintenance of Services' contingency plans for continuing to provide services in the event of incidents that are liable to disrupt its services.	16/12/21	16/12/21
Management of Information (Adult Services)	Ensure Services are taking necessary action to apply the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts, records Management and deal with information generally, including ICT Policies.	07/10/21	07/10/21
Non-Domestic Rates	Income from the Council's Non-Domestic Rates Tax base, including billing, collection and recovery.	07/10/21	07/10/21
Asset Management	Corporate recording and utilisation of the Council's properties, including comparison with the Insurance Register.	07/10/21	07/10/21
Capital Expenditure	Management of major capital expenditure projects, e.g., Schools Estate, tendering, build, including PPP or similar schemes. Specification and awarding of tenders and monitoring of contract progress including Construction Industry Scheme (CIS), guarantees, etc. Applies to capital contracts. As part of The Affordable Housing Programme, the Private Sector Workstream is included from 2016.	07/10/21	07/10/21

2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
Fleet Management	Management of the Council's vehicles, including purchase, sales, security, assessment of number needed, green policy and usage of vehicle fuel bought by the Council.	16/12/21	16/12/21
Management of Contracts	Review the arrangements in place for monitoring a contract after it has been awarded and is in place. This applies to revenue contracts. When auditing IT related contracts, refer to COBIT APO10. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street Lighting Installations</li> </ul>	19/04/22	19/04/22
Resource Transfers	Payments from the NHS for transfers of people into Council care. Including all transfers, not only those specifically called resource transfers.	16/12/21	16/12/21
Clients' Funds	Management and security of funds / assets held on behalf of clients, i.e., people in care and the assets of deceased persons.	19/04/22	19/04/22
Management of Portfolio, Programmes and Projects (COBIT 5 APO05, BAI01 & BAI05)	Review how Business Technology Solutions optimises the portfolio of programmes in response to programme and service performance & changing Council priorities, including managing organisational change enablement. (Note assessing mechanisms for ensuring IT enabled programmes and projects are managed effectively and in accordance with Council Project Management Framework is covered under Management of Projects). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BTS Management of Projects</li> </ul>	19/04/22	19/04/22
Management of Availability, Capacity & Continuity (COBIT 5 EDM04, BAI04 & DSS04)	Review how BTS ensures that adequate and sufficient IT related capabilities are available to support objectives effectively. It also covers maintenance of service availability, efficient management of resources, and optimisation of system performance, continuation critical Council operations and maintains availability of information in the event of a significant disruption. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scope of this review is Disaster Recovery.</li> </ul>	30/06/22	30/06/22
Management of IT Security (COBIT APO13 & DSS05)	Review the information security policies and arrangements in place for information security management, i.e., protection against malware, network and connectivity security, endpoint security, user identity and logical access, physical access to IT assets, management of sensitive documents and output devices and monitoring of the infrastructure for security related events (including cyber).	16/12/21	16/12/21

2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (cont'd)	Proposed Coverage	Status 18/05/23	Status 28/09/23
Purchasing Cards	A review of purchasing cards in Education.	02/03/23	02/03/23
COBIT 5 Capability Assessment	Provision of assurance on outcomes of BTS' COBIT 5 Capability Model Assessment.	30/06/22	30/06/22

28 September 2023

Agenda Item No. 9

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## **Fife Integration Joint Board (IJB) 2023/24 Annual Internal Audit Plan**

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**Report by:** Pamela Redpath, Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services

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**Wards Affected:** All

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### **Purpose**

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To submit to Members of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee a copy of Fife IJB's 2023/24 Annual Internal Audit Plan.

### **Recommendation(s)**

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Members are asked to note the contents of the Fife IJB 2023/24 Annual Internal Audit Plan at Appendix 1 and identify any individual audits it wishes to receive assurances from.

### **Resource Implications**

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None.

