

## REPORT TO BUCHAN AREA COMMITTEE – 11 JANUARY 2022

### BUSINESS SERVICES' AREA COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT - MID-YEAR PROGRESS (APRIL 2021 – SEPTEMBER 2021)

#### **1 Executive Summary / Recommendations**

1.1 To provide the Buchan Area Committee with an update on progress in relation to performance indicators which support the Council Plan Priorities 2020-22.

#### **1.2 The Committee is recommended to:**

**1.2.1 Acknowledge and consider progress made in relation to Business Services performance indicators relating to the Buchan Area;**

**1.2.2 Instruct the Director of Business Services to continue to present reports on progress with performance indicators to the Committee on a six-monthly basis, in line with the Performance Management Framework, evidencing progress and performance supporting the Council Plan 2020-22.**

#### **2 Decision-Making Route**

2.1 The Council Plan 2020-22 was approved at Full Council at the meeting of 7 October 2020. The Plan is centered around three pillars aimed at supporting wider recovery in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2 To help support and deliver the Council Plan, Directorate and Area Plans have been developed and approved by their respective committee. The Buchan Area Plan was approved by this committee at its meeting on 22 June 2021.

2.3 The Buchan Area Action Plan details projects/actions specific to the Buchan Area and six-monthly reporting on progress is provided in line with the Performance Management Framework.

2.4 In addition to the Area Plan, each Directorate is responsible for reporting six-monthly on a suite of area-based performance indicators to allow for further scrutiny of performance within each area.

#### **3 Discussion**

3.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Buchan Area Committee on progress with the Business Services performance indicators which help demonstrate how we are working towards delivering the Council's Strategic Priorities.

- 3.2 There are 16 performance indicators being reported and **Appendix 1** to this report details progress along with supporting narrative. All indicators are being reported on an Aberdeenshire wide basis as the systems will not facilitate reporting at an area basis. Work is ongoing however, to enable the two measures relating to operational buildings to be reported at an area level from April 2022 onwards.
- 3.3 Five performance measures are showing as green and on track and three are showing as red. The supporting narrative for each of these measures provides more detail. Seven performance measures are 'data only' and relate to benefit and grants payments. The final measure relates to the percentage of web chats which are automated. The project to implement this system is ongoing and data will be reported once the system has been implemented.
- 3.4 This and future performance indicator monitoring reports are provided to assure and enable the Committee to monitor progress of delivery of the council priorities the Service is responsible for, providing a balanced overview allowing elected members to form a judgement on performance and support improvement as required in line with the scrutiny remit of the Committee.

#### 4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 4.1 At its meeting on 7 October 2020, Full Council agreed a new set of six Strategic Priorities detailed in the undernoted table.

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Our People	Education Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation

Underpinning the Priorities are a number of key principles. They are: right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plans; human rights and public protection; tackling poverty and inequalities; digital infrastructure and economy.

This report supports the priorities of: Resilient Communities; Health & Wellbeing; Economy & Enterprise; and Estate Modernisation.

This report supports the key principles of: right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; tackling poverty and inequalities; and digital infrastructure & economy.

- 4.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation is agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		X	
Staffing		X	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland			X
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			X
Health and Wellbeing		X	
Town Centre First			X

- 4.3 There are no staffing or financial implications arising directly from this report.
- 4.4 An integrated impact assessment has been carried out at the screening stage (IIA-000306) and no further detailed assessments are required. This report is a high-level planning document and does not have any differential impact on any of the protected characteristics. Any service changes made as a result of this plan will be subject to separate reporting and integrated impact assessments carried out as appropriate.
- 4.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate and Directorate Level:

Aberdeenshire Corporate Risks: ([link: Corporate Risk Register](#))

- ACORP001 – Budget Pressures
- ACORP002 – Changes in government policy, legislation and regulation
- ACORP004 – Business & organisation transformation
- ACORP005 – Working with other organisations (e.g. supply chains, outsourcing and partnership working)
- ACORP006 – Reputation Management (including social media)
- ACORP007 – Social Risk (e.g. population changes, poverty and social inequality, demographic changes, crime, anti-social behaviour)
- ACORP008 – Data Protection & Cyber Security
- ACORP009 – Operational Risk Management (including Health & Safety)
- ACORP010 – Environmental Challenges e.g. extreme weather events, climate change (this includes localised risks around flooding and air pollution and the need for communities to display resilience)

Business Services Directorate Risks: ([link: Business Services Directorate Risk Register](#)).

- BSSR002 – Communities are confident, resilient and inclusive. Individuals feel secure and in control of their circumstances
- BSSR003 – We live within our means and use public money to maximise outcomes for our communities

- BSSR004 – Our asset, property and land are managed to the best financial effect, supporting delivery of our priorities and service ambitions in the medium to long term
- BSSR005 – One Aberdeenshire, people working effectively with each other across public services and across communities
- BSSR006 – Staffing working close to the communities they serve, making decisions based on local need

## **5 Scheme of Governance**

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section B.11.2 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to reviewing the effectiveness of Council policy implementation and Council service delivery within the Area and identifying potential improvements and making recommendations to the relevant Policy Committee.



**Ritchie Johnson**  
**Director of Business Services**

Report prepared by Jenn Askildsen, Support Services Team Leader  
16 December 2021



### **List of Appendices**



Appendix 1 – Business Services Area Performance Indicator Report - Mid-Year Update (April 2021-September 2021)

## BUSINESS SERVICES' AREA COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT - MID-YEAR PROGRESS (APRIL 2021 – SEPTEMBER 2021)

PI Status		Long Term Trends		Short Term Trends	
	Alert		Improving		Improving
	Warning		No Change		No Change
	OK		Getting Worse		Getting Worse
	Unknown				
	Data Only				

**Traffic Light: Red - 3; Green - 5; Data Only - 7; New PI - 1**

Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Average call wait times for Contact Centre	10	10.1	10.5	Q1 2021/22	5.86		
				Q2 2021/22	6.7		
				Q3 2021/22			
<p>This is an Aberdeenshire wide performance indicator.</p> <p>Due to Average call wait times are currently well below the target of 10 minutes, although there has been a slight decline between Q1 and Q2 - 5.86 minutes (Q1) and 6.7 minutes (Q2).</p>							

Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Contact Centre call abandonment rate	25%	25.25%	26.25%	Q1 2021/22	28.6%		
				Q2 2021/22	30%		
				Q3 2021/22			
<p>This is an Aberdeenshire wide performance indicator.</p> <p>Whilst this quarter's abandonment rate is higher than Q1, there is improvement month on month since June 2021 (June 35.91%, July 34.2%, August 31.75%, September 24.17%). Six</p>							

temporary advisors completed first service training during September.

Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Percentage of web chats which are automated	85%	84.15%	80.75%	Q1 2021/22	0%	N/A	N/A
				Q2 2021/22	0%		
				Q3 2021/22			

This is an Aberdeenshire wide performance indicator.

The project to implement artificial intelligence web chat is ongoing and the system has not yet been implemented. Once the new system is in place this will be reported on.

Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Average number of days: Council Tax Reductions (CTR) new claims	22	27.02	27.02	Q4 2020/21	31.67	✔	
				2020/21	27.19		
				Q1 2021/22	30.76		
				Q2 2021/22	31.07		
				Q3 2021/22	27.17		
				2021/22	29.98		

This is an Aberdeenshire wide performance indicator.

Over the last quarter several improvements to processes have been implemented and as a result, the average time taken to process new Council Tax Reduction (CTR) applications has reduced since August 2021. The majority of working age CTR applications arise from Universal Credit claimants therefore the time taken to process is dependent on the Universal Credit processing timescale.

Improvements to working practices in recent months has resulted in November's processing time being 25.84 days.



Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Average number of days for Changes in Circumstances: Council Tax Reduction	9	12.06	12.06	Q4 2020/21	7.87	✔	
				2020/21	6.8		
				Q1 2021/22	9.06		
				Q2 2021/22	9.27		

				Q3 2021/22	9.18		
				2021/22	9.17		

This is an Aberdeenshire wide performance indicator.



Over the last quarter several improvements have been implemented to processes and as a result the average time taken to process Council Tax Reduction changes in circumstances has reduced since October 2021. The team are looking at introducing further improvements in early 2022.

From the period January 2022 to March 2022, the Aberdeenshire Support and Advice Team (ASAT) will work on advanced changes of circumstances in relation to updated state benefits and annual billing for the year 2022/23. These changes will drive the average processing days down.

Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Number of Discretionary Housing Payments awards made				Q4 2020/21	423		
				2020/21	2,349		
				Q1 2021/22	944		
				Q2 2021/22	294		
				Q3 2021/22	70		
				2021/22	1,308		

This is an Aberdeenshire wide performance indicator.



In year 2019/20 (Pre-Pandemic) for Q1 and Q2 a combined a total of 639 awards were made. In Q1 and Q2 2021/22 this equates to 1238 the budget received from the Scottish Government reflects this increase in demand. The budget rose from £1,065,712. in 2019/20 to £1,569,301 in the current year 2021/22.



Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Committed Discretionary Housing Payments expenditure	N/A	N/A	N/A	Q1 2021/22	£879,551		
				Q2 2021/22	£593,042		
				Q3 2021/22			



This is an Aberdeenshire wide performance indicator.

There are no targets set for Discretionary Housing Payments as it is dependent on demand and available budget. The Budget is provided by Scottish Government and the vast majority of the budget is for the mitigation of the effect of the Social Sector Size Criteria (Bedroom Tax). Expenditure is constantly monitored.

Budget for year 2021/22 is £1,599,301  
Committed expenditure as at end Q2 is £593,042



Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Net Discretionary Housing Payments paid to date	N/A	N/A	N/A	Q1 2021/22	£308,379		
				Q2 2021/22	£661,281		
				Q3 2021/22			
<p>This is an Aberdeenshire wide performance indicator.</p> <p>There are no targets set for Discretionary Housing Payments as it is dependent on demand and available budget. The Budget is provided by Scottish Government and the vast majority of the budget is for the mitigation of the effect of the Social Sector Size Criteria (Bedroom Tax). Expenditure is constantly monitored.</p> <p>Budget for year 2021/22 is £1,599301 Paid to end Q2 is £661,281</p>							

Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
The average time taken to process new Housing Benefit claims from the date of receipt to the date of decision (days)	22	23	24	2019/20	22		
				2020/21	27		
				2021/22			
<p>During 2020/21, the average time taken to process new benefit claims was 27 days, which is a significant increase from the average of 22 days for 2019/20.</p> <p>The team responsible for processing housing benefit and council tax reduction experienced significant increases in workload during 2020/21, including a 30% increase in new claims and were responsible for processing a range of financial assistance schemes introduced to help alleviate the impact of Covid-19.</p> <p>However, over the last quarter a number the team have implemented a number of improvements to their processes and as a result the average time taken to process new Housing Benefit Claims has reduced to 19 days (November 2021). August 2021 – 24 days, September 2021 – 21 days, October 2021 – 21 days.</p>							



Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
The average time taken to process change of circumstances for Housing Benefit claims from the date of receipt to the date of decision (days)	9	10	11	2019/20	6		
				2020/21	7		
				2021/22			
<p>During 2020/21, the average time taken to process changed benefit claims was 7 days, which is a slight increase from the average of 6 days for 2019/20.</p> <p>The team responsible for processing housing benefit and council tax reduction experienced significant increases in workload during 2020/21, including a 4% increase in changes in circumstances and were responsible for processing a range of financial assistance schemes introduced to help alleviate the impact of Covid-19.</p>							




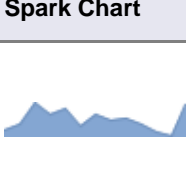
From the period January 2022 to March 2022, the Aberdeenshire Support and Advice Team (ASAT) will work on advanced changes of circumstances in relation to updated state benefits, rent increases and annual billing for the year 2022/23. These changes will drive the average processing days down.

Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold			Status	Spark Chart
					Value		
Crisis Grant Claims Paid	N/A	N/A	N/A	Q4 2020/21	1,315		
				2020/21	4,400		
				Q1 2021/22	1,149		
				Q2 2021/22	1,183		
				Q3 2021/22	856		
				2021/22	3,188		

Crisis Grant applications are demand led and there have been a number of factors that have resulted in increased applications. Awards made in Q1 and Q2 2021/22 show an increase of 22% on the same quarters in 2020/21. Expenditure is constantly monitored to stay within the budget.



Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold			Status	Spark Chart
					Value		
Community Care Grants Paid	N/A	N/A	N/A	Q4 2020/21	295		
				2020/21	864		
				Q1 2021/22	262		
				Q2 2021/22	219		
				Q3 2021/22	220		
				2021/22	701		

Community Care Grants are demand led and budget is constantly monitored to prioritise awards. Priority levels for award are reviewed month on month depending on demands on the budget. Awards made in Q1 and Q2 2021/22 show an increase of 55% on the same quarters in 2020/21.



Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold			Status	Spark Chart
					Value		
Amount paid out for Crisis Grants	N/A	N/A	N/A	Q4 2020/21	£190,084.15		
				2020/21	£523,878.92		
				Q1 2021/22	£163,302.01		
				Q2 2021/22	£151,266.68		

				Q3 2021/22	£109,875.00		
				2021/22	£424,443.69		

Total expenditure as at end of November 2021 is £424,443 which equates to 81% of the expenditure for the year 2020/21. The pandemic and Storm Arwen have contributed to that increased demand. Additional Funds had been provided earlier in the year to support the provision of Crisis Grants in year 2021/22.

Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Amount paid out for Community Care Grants	N/A	N/A	N/A	Q4 2020/21	£231,092.69		
				2020/21	£419,812.44		
				Q1 2021/22	£172,529.32		
				Q2 2021/22	£125,331.44		
				Q3 2021/22	£129,188.34		
				2021/22	£427,049.10		

Community Care Grant expenditure in 2020/21 was less than anticipated due to the impact of the pandemic as people were unable to move address. The increased expenditure in year 2021/22 reflects the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions.



Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use %	82.24%	81.42%	78.13%	2019/20	74.96%		
				2020/21	77.4%		
				2021/22			

In 2020/21, 77.4% of Aberdeenshire's operational buildings were assessed as suitable. This is an increase from 74.96% for 2019/20.

At April 2021, of Aberdeenshire's 624 operational facilities, 483 were assessed as suitable with remaining 141 predominantly being within Community Centres/Halls (smaller rural facilities), Sports Pavilions and Depots. Activities being progressed through the Estate Modernisation Programme, in addition to the ongoing implementation of the Depot Strategy will bring improvement to this indicator.

Activity is ongoing to enable suitability to be reported at an area level for future years in addition to Aberdeenshire wide reporting.

Review with ACES Scottish Asset Management Sub-Group, and CIPFA Benchmarking Group, highlights that, outwith schools portfolio there is no common approach towards suitability assessments or grading thresholds, i.e. this threshold at 50%. Discussions amongst members of these groups indicate a consensus to review approaches/models and develop a common suitability methodology, including thresholds.

Performance Measure	Current Target	Amber Threshold	Red Threshold		Value	Status	Spark Chart
Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition %	88.6%	87.71%	84.17%	2019/20	87.56%		
				2020/21	90.82%		
				2021/22			

In 2020/21, 90.82% of Aberdeenshire's operational floor area was assessed as satisfactory. This is an increase from 87.56% for 2019/20.

As at April 2021, Aberdeenshire's operational floor area extended to 679,425sqm with 617,059sqm assessed as satisfactory. Remaining 62,366sqm is generally contained within elements of Academies, Community Centres/Halls (smaller rural facilities), Pools and Depots. As part of its response to Edinburgh Schools enquiries, Aberdeenshire have embarked on a Condition Survey Programme across its operational portfolio, in line with Scottish Government guidance, with surveys to date focussing on the schools portfolio. As this consistent survey methodology is adopted for remaining portfolio, further improvement in this indicator is anticipated along with activities being progressed through the Estate Modernisation Programme.

In addition, activity is ongoing to enable condition to be reported at an area level for future years in addition to Aberdeenshire wide reporting.