



Delivering Best Value

2023/24

Final Report

September 2024

BEST VALUE

Introduction

Best Value was introduced on a voluntary basis in 1998 and became a statutory duty following the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Best Value is about ensuring that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on continuous improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.

From 2022, the way in which Best Value is reported for Councils changed.

As part of the Annual Audit, external auditors now report annually to the Audit Commission on specific best value themes.

This year, workforce innovation is the focus for the best value thematic audit.

This new national approach is intended to facilitate the exchange of ideas and performance data across councils, as well as offering a detailed analysis of a specific aspects of work.

It also offers us the opportunity to introduce more regular corporate self-assessment to inform that process and, perhaps more importantly, to encourage ongoing dialogue around best value across services at key points in the year.

This report is our first corporate self-assessment report. It considers how we are measuring up against the Best Value Themes and is presented as a prompt and discussion piece to inform service discussions on best value more locally.

This year the assessment has been carried out by the Council's Research and Insight Team and is based on existing data and evaluation already gathered for audit purposes. Next year, the process will expand to draw on wider reviews and involve leaders and partners more directly.

Feedback on this report and the future process is encouraged. Please email

research.enquiries@fife.gov.uk

Purpose of this report

Local councils are under pressure with increasing demand for services, a real-terms reduction in funding, combined with high inflation and rising interest rates. Faced with these pressures and spending constraints it is essential that councils secure best value in procurement and demonstrate they are indeed securing and delivering best value.

Best Value was introduced on a voluntary basis in 1998 but is now a statutory requirement with the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 placing a duty on all Councils to secure Best Value. This matters because Best Value is about:

- Ensuring good governance
- Managing resources effectively
- Focusing on improvement
- And, most important of all, delivering the best possible outcomes for local people.

This report provides a self-assessment and reflection on Fife Council's practice and progress over the last 12 months in relation to the Best Value Themes: ¹:

1. Vision and leadership
2. Governance and accountability
3. Effective use of resources
4. Partnerships and collaborative working
5. Working with communities
6. Sustainability
7. Fairness and equality

This self-assessment has been informed by a range of sources including:

- audit and inspection,
- committee papers,
- review of the annual code of corporate governance, and
- community feedback.

¹ [Section 2 – Best Value Themes - Best Value: revised statutory guidance 2020 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-value-revised-statutory-guidance-2020/pages/section-2-best-value-themes.aspx)

1. Council vision and leadership

What is required?

In achieving Best Value, a local authority will be able to demonstrate the following:

- Members and senior managers have a clear vision for their area that is shared with citizens, key partners and other stakeholders.
- Members set strategic priorities that reflect the needs of communities and individual citizens, and that are aligned with the priorities of partners.
- Effective leadership drives continuous improvement and supports the achievement of strategic objectives.

How are we doing?

Leadership was the focus of last year's annual Best Value thematic work, covered in all council Annual Audit reports published in Autumn 2023. Our external auditors, Azets, concluded that Fife Council has appropriate arrangements in place to demonstrate Best Value under each reported area of the [2022/23 Best Value thematic review of Leadership](#).

A number of key leadership developments that were planned for 2023/24 have since been delivered:

1.1 Plan for Fife 2024-27

Following three-year review work in 2023/24, Fife Partnership Board (FPB) agreed the 2024-27 focus would remain on the existing recovery and renewal priorities.



The review was informed by the findings of the Fife Strategic Assessment 2024, and the Our Fife Leadership Summits which helped us develop clearer shared commitments with our partners around strategic change priorities: no wrong door, working for place, community wealth building and health and wellbeing.

In August 2024, Fife Partnership approved some changes to partnership governance arrangements to improve focus and delivery of current priorities. Particular attention will be on the strategic change and reform required to support the design and development of future services and the changes required to respond to Fife priorities, national shifts, and social and financial pressures.

1.2 Elected member training and development

A revised approach to elected members on-going professional development and training which identified and expanded mandatory areas of training was agreed in December 2023. Democratic services are now working with committee chairs and elected members to encourage them to complete the mandatory elements. An elected member working group on training and development has been established.

1.3 Decentralisation

A review of decentralisation and the role of Area Committees focussed on physical place-making services such as green space, street, property, housing, and town centre development. Cabinet Committee agreed a set of actions on 30th November 2023 for improving area-based working and decentralisation. This involves organisational arrangements for greenspace management, development of an improved approach to community asset transfer, identifying process improvements and ownership information, and creating a stronger place focus and leadership for local community plans. These improvements will support the effectiveness of place working and the role and influence of Area Committees.