### **Legal & Risk Implications**

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Without proper corporate governance, risk management and internal controls in place, the risk increases that the IJB, and its Health and Social Care Partnership, will not achieve its objectives and may suffer financial loss and / or reputational damage. Obtaining independent assurances around the IJB's framework of governance, risk management and control through delivery of the Internal Audit Plan are of fundamental importance to the Council.

### **Impact Assessment**

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An Equality Impact Assessment is not required because the report is not proposing a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

### **Consultation**

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No consultation required.

## 1.0 Background

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- 1.1 The Integrated Resources Advisory Group guidance states that it is the responsibility of the IJB to establish adequate and proportionate internal audit arrangements for review of the adequacy of the arrangements for risk management, governance and control of the delegated resources. This responsibility includes determining who will provide the internal audit service for the IJB and nominating a Chief Internal Auditor.
- 1.2 The IJB formally took over operational responsibility of the delegated functions with effect from 1 April 2016. As detailed in the Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Internal Audit Report for 2022/23 for the Fife IJB, Fife, Tayside and Forth Valley Audit and Management Services (FTF) was appointed as the Internal Auditors for Fife IJB for financial year 2021/22 onwards, including the role of Chief Internal Auditor. Prior to that, Fife Council's Audit Services provided those services.
- 1.3 The Internal Audit Output Sharing Protocol sets out principles in relation to the sharing of key internal audit outputs between the IJB, Fife Council and NHS Fife, including Internal Audit plans and annual reports. In the context of Fife Council and in relation to Internal Audit plans specifically, the Internal Audit Output Sharing Protocol requires the IJB's Annual Internal Audit Plan to be presented to Fife Council's Standards, Audit and Risk Committee for noting, to allow identification of any relevant audits that it may wish to receive assurances from.
- 1.4 The Fife IJB's 2023/24 Annual Internal Audit Plan was approved by the IJB's Audit and Assurance Committee at its meeting on 13 September 2023.

## 2.0 Conclusions

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- 2.1 As detailed in the Chief Internal Auditor's 2022/23 Annual Internal Audit Report for the Fife IJB, FTF was appointed as the Internal Auditors for financial year 2021/22 onwards, including the role of Chief Internal Auditor. Prior to that, Fife Council's Audit Services provided those services.
- 2.2 The Internal Audit Output Sharing Protocol requires the IJB's Annual Internal Audit Plan to be presented to Fife Council's Standards, Audit and Risk Committee for noting, to allow identification of any relevant audits which it may wish to receive assurance from.

### List of Appendices

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1. Fife IJB's 2023/24 Internal Audit Annual Plan

Report Contact:

Pamela Redpath

Service Manager – Audit & Risk Management Services

Email – [Pamela.Redpath@fife.gov.uk](mailto:Pamela.Redpath@fife.gov.uk)

## Fife IJB Internal Audit Annual Plan 2023/24

Ref	Audit	Indicative Scope	Days	Target Audit Committee
F01-24	Audit Planning	Audit Risk Assessment & Operational Planning.	5	September 2023
F02-24	Audit Management	Liaison with management, Pre-Audit Committee liaison with Chief Finance Officer, preparation of papers and attendance at Audit Committee. Follow Up Process and validation of audit recommendations.	5	Ongoing
F03-24	Annual Internal Audit Report (2022/23)	Chief Internal Auditor annual assurance statement to the IJB and fieldwork to support this.	10	June 2023
F04-24	Governance & Assurance	Ad-hoc advice and support to management on matters of governance and assurance.	5	June 2023
F05-24	Internal Control Evaluation	Holistic assessment of the internal control environment in preparation for production of 2023/24 Annual Report. Follow-up of previous agreed governance actions including Internal Audit recommendations.	10	April 2024
F06-24	Resilience and Business Continuity	Review of the resilience and Business Continuity planning arrangements.	15	TBC

28 September, 2023

Agenda Item No. 10

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## Standards, Audit and Risk Committee Workplan

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**Report by:** Eileen Rowand, Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services

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**Wards Affected:** All

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### Purpose

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This report supports the Committee's consideration of the workplan for future meetings of the Committee.

### Recommendation(s)

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It is recommended that the Committee review the workplan and that members come forward with suggestions for specific areas they would like to see covered in any of the reports.

### Resource Implications

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Committee should consider the resource implication for Council staff of any request for future reports.

### Legal & Risk Implications

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Committee should consider seeking inclusion of future items on the workplan by prioritising those which have the biggest impact and those which seek to deal with the highest level of risk.

### Impact Assessment

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None required for this paper.

### Consultation

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The purpose of the paper is to support the Committee's discussion and therefore no consultation is necessary.



## 1.0 Background

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- 1.1 Each Committee operates a workplan which contains items which falls under the headings: items for decision and Scrutiny/Monitoring. These items will often lead to reactive rather than proactive scrutiny. Discussion on the workplan agenda item will afford members the opportunity to shape, as a committee, the agenda with future items of business it wishes to review in more detail.

## 2.0 Conclusions

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- 2.1 The current workplan is included as Appendix one and should be reviewed by the committee to help inform scrutiny activity.

### List of Appendices

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1. Standards, Audit and Risk Committee forward work plan.

### Background Papers

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

None

### Report Contact

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Committee Services Manager  
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Email- [helena.couperwhite@fife.gov.uk](mailto:helena.couperwhite@fife.gov.uk)

<b>Standards, Audit and Risk Committee of 30 October 2023</b>			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Service(s)</b>	<b>Contact(s)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Fife Council and Charitable Trusts - Annual Audit Report and Annual Accounts 2023-24	Finance and Corporate Services	Elaine Muir	
Fife IJB Annual Internal Audit Plan	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	

<b>Standards, Audit and Risk Committee of 9 November 2023</b>			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Service(s)</b>	<b>Contact(s)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Whistle Blowing Policy Update	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
Safeguarding Public Money: are you getting it right?		Pamela Redpath	
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Scotland (RIPSA) Act 2000	Finance and Corporate Services	Lindsay Thomson	
The Acting Ethical Standards Commissioner for Scotland Annual Report 2022/23, the Standards Commission for Scotland (the Commission) Annual Report for 2022/23; and Decisions taken by the Hearing Panel of the Commission	Finance and Corporate Services	Lindsay Thomson	
National Fraud Initiative (NFI) in Scotland 2023	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	

NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE EXERCISE - PROGRESS TO DATE	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
2023/24 Issued Audit Reports	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
Internal Audit Plan - Progress Report	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	

<b>Standards, Audit and Risk Committee of 18 January 2024</b>			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Service(s)</b>	<b>Contact(s)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Code of Governance	Finance and Corporate Services	Lindsay Thomson, Pamela Redpath	
2023/24 Issued Audit Reports	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
2023/24 Issued Audit Reports	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
Risk Management Update	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	

<b>Standards, Audit and Risk Committee of 14 March 2024</b>			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Service(s)</b>	<b>Contact(s)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2023/24 Issued Audit Reports	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
2023/24 Issued Audit Reports	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
Internal Audit Plan - Progress Report	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	

<b>Standards, Audit and Risk Committee of 23 May 2024</b>			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Service(s)</b>	<b>Contact(s)</b>	<b>Comments</b>

**Standards, Audit and Risk Committee**

**Forward Work Programme as of 08/09/2023**

2023/24 Issued Audit Reports	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
2023/24 Issued Audit Reports	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
Post Audit Review Performance Report	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
23/24 Internal Audit Plan	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	

<b>Standards, Audit and Risk Committee of 28 June 2024</b>			
<b>Title</b>	<b>Service(s)</b>	<b>Contact(s)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2023/24 Issued Audit Reports	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
Risk Management Update	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	
22/23 Internal Audit Annual Report	Finance and Corporate Services	Pamela Redpath	