

To: Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

On: 13 June 2024

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Finance and Resources 2024-2027 Service Improvement Plan

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Service Improvement Plan for Finance and Resources is a three-year plan covering the period 2024-2027. The purpose of the Plan is to identify the priorities being addressed, the key tasks to be implemented, the implementation timetable and our measures of success.
- 1.2 The Service Improvement Plan is part of a suite of documents which describe the strategic direction for the Service and the Council, and also includes the Council Plan, Community Plan, Risk Management Plan, and the Workforce Plan. Following recommendations from the Council's auditors, the Council Plan priorities are being refocused, and this is reflected in Service Improvement Plans, with services reducing the number of priority areas each year. The new, more accessible, format of Service Improvement Plans, introduced in 2023-2024, has been well-received and will be retained.
- 1.3 The Service Improvement Plan is appended to this report and includes performance indicators and an action plan grouped under the Council Plan themes. A mid-year progress update on the Service Improvement Plan will be submitted to the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board in the autumn of 2024.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board:

- (a) approves the attached Service Improvement Plan; and
- (b) notes that mid-year progress of this Service Improvement Plan will be reported to this Board in the Autumn of 2024, with updates to the performance indicators and action plan.

3. Background

3.1 Finance and Resources enables and supports the smooth running and strategic management of the Council's financial, legal, property, procurement, ICT, human resources, and customer and business services as well as maintaining sound audit and governance across the Council. The service leads on the delivery of strategic change and organisational development across the Council. Support services such as those provided by Finance and Resources have been critical to shifting focus back to a strategic, forward-looking approach after the pandemic, and will remain critical as the Council addresses its financial sustainability and stability.

4. Service Improvement Plan 2024-2025: What do we want to achieve?

4.1. Council services continue to operate in a challenging context. The Council and services remain ambitious for our people and our place, and the Service Improvement Plan process ensures a clear focus on continuous improvement. The Service Improvement Plans process allows us to describe where activity is targeted, and through the 6-monthly updates described below, provide a balanced view on progress.

4.2. Our Service Improvement Plan sets out actions for the next three years, and in 2024/25 our particular areas of focus will be:

- Continuing to lead on financial sustainability
- Lead on the delivery of the Council's governance review
- Delivering a new approach to recruitment and talent management, ensuring that the Council is an employer of choice and that current employees can develop and progress here;
- Working with local suppliers to increase the proportion of our procurement spend on local businesses which in turn supports the local economy;

- Progressing the Purchase to Pay (P2P), delivering a far more efficient, consistent process, with improved data and insight and reduced duplication;
- Continuing to deliver a broad range of support services to the rest of the Council, including elected members;
- Continuing to bolster our cyber-resilience through technical and non-technical measures, protecting our digital assets;
- Rolling out the Leadership Development Programme to senior managers across the Council;
- Complete the roll out of Wi-Fi across the corporate and education estate, providing 100% coverage in schools and increased availability across other Council buildings;
- Progress the delivery of the new Customer Strategy, an ambitious programme of transformation that will see the ongoing development of our digital service offering and investment in future technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) that will improve the service we offer our customers;
- Implement the Green Print Strategy, creating a ‘think digital first’ culture;
- Engage and participate in trauma informed and responsive Renfrewshire programme.

5. Monitoring progress

- 5.1 Progress on the implementation of the Service Improvement Plan is regularly monitored by the Senior Management Team and will be reported to the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board on a six-monthly basis. A mid-year review of progress will be brought to this Board in Autumn 2024 and an annual outturn report in Spring 2025.

Implications of the Report

- 1. Financial** – This report notes the financial challenges facing the local authority and the work that will be undertaken by the service to manage this.
- 2. HR & Organisational Development** – The Service Improvement Plan details several pieces of work being progressed by the People & OD team.
- 3. Community/Council Planning** – Service Improvement Plans reflect the contribution of each service to the Council and Community Plans.
- 4. Legal** – None

5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** – Digital resources are now key to the delivery of services and strategies are in place to manage this.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. The delivery of actions included in the appendix will be impact assessed where appropriate.
8. **Health & Safety** – The Service Improvement Plan includes actions relating to employee wellbeing and absence.
9. **Procurement** – The Service Improvement Plan includes actions relating to procurement activity.
10. **Risk** – Risks related to the delivery and management of services are regularly monitored and included in Renfrewshire Council's Corporate and Strategic Risk Registers.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – None
13. **Climate Change** – The Service Improvement Plan includes actions and indicators under the theme "Green" demonstrating how it will contribute to Renfrewshire's Plan for Net Zero.

List of Background Papers: None

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Appendix 1: Service Improvement Plan 2024-2027

Finance & Resources

Service Improvement Plan 2024 - 27



Renfrewshire
Council

Finance & Resources – our service



Strategic and operational financial advice and accountancy, Council Tax, rates and benefit processing



Business services providing administrative support across services including payroll and employee services



Human resources including health & safety, training and workforce planning



Legal services providing advice and support to all council services



Strategic and commercial procurement supporting tendering, fair working practice and sustainability



Customer services providing professional front facing customer and administrative support councilwide



Transformation, providing project & programme management



ICT services, provision of ICT equipment, security and compliance, hosting, storing & connectivity



Internal audit, fraud, insurance and risk management



Support for elected members and boards including delivering elections

Finance & Resources - about us

Finance and Resources leads the delivery of a wide range of professional services which support the smooth running and strategic management of the Council. Finance and Resources is led by the Director, Alastair MacArthur, and he is supported by four Heads of Service, the Chief Auditor and the Strategic Service Delivery Manager.

Business Services delivers financial operations including Revenues and Benefits, and provides business support to other Council services

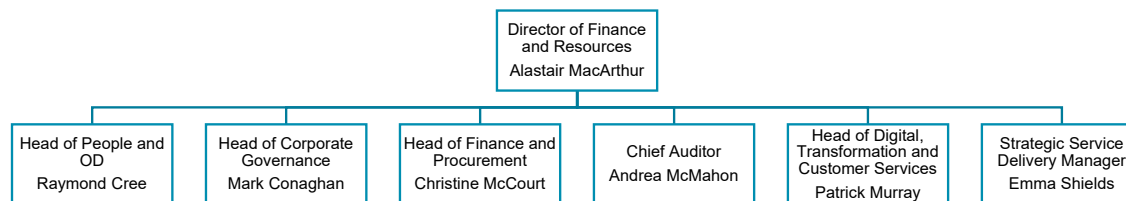
Corporate Governance provides legal services and supports the governance and effective running of Council and policy boards

Digital, Transformation and Customer Services leads on ICT provision, project and programme management, and our front-facing customer services, and leads on our Digital Strategy

Finance and Procurement provides financial and budgetary management services and a corporate procurement service to all council services

Internal Audit leads on audit activity and risk management, ensuring robust controls are in place to manage risks associated with council activity

People and OD delivers HR services including supporting recruitment, professional development and employee wellbeing



Our resources and risks

BUDGET

For 2024/24, the revenue budget approved for General Services on 29 February 2024 was **£549m**. The capital budget approved for General Services on 29 February 2024 was **£147.8m** for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29.

The Finance & Resources revenue budget for 2024/25 is approximately **£44.5m**

Finance and Resources also supports all other council services with financial and budget management as well as providing support to our capital projects.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Council's risk management arrangements are well established with all strategic, corporate and service risks being reported to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board. Corporate and strategic risks, where senior officers in the Finance & Resources service are owners or joint owners are shown on the right. The service also plays a significant role in the management of many 'business as usual' risks that exist within the council.

Risks	Evaluations
Our strategic and corporate risks	
Financial Sustainability	Very High
Successful Cyber Attack	Very High
Financial Stability	High
Workforce planning, recruitment and retention	High
National Care Service – governance and financial implications	Moderate

Transformation and financial sustainability

The Council's financial outlook is significantly challenging. The most recent analysis reported to Council on 29 February 2024 suggests that Renfrewshire Council will experience a funding deficit in the range of £45m-£50m in the three years following 2024/25, unless mitigating action is taken.

The Council continues to explore ways to transform how we deliver our services – to improve the experience of our customers and service-users but also to ensure the Council's financial sustainability.

Finance & Resources continues to support this through:

Delivering **transformation** savings workstreams for Finance & Resources

Leading with the cross-service **Financial Sustainability** workstreams led by the Corporate Management Team

Providing Council services with **finance and HR partner advice and support** to deliver service-specific savings

Providing **project and programme management** support to the transformation programme

Workforce innovation and wellbeing

The Council launched its people strategy [“Our People, Our Future”](#) in 2021, which was updated in 2023 with the following 3 priorities:



**Improving our
Employee Experience**



Workforce Planning



Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

The strategy describes the Council’s organisational development vision and workforce planning activities under three strategic outcomes – **improving our employee experience, workforce planning and equality, diversity and inclusion.**

The strategy is aligned with the Council Plan and is focussed on the Council improving our employees’ experience whilst at work, looking at living our values, employee voice and recognitions which all positively impact on the culture within our workplace. There is a focus on workforce planning, there are many changes and challenges facing the Council in the coming years and this will ensure the right workforce and right skills are in place to deliver this. The last priority is focussed on inclusion, the council wants to be a place where everyone feels included and has a richness of diversity.

Finance and Resources will ensure these priorities are reflected in both our strategic and day-to-day operations. High-level actions are embedded in our Service Improvement Plan. A key focus this year is the roll-out of the senior leadership development programme. This has already been delivered to the Corporate Management Team and the programme for the next group of staff has recently launched. The People and OD team have the overall lead for the programme and are continuing to support a range of activities, including establishing Staff Forums.



Renfrewshire Council's Service Improvement Context



Our local policy context

Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

- Brings together existing programmes of work focused on achieving fairness and equity, and tackling the inequalities that exist across Renfrewshire's communities.

Data Strategy Framework

- Successful outcomes are driven by good data, its analysis and the business intelligence it provides. The Data Strategy Framework supports council services to improve their data management and embed the culture and skillsets required to make data-driven, evidence-based decisions.

Trauma Informed and Responsive Renfrewshire

- We understand what trauma is, and how it can affect people. We will focus on awareness raising, skills development and our communications approach in order that services respond appropriately to those with current or past experience of trauma.

Customer Strategy 2023-2028

- Every customer interaction matters, and we will continue to develop our digital service offering whilst also investing in the skills of our people so that customer needs are fulfilled no matter how they contact the Council.

HR Policy Review

- Ensuring our policies remain relevant to a modern workplace with staff wellbeing a core component.

Digital

- Aligning digital activity across the Council under this single vision and direction, maximising the benefits for customers and staff.

Procurement Strategy

- Managing demand, delivering social value and best value, and aligning our procurement activity with the vision and priorities of the Council.

Other plans, strategies and reports



For Finance & Resources, a wide range of reports are presented to the Finance, Resources & Customer Services Policy Board. Papers and access to video recordings of past meetings can be found on the Council's website.

Our key priorities

Ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council

Supporting our citizens through the cost-of-living crisis

Supporting the Council on governance and oversight

Improving the employee experience

Delivering modern, efficient services via a range of channels including digital

Supporting the council on effective resource planning

Supporting transformation and change across the organisation

Protecting our digital assets and service delivery through strong cyber security and compliance

Our focus for 2024/25

- Continuing to lead on financial sustainability and transformation programmes across the Council;
- Lead on the delivery of the Council's governance review arising from the Bowles report;
- Delivering a new approach to recruitment and talent management, ensuring that the Council is an employer of choice and that current employees can develop and progress here;
- Working with local suppliers to increase the proportion of our procurement spend on local businesses which in turn supports the local economy;
- Progressing the Purchase to Pay (P2P) project, delivering a far more efficient, consistent process, with improved data and insight and reduced duplication;
- Continuing to deliver a broad range of support services to the rest of the Council, including Elected Members;
- Continuing to bolster our cyber-resilience through technical and non-technical measures, protecting our digital assets;
- Rolling out the Leadership Development Programme to senior managers across the Council, supporting workforce innovation through skills development, career progression and talent management;
- Complete the roll out of Wi-Fi across the corporate and education estate, providing 100% coverage in schools and increased availability across other Council buildings;
- Progress the delivery of the new Customer Strategy, an ambitious programme of transformation that will see the ongoing development of our digital service offering and investment in future technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) that will improve the service we offer our customers;
- Implement the Green Print Strategy, creating a 'think digital first' culture and supporting our RenZero agenda;
- Engage and participate in trauma informed and responsive Renfrewshire programme, with a particular focus on our frontline services.

Delivering the Council Plan - PLACE

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	When will we do it by?
Support delivery of the Council's infrastructure investment programme	Renfrewshire's residents have access to a range of modern, fit for purpose facilities.	31 March 2026
Support delivery of the Council's financial sustainability work	The Council is able to maintain a balanced budget within the context of a challenging financial environment.	31 March 2027
Delivering strong universal services to all Renfrewshire citizens	We will provide a range of services to all Renfrewshire residents, including the delivery of billing, registration services, customer service provision and digital services such as those available through My Account.	31 March 2027
Implement the first phase of the Scottish Government's new licensing regime for short-term lets	We will ensure that all premises currently used for short-term lets are compliant with the law.	31 September 2024

Delivering the Council Plan – PLACE

Performance Indicator	Frequency	2022/23 Value	Latest Update	Latest Value	2024/25 Target
FINSUS1 Total useable reserves as a % of council annual budgeted revenue	Annual	49.2	2022/23	49.2	n/a
FINSUS2 Uncommitted General Fund Balance as a % of council annual budgeted net revenue	Annual	2.2	2022/23	2.2	1.8%
FINSUS3 Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - General Fund	Annual	3	2022/23	3	3.47%
FINSUS4 Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - Housing Revenue Account	Annual	32.5	2022/23	32.5	28.59%
FINSUS5 Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure	Annual	101.7	2022/23	101.7	100%

Delivering the Council Plan - ECONOMY

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	When will we do it by?
Actively engage with Renfrewshire suppliers to increase the percentage of procurement spend	Increasing local procurement spend supports local job creation and the sustainability of local businesses. It contributes to community wealth building and post-pandemic economic recovery	31 March 2025
Develop a Community Wealth Building Plan for Renfrewshire	This action will be delivered jointly with Economic Development. Supporting local businesses to bid for public sector work, encouraging entrepreneurs and promoting a 'buy local' approach will contribute to a stronger local economy, and may address some inequalities.	31 March 2025

Performance Indicator	Frequency	2021/22 Value	Latest Update	Latest Value	2024/25 Target
% of procurement spend spent on local enterprises	Annual	18.87%	2021/22	N/A	23%

Delivering the Council Plan - FAIR

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	When will we do it by?
Engage and participate in trauma informed and responsive Renfrewshire programme	We understand what trauma is, and how it affects people, so we will now work differently: Learning and working together to co-create fair and helpful collaborations to support healing and recovery with people affected by trauma.	31 March 2025
Continue to support residents with the cost-of-living crisis through the provision of advice services, grants and other funding	People experiencing hardship are supported to maximise their income.	31 March 2025

Delivering the Council Plan - FAIR

Performance Indicator	Frequency	2022/23 Value	Latest Update	Latest Value	2024/25 Target
Time taken for processing new housing benefit applications up until the posting of notification of outcome of the application (cumulative)	Quarterly	38.51	Q3 2023/24	19.86	22
Time taken for processing change of circumstance housing benefit applications up until the posting of notification of outcome of the application (cumulative)	Quarterly	14.35	Q3 2023/24	9.55	9
Average speed of processing a Crisis Grant (Scottish Welfare Fund) in days	Quarterly	2	Q3 2023/24	2	2
Average speed of processing a Community Care Grant (Scottish Welfare Fund) in days	Quarterly	13	Q3 2023/24	12	15
Percentage of Finance and Resources staff completing Level 1 Trauma Informed training	Six monthly	NEW	NEW	NEW	Baseline to be established

Delivering the Council Plan - GREEN

Ensure that climate considerations are taken into account in our procurement strategies and tenders with a focus on reducing emissions	Working together with other services we can support the reduction of emissions, waste and consumption by challenging usage, taking an innovative approach to specification, better utilising technological solutions and promoting the circular economy.	31 March 2025
Implement the Green Print Strategy in order to reduce our reliance on paper, drive down printing costs and support the organisation's work towards net zero	Reducing print use will contribute to the Council's Net Zero goals, improve the customer experience through provision of end-to-end digital services, and reduce the risk of information security incidents.	31 March 2025

Performance Indicator	Frequency	2023/24 Value	Latest Update	Latest Value	2024/25 Target
Print volume – number of pages printed by council services	Quarterly	NEW FOR 24/25	NEW FOR 24/25	NEW FOR 24/25	Baseline to be established

Delivering the Council Plan – LIVING OUR VALUES

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	When will we do it by?
Embed the new Managing Absence Policy across the Council.	Reduce absence across the council, to ensure a more consistent service delivery to our customers and deliver cost savings.	31 March 2025
Embed the Wellbeing Strategy and support services to implement it.	Set a positive culture around health and wellbeing, reduce burnout and improve attendance across the council.	31 August 2023
Deliver a refreshed approach to workforce planning and workforce innovation.	Given the national challenges in recruitment, the council needs robust workforce planning to ensure it attracts and retains the right candidates for new jobs, provides working learning and development for all employees, and has a clear pathway for career progression..	31 March 2024
Deliver the Purchase to Pay programme which will streamline payments and deliver a more efficient process	Customers and suppliers benefit from more efficient processing.	31 December 2025
Deliver the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25.	Robust internal scrutiny provides assurance of good governance to senior leaders, elected members, citizens and external bodies.	31 March 2025

Delivering the Council Plan – LIVING OUR VALUES

What will we do?	What difference will we make?	When will we do it by?
Implement the new Customer Strategy.	Our staff and our technology will be developed in a way that ensures our customers are central to everything we do. The service our customers receive will be the same whether they call, visit or do it online. and no matter how the customer chooses to do interact with us, we will aim to get it right for them first time.	31 March 2029
Continue to implement a range of technical and non-technical measures to bolster our cyber resilience, protecting our digital assets	We make use of technology to minimise the risk of cyber threats, and through training and awareness raising we support our staff and elected members to understand and mitigate the risks.	31 March 2025

Delivering the Council Plan – LIVING OUR VALUES

Performance Indicator	Frequency	2022/23 Value	Latest Update	Latest Value	2024/25 Target
Customer Service Unit - % of calls answered	Quarterly	96%	Q3 2023/24	93%	90%
Cost of collecting council tax per chargeable dwelling	Annual	7.97	2022/23	N/A	11.5
Percentage of Council Tax due in the year, collected by the end of the year (cumulative position to date)	Quarterly	95.31%	Q3 2023/24	85.83%	96%
Total % of investigation (Stage 2) complaints responded to within targets by Finance & Resources (cumulative to date)	Quarterly	84.9%	Q3 2023/24	96.6%	85%
Number of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt, as a percentage of all invoices paid council wide (cumulative)	Quarterly	90.21%	Q3 2023/24	97.19%	95%
Average number of work days lost through sickness absence per employee (F&R) (FTE)	Quarterly	8.95	Q3 2023/24	2.45	8.5 Days
% of Finance and Resources FOI requests completed within timescale	Quarterly	97.2%	Q3 2023/24	84%	95%
Percentage of income due from Council Tax for prior years (cumulative position to date)	Quarterly	97.21%	Q3 2023/24	97.17%	97.27%
Percentage of Non Domestic Rates due in the year, collected by the end of the year (cumulative to date)	Quarterly	95.67%	Q3 2023/24	80.36%	96.5%
Percentage of Audit Plan completed (cumulative)	Quarterly	93.2%	Q3 2023/24	64.2%	90%
F&R Front Line complaints (Cumulative)	Quarterly	86.6%	Q3 2023/24	88.3%	85%
Average days Small and Medium sized businesses invoices paid	Quarterly	13.06	Q3 2023/24	6.85	15 Days

Delivering the Council Plan – Cross-cutting theme

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

'Across all of our work and all of our efforts, we hope for loving and happy lives for Renfrewshire's **children** – working together to get it right for children, families and communities – protecting, learning, achieving and nurturing. Every priority of this Council Plan will contribute to improving the lives of Renfrewshire's children and their families. It is our fundamental duty as an organisation and our shared responsibility as citizens of this place to ensure that our children inherit a Renfrewshire where their wellbeing is nurtured, their futures are bright, and their environment is safe and healthy.'

Additional actions for cross-cutting theme	What difference will we make?	When will we do it by?
Contribute to the Council's commitment to The Promise for all care experienced people	Care experienced young people have better outcomes and a more positive experience of care; feel listened to and valued; can build and maintain good relationships.	31 March 2026

Finance & Resources

Service Improvement Plan 2024– 27

For more information, please contact:

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