1.4 Change planning

3-year change planning focuses on delivery against the Plan for Fife strategic priorities and the Council's strategic change agenda for No Wrong Door, place-based delivery and digital enablement. Services have a 3 year vision and annual priorities that also take account of the overall budget assumptions. Change planning is an iterative process and will both inform, and be informed by, the developing business cases for No Wrong Door and digital enablement and supports medium term financial and workforce plans. In recent years our medium-term financial strategy has minimised workforce reductions and we have not had to apply formal Council-wide workforce reduction measures.

Service Change Planning is refreshed annually with Services asked to consider their forward change plans and where they can target performance improvement, manage their budgets more efficiently, or where budget savings need to be met. It considers:

- As is – where the Directorate is now
- To be – what the future will look like and
- Why - the benefits and impacts for services in line with the Plan for Fife.

Support and resource are in place to help managers prepare and develop change planning and it runs concurrently with the budget process and workforce planning.

1.5 Organisational structure

Following the appointment of a new Chief Executive in June 2023, a review of the Council's organisational structure was completed in April 2024.

As a first step, a new Place Directorate was established, the Education and Children's Services Directorate was remodelled to establish a focused Education Directorate and a reset Communities Directorate including Children's Services and Criminal Justice and new leaders were appointed. These changes respond to the strategic change agenda and support the priorities and focus on people and place going forward.

Fife Council Management Structure



What's ahead?

Fife's public services need to be fit for the future, sustainable and delivered with communities if inequalities are to be addressed and life chances boosted for all.

The Council is progressing organisational change and reform to support the whole system change and the Plan for Fife points through its four strategic change priorities: 'no wrong door' for people & family support services, building community wealth, health & well-being and working for place. In addition, the Council continues to consider its approach to digital opportunities and the need to continue to make progress on efficiencies.

A blueprint for a new Greenspace Service has been developed which will see greenspace functions across the Council brought together to form a new Greenspace Service. The new Service will see a more community facing, joined up approach to strategic investment and operational delivery.

From 2024, change themes will be reflected in Annual Service Review Reports and integrated into a revised approach to service planning in 2025.

A three-year programme of public service collaboration, together with further Leadership Summit engagements with partners, will prepare the ground for the next 10-year plan for Fife in 2027. Through the collaborative programme, partnership improvement activity will happen at scale in a number of priority areas: maximising life chances through progressive recruitment, community wealth building through procurement, and sustainable places.

2. Governance and accountability

What is required?

In achieving Best Value, a local authority will be able to demonstrate the following:

- A clear understanding and the application of the principles of good governance and transparency of decision-making at strategic, partnership and operational levels.
- The existence of robust arrangements for scrutiny and performance reporting.
- The existence of strategic service delivery and financial plans that align the allocation of resources with desired outcomes for the short, medium and long terms.

Fife Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. Fife Council also has a duty under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised. In discharging this responsibility, elected members and senior officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of Fife Council's affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions which includes the management of risk.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Fife Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles and reflects the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE² Framework (CIPFA Delivering Good Governance - Guidance for Scottish Councils 2016). The Code summarises how the governance arrangements for Fife Council (and its group entities) address the requirements of the Code.

The Council is made up of 75 elected members across 22 wards with the Scottish Labour Party forming a minority administration. Cllr David Ross is the Leader of the Council. Six strategic spokespeople cover broad portfolios of Council services, linking with Executive Directors.

Elected members

75
22 wards



SNP 34

Labour 17

Liberal Democrats 13

Conservative 8

Independent 1

By-election pending ○ Scottish Labour Party & Scottish Co-operative Party 1

The Council's structure of governance is based on a Cabinet Committee and four Council service area themed scrutiny committees. The Cabinet Committee plays a key role in governance and decision making. The function of the Cabinet Committee is to set the strategic and policy direction of the Council and take all major policy and resource decisions on its behalf.

² Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers

The Council also constituted a Standards, Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) which has the delegated authority to support the Council in its responsibilities for risk management, governance, and control. The SARC seeks assurance that an effective system of risk management and internal control is maintained. The SARC also has a role in the application of standards matters across the Council, and the Council's performance in complaints and freedom of information.

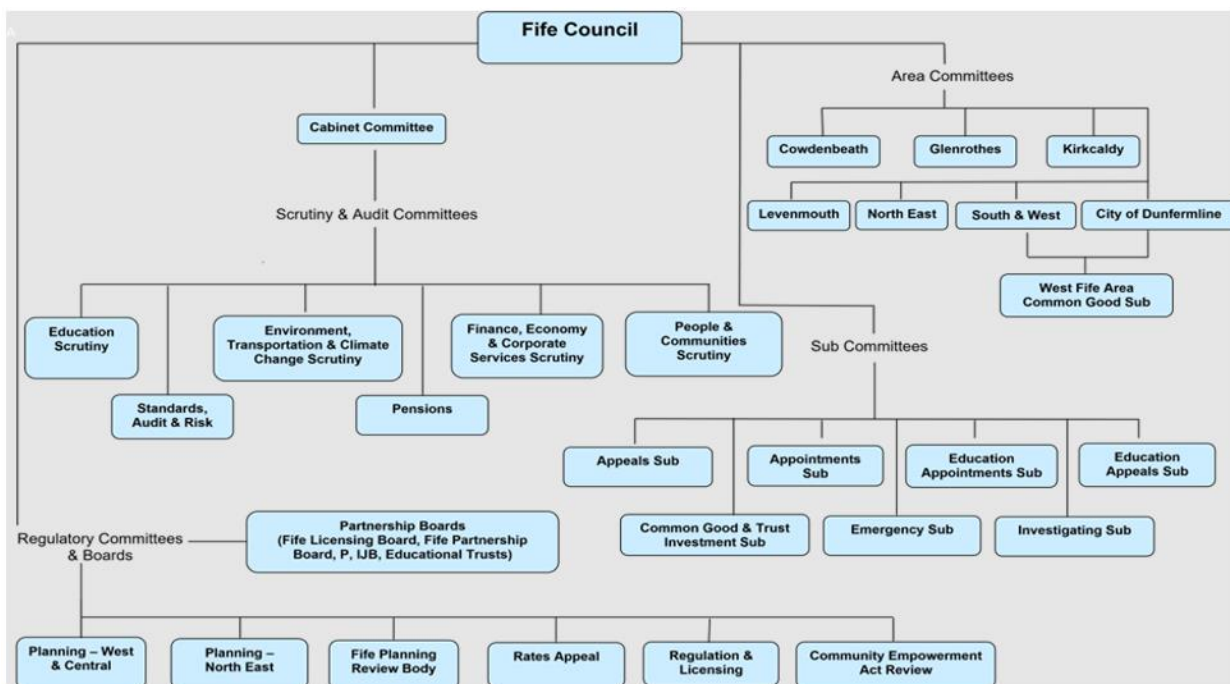
How are we doing?

The Annual Governance Statement, which accompanies the Annual Accounts, demonstrates that Fife Council has put in place appropriate management and reporting arrangements to enable it to satisfy itself that its approach to corporate governance is both adequate and effective in practice, and can greatly mitigate risks to achieving its objectives.

Our annual review of the local code of corporate governance helps us identify areas for improvement on an annual basis through corporate and directorate action plans. In 2023/24, we revised our Corporate Governance Framework to ensure that it is fit for purpose, enhancing the approach with the introduction of a new Local Code of Corporate Governance Checklist comprising 91 statements directly linked to the CIPFA Delivering Good Governance Framework and related Scottish Guidance.

Completion of the Checklists by each directorate and the ALEOs provides a comprehensive source of assurance, helping to identify areas of good practice that can be shared, as well as areas requiring improvement (at a directorate and corporate level). Good progress has been made in delivering on the improvement actions identified last year, and progress on actions from previous year are picked up in the relevant sections of this report.

In addition to revised standing orders being approved in June 2023, the Council approved a revised List of Committee Powers in May 2024. This document clarified elements of the role and remits of Committees and their membership but did not make substantive changes to the structure. The current Committee structure is as follows:



Elected members work closely with senior officers and partners to develop strategic, thematic and local community delivery plans and monitor progress against them. New training has been introduced for elected members, including mandatory elements. An

elected member working group on training and development has been established. Political leaders meet regularly to discuss issues at the Cross Party Leadership Group and we use cross party groups to develop key strategy and policy. We have an experienced leadership team, strong working relationships and a culture of positive engagement with elected members.

Area committees and Cabinet allocate council resources in line with agreed priorities and performance is regularly reported to the same groups, and to scrutiny committees. Area Committees are an integral part of Fife Council's decision making and governance framework. As part of the Council's commitment to decentralisation, they ensure that policies and services are responsive to the needs and wishes of communities. In addition to specific local decision-making responsibilities, Area Committees can scrutinise local delivery of services and shape wider priorities, policies and programmes.

Our annual review of the local code of corporate governance helps us identify areas for improvement on an annual basis through corporate and directorate action plans. The approach was enhanced during 2023/24, with the introduction of a new Local Code of Corporate Governance Checklist comprising 91 statements directly linked to the CIPFA Delivering Good Governance Framework and related Scottish Guidance. Completion of the Checklists by each directorate and the ALEOs provides a comprehensive source of assurance, helping to identify areas of good practice that can be shared, as well as areas requiring improvement (at a directorate and corporate level).

Progress on actions from previous year are picked up in the relevant sections of this report.

Governance of Trusts and arms length external organisations (ALEOs)

Fife Council is also responsible for confirming effective corporate governance arrangements exist within its other group entities. This includes:

- Business Gateway Fife (BGF)
- Fife Sports and Leisure Trust (FSLT)
- Fife Coast & Countryside Trust (FCCT)
- Fife Golf Trust (FGT)
- Fife Cultural Trust (FCT)

Business Gateway Fife has recently reviewed its operating systems and structures to enhance performance measures, including work to homogenise grant processes, creating an efficient and agile approach to service delivery. The organisation has reworked its assets to allow for joint working with Scottish Enterprise and has updated the Enterprise Hub in Glenrothes to reflect the needs of business customers. The Board has reviewed key risks and mitigation measures in the last 12 months.

The ALEOs have regular performance sessions on Service Level Agreement delivery and have been reviewed and updated. Annual reports have been modified and further changes are being made for coming years to allow more time for scrutiny.

What's ahead?

Following approval of revised committee and officer powers, a draft scrutiny protocol has been developed by an officer working group and in discussion with the chairs of the four strategic scrutiny committees. Financial regulations were also approved in May 2024.

A number of improvements were made to the Council's fraud governance arrangements during 2023/24 - including a new standalone Whistleblowing policy - however further development is planned during 2024-25.

3. Effective use of resources

What is required?

In achieving Best Value, a local authority will be able to demonstrate the following:

- It makes best use of its financial and other resources in all of its activities.
- Decisions on allocating resources are based on an integrated and strategic approach, are risk-aware and evidence-based, and contribute to the achievement of its strategic priorities.
- It has robust procedures and controls in place to ensure that resources are used appropriately and effectively, and are not misused.
- It works with its partners to maximise the use of their respective resources to achieve shared priorities and outcomes.

The Council has in place a number of components for the effective management of its resources.

These include a Medium-Term Financial Strategy, a Capital Strategy, a Procurement Strategy, a Risk Management Strategy, a Workforce Strategy which sets out the vision for the workforce for the period 2022-25 (Our People Matter), and a refreshed approach to workforce planning, which is designed to be more agile and responsive and will relate to and assist the current service planning approach (Service People Plans and in development a Corporate People Plan). There are also a range of HR Policies.

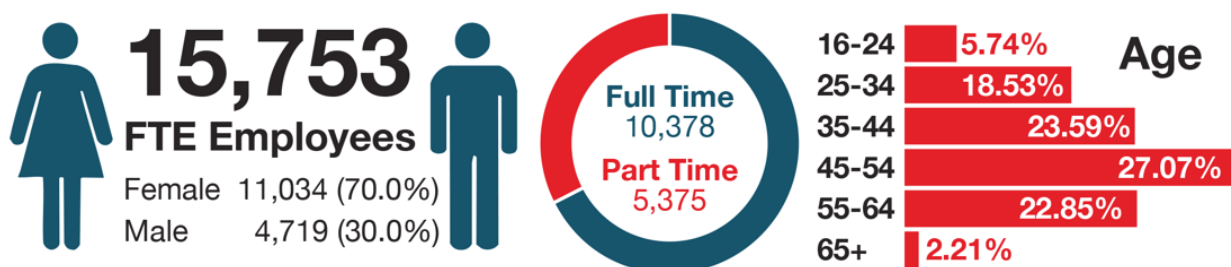
The Council’s approach to Digital Services is being developed and delivery of this work is monitored through the Council’s Digital Portfolio Board and there is further oversight via the Reform and Recovery Board.

In addition, Services have maintained and updated Directorate Business Continuity Plans, and these inform the ICT Systems Recovery Plans which are documented and subject to regular testing and updating.

3.1 Workforce/Staff

Each year, there is a more detailed focus on a particular aspect of best value. This year the focus for the best value thematic audit is Workforce Innovation. This and previous reports from our external auditors will be available here: [Best Value | Fife Council](#)

How are we doing?



The Council’s workforce strategy, Our People Matter (OPM) 2022 - 2025, sets out our ambitions and our commitment to providing a working environment in which employees can

make an optimized contribution to delivering sustainable services, the Plan for Fife and other agreed priorities. It aims to promote a positive culture, good leadership, inclusive experiences, development opportunities and support for employee wellbeing.

A self-assessment process is undertaken annually both at corporate and directorate level to assess maturity/progress against delivering the strategy and improvement actions are identified. OPM progress and actions are reported annually to the Reform Board and Cabinet, and a mid-term review was conducted to assess strengths and areas for improvement.

Our workforce strategy works in a complimentary way with our workforce planning approach and we are strengthening the links to service change planning to ensure that our workforce capacity and capability meets our organisational needs now and in the future.

Workforce planning is directly influenced by a range of factors including service change planning, transformational change work, service delivery requirements and workforce priorities such as reducing absence, employee development. We have refreshed our approach to workforce planning, accompanied by the launch of real-time data tools around the workforce profile including leavers and new starts information.

Workforce planning at a service level is happening alongside service change planning, to ensure we have staff with the right skills in place to deliver our priorities. The data from the Service People Plans has enabled the development of corporate workforce planning priority themes. These themes direct corporate activities to support strategic workforce planning activities.

A revised approach to managing absence was approved by the Cabinet Committee on 29 June 2023, which included the creation of an Attendance Support Unit to help reduce absence levels Council wide. A recent report to the Scrutiny Committee in June 2024 provided a performance and improvement update on the Attendance Support Unit and the strategy to improve attendance management.

Results of the Health, Safety & Wellbeing survey (January 2024) informs work to address areas for improvement and tackle issues such as work-related stress, physical well-being and health and safety compliance. Since the last survey in 2022, there have been moderate improvements in a range of areas, and we will continue to build on those improvements. Our Heartbeat survey monitors employee engagement and tells us what our employees are thinking and feeling about work. The second survey ran late Spring 2024.

Resourcing challenges have been evident in recent years, impacted by external factors including the pandemic. Recruitment continues to be an area of challenge, however, the ongoing work to address these challenges is leading to improvements.

The approach to blended working is well established, however, there is further work to be done to extend flexible working opportunities for the whole workforce. A strong culture and focus on support for employee wellbeing exists both corporately and within services who have developed their own initiatives to meet the specific health, and wellbeing needs of their teams.

What's ahead?

Engagement will take place later this year on a refreshed OPM (2025-2028) and the development of a Corporate People Plan (for the same period) which will use the key insights from the Service People Plans to set out the actions we will take to address current and future gaps in our workforce capacity and capability.

Work will be progressed to develop the maturity of both our corporate and service approach to workforce planning, including understanding and scoping future workforce needs. We will continue to support the identification and development of leadership development activities within Services, including the First Line Managers Development Programme.

Delivery of our recruitment strategy will continue with a strong focus on innovative approaches to progressive recruitment such as our Life Chances model, which enters its next phase of implementation following the pilot period, to fully embed the model across Fife Council. We will continue to look at our more established initiatives such as our Workforce Youth Investment fund and how we can use this funding to target areas identified in service people plans. We will continue to work closely with our community planning partners and our established employability initiatives.

The Attendance Support Unit's work will continue with the aim of reducing absence. Work will focus on early engagement with employees who are absent from work due to sickness, managerial compliance and manager upskilling. The creation of attendance management induction training for new managers/employees and the provision of attendance data for managers should all help towards increasing managers' confidence to manage absence effectively. The ASU will continue to engage regularly with leadership teams across the Council to identify new innovative ways to reduce absence and drive cultural change.

Results from the 2024 Heartbeat survey show a 12% increase in response rates. There has been an increase in positive responses to the 12 statements which cover self, team, community and organisational leadership. Analysis will be undertaken to identify what Council-wide actions can be taken to enable improvement. Work will also be undertaken at a service/directorate level to identify and action improvement activities.

3.2 Asset Management

We need to ensure that we have the right assets in place to support future needs and priorities. We also need to meet our climate change and net zero obligations. Our asset management strategy is based on the principles of improving efficiency (doing more with less); the effectiveness of our activities (achieving better outcomes); and improving leverage through driving inclusive growth and working in partnership. It supports and aligns with the Plan for Fife and the Scottish Government Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland (IIP).

How are we doing?

We have completed the reconfiguration of our office estate for blended (hybrid) working through our Workstyles Programme. This approach combined upgrading facilities, with the provision of technology and terms and conditions. It supported the closure of two major office buildings, with significant revenue savings for the Council.

In supporting the Council's Capital Plan and the Plan for Fife, we work across a number of areas, many of which provide benefits across multiple themes and sectors. This includes targeted action plan to achieve Net Zero. Highlights include:

- **Capital programme** - the new Dunfermline Learning Campus will accommodate two new secondary school buildings, and accommodation for our business and broader communities. It will welcome pupils in August 2024.
- **Care villages** - Methil Care Village opened in September 2023, it typifies our integrated intergenerational approach, with nursery facilities, a care home and housing provision in carbon efficient buildings on a single site.
- **Council Housing** - Our work involves upgrades to our existing housing stock as well as the Affordable Housing Programme (AHP). This work contributes across a wide range of our objectives including net-zero, resilience, and community wealth building.
- **Decentralisation** - We have been working to support our area committees and our communities in the provision of property for community groups through subsidised leases. This has included improvements to the way we interface with the public and improved information flow.

What's ahead?

We will continue the move to a smaller network of integrated community and operational facilities, that contribute to Place and Community Wealth Building. Collaboration and sharing will be fundamental. We will seek to capitalise on opportunities for wider asset rationalisation and service integration with our public sector partners, in support of the Building No Wrong Door agenda. Key projects to support these objectives include:

- NHS Fife staff will be sharing space in our offices. This will support efficiencies in building use as well as Collaboration/No Wrong Door.
- We will seek to implement further improvements to our corporate offices, to build on the benefits being realised through Workstyles.
- Our contribution to the capital programme will continue with work developing Cupar Care Village and a new High School building for South and West Fife.
- The new community hub at Abbeyview is due to open in November 2024 and work is continuing on the new community hub at Templehall.
- We are continuing to support the Affordable Housing Programme and also working on new business units in Levenmouth and at Halbeath Interchange.

3.3 Information / Digital

Our Digital Strategy reflects the change and priorities in the Plan for Fife and responds to service pressures and opportunities. Maximising digital opportunity is a key consideration in the service change planning process.

How are we doing?

The alignment between our Digital Strategy and Our People Matter (OPM) approach has been strengthened, identifying areas of focus for us as a digital council with the need for a digital workforce mindset (culture & behaviours) and practice (leadership, performance and skills).

Our aspirations under mindset and practice support the development of a digital workforce who are confident to operate new, digital ways of working and service delivery. Technology-based solutions are considered early in business change activities and involve architecture

and analysis to ensure fit and benefits. 34 technology projects have been delivered since January 2022 with documented benefits.

The use of digital technology is having a positive impact on workforce productivity, service delivery and outcomes. Care at Home have successfully mobilised their carers enabling 20% productivity gains. Building Services have also achieved significant gains in productivity. There are smaller staff groups also benefiting from the use of mobile solutions.

A key principle of the workforce strategy is to develop digital skills for all, with no employee left behind. Progress has been made in addressing digital exclusion for employees, upskilling and increasing the digital confidence of our workforce through:

- Digital champions programme
- Digital skills survey – gap analysis
- Increasing digital learning resources and opportunities
- Dive into Digital events

The roll out of Microsoft Office 365 has widened the use of digital technology and provides a secure platform that enables working from anywhere and Use Your Own Device (UYOD). The vast majority of the Council has 'signed up' to this - now around 20,000 users.

As buildings started to close in March 2020 and many employees were forced to work from home, the M365 platform moved from a 'nice to have' to a 'must have'. In the first few weeks of lockdown the number of registered users rose from 1,800 to around 12,000. By the end of April 2020, we were running around 5,000 Teams meetings per week.

This gave the council a secure, robust platform with which to continue doing business during the pandemic – something that many other councils and the NHS were unable to do initially. Since then, we have developed a M365 based intranet that is accessible from personal and council mobile devices and PCs.

A number of additional Microsoft applications have been rolled out to users that improve workforce productivity, with more to come. All Council employees have an active account which means they have an email address and can access Oracle our HR system and the intranet on their own smart devices, where they previously had no digital footprint. Viva Engage has been implemented, allowing every employee to join communities and discussions.

The Council continues to replace a number of legacy systems through the Legacy Programme. Key projects have achieved significant milestones.

- The Housing Cx Project went live in June 2022. Work is underway to migrate the solution to the cloud although challenges are causing delays.
- The Social Work/Social Care case system transferred from SWIFT to Liquid Logic. The system is required to provide an accurate record management system for service users across social work children and families, adults, older people and criminal justice. Liquid Logic functionality for Childrens' Social Care went live in May 2023 whilst Adult Social Care and Criminal Justice went live in April 2024.
- The CoMIS Replacement Project for Property and Housing repairs remains a work in progress.

Work is continuing to progress the 1-2-1 Education Device Strategy. While still in a pilot and planning phase, some 8,000 devices are available to Fife's young people on a 1-2-1 basis. Access to the same device 24/7 is supporting a seamless digital learning experience. For

less privileged pupils within this pool, connectivity at home was also provided via mobile hotspots.

What's ahead?

Digital change is being co-ordinated by the Digital Portfolio Board and will further leverage existing strategic solutions and partnerships to deliver benefits and contribute towards the budget shortfall in future years. An approach to identify, quantify, prioritise and then get into delivery is ongoing and will run into mid 2025. Early opportunities will however be progressed where possible, contributing to Service change such as the No Wrong Door approach, 121 devices in Education and optimising the use of existing systems.

No Wrong Door will transform the Communities Directorate and introduce new ways of working that will require innovative technology to underpin the approach. A data warehouse and small app development will enable a 360 view of the citizen of Fife improving the quality of interactions and interventions with the objective of preventing more people from falling into crisis.

Following the 1-2-1 Device pilot in Education, a business case is being prepared for rolling this out to all P6-S6 pupils, subject to funding being identified.

The coming year will see more focus on ensuring that the value of using a more modern system like Liquid Logic is maximised, including improving the integrity of the data from payment recording systems to allow improved financial forecasting processes.

Further opportunities will be identified with Directorates and prioritised via a pipeline approach overseen by the Digital Portfolio Board. From 2025 onwards a forward delivery programme will be introduced with change tracked and managed in a co-ordinated way.

3.4 Risk Management

Risk management is a fundamental element of good governance and decision making in any organisation. The range of vital services delivered by the Council for individuals and businesses in Fife routinely result in a varied and complex risk profile. The Council's risk management arrangements are designed to support, on a continuous basis, the identification, assessment and management of risks as well as the monitoring, reviewing and reporting of them.

How are we doing?

Audit and Risk Management Services provides the internal audit function for Fife Council and operates in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), which apply to Local Government. Conformance with the PSIAS has been confirmed independently, through the completion in 2023 of a formal External Quality Assurance process.

The Service undertakes a risk-based annual programme of audit work approved by the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee. An annual report to the Members of Fife Council, Chief Executive and Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services, provides the internal audit opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's governance, risk management and control framework.

The overall audit opinion for the year to 31 March 2024 is that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

During 2023/24, a number of improvements were made by management to address the critical recommendation contained within the Safeguarding internal audit report, which related to Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration. A formal follow-up of the report was also carried out by Internal Audit this year and independent assurances were obtained that the recommendation had been fully implemented.

In addition to the improvements made, a small number of limited assurance internal audit reports have been issued since the last Governance Statement, including the Community Equipment Service - Fife Equipment Loan Store, which contains one critical recommendation surrounding the servicing of community equipment, Lone Working, School Transport - Additional Support Needs and Third Sector Funding. Management has agreed to fully implement all of the recommendations within these audit reports and will monitor progress made towards this.

The Council's corporate risk management arrangements continued to mature during 2023/24, driven by the implementation of the Risk Management Improvement Plan and Risk Management Strategy Group, which met regularly as planned. Key improvements included the development of a new Strategic Risk Register; establishing formal horizon scanning, and risk escalation processes; utilisation of the new, approved PESTELO impact assessment matrix; delivery of training and awareness sessions, including awareness session for the extended Council Leadership Team and CPD events; and ongoing development of e-learning solutions, in consultation with HR colleagues.

What's ahead?

Progress has also been made towards implementing the Roll Out Plan, supporting services to develop, implement and embed effective risk management arrangements locally, including development of service-level risk registers. This work will continue. The Risk Management Maturity Model will be reviewed and revised. Risk management advice and guidance will be provided to Council ALEOs.

The Council's 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan contains formal follow-up reviews of the Community Equipment Service - Fife Equipment Loan Store and Lone Working reports, which should provide independent assurance in due course that the areas requiring improvement, and corresponding risks, have been adequately addressed.

The Council is determined to protect itself and the public from fraud and corruption and have developed its existing counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements in consideration of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption. Fraud governance arrangements were enhanced during 2023/24 with the launch of a new mandatory Corporate Fraud e-learning package and new Whistleblowing Policy and supporting working practices and procedures, including new referral routes. Further development is planned during 2024-25.

During the year a review has been taking place in relation to Programme and Project governance and assurance by officers. Major change projects (over £5m or higher risk projects) have specific governance arrangements already in place and have governance boards established which meet regularly to monitor and track progress and risks. However, the review has identified some areas for improvement and the need to strengthen some aspects to ensure effective management of resources associated with Programmes and Projects. These will take place during the coming year.

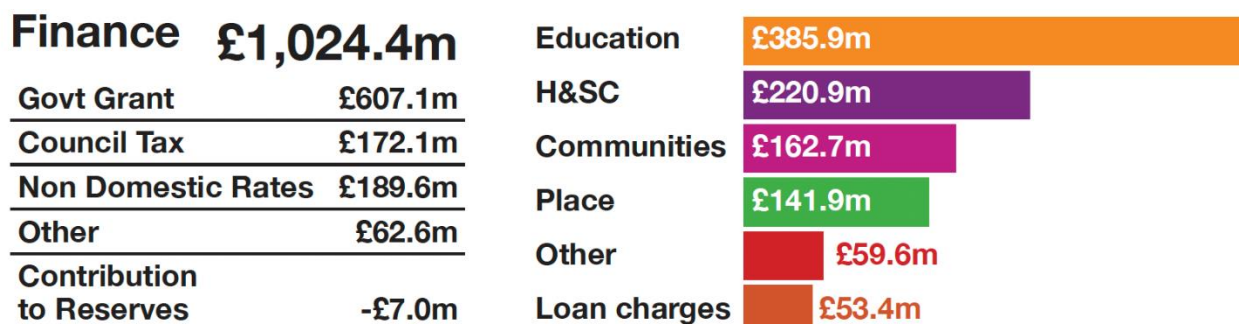
3.5 Financial Management and planning

Budget setting, asset plans and digital strategy are all aligned to strategic and local priorities. Our medium-term financial strategy outlines the financial challenge over the next three years and proposed strategies for dealing with these challenges, including the implementation of change programmes. The long-term financial plan has been refreshed.

How are we doing?

The last year has been another challenging year for the Council and the focus has been to ensure that support is provided to communities, individuals and businesses whilst safeguarding the Council's financial sustainability and maintaining service delivery.

Budget constraints and increasing cost pressures are putting Council finances under severe strain. With a proportion of funding being ringfenced or directed for national policy initiatives there is less scope to properly plan ahead and target resources to local needs. As a result, Councils are being faced with having to make increasingly difficult choices about spending priorities and service provision.



Fife will continue to explore all options to close the budget gap. For example, changes to the statutory accounting guidance for the repayment of debt on Service Concessions allowed the repayment term to be extended and generated an annual benefit from 2023/24 of £4m per annum in the near term. In the 2023/24 budget £1.552m of balances were used to close the budget gap and a further £6.448m of balances were used for one-off temporary investment. Balances are not anticipated to be used to close the budget gap in future years.

We've looked at examples of successful reform and delivery from around the UK and beyond. This has helped inform our current redesign work around place-based, people-focused and digitally enabled services. Evidence suggests that adopting a no wrong door approach and rolling out whole family support can achieve better outcomes for people and families. A redesign of People services will support people to take control of their own lives by working with families and households to empower them to build their capacity and resilience through relationship-based, person-centred support.

This year, Internal Audit undertook a high-level review of the Council's funding and governance arrangements in place for third sector organisations. Third sector funding is governed by the Council's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which sets out the processes and practices through which organisations are commissioned. It is designed to assist officers working with voluntary organisations and the organisations themselves to understand their respective roles and to ensure consistent systems and practices across the Council. The review found that the Council has a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (the Framework) for managing third sector funding in line with best practice principles. There is regular reporting of third sector funding activity.

What's ahead?

The Council is facing significant financial challenges now and in the coming financial years. The financial position for 2024/25 is forecast to be a substantial overspend which will impact adversely on balances. Services will need to practice sound financial management in order to bring their budgets back in line. The budget gap for 2025/26 and beyond is also challenging and the opportunities for corporate solutions are no longer available, meaning that difficult decisions will need to be taken in order to retain a balanced budget position.

To mitigate increasing financial risk and service overspend, financial management will be strengthened across the organisation and will include review of financial controls and processes in place. Increased emphasis on budget holder accountability and responsibility will be achieved through enhanced availability of financial information through self-service access to financial information directly from the Council's core financial systems. Where overspends are emerging, mitigating actions will be required and these will be reported within the regular financial reports presented to both Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.

Initial work has begun to review the Council's Capital Strategy to ensure that it is in line with the refreshed Plan for Fife. The strategy will inform the Capital Investment Plan. The current economic conditions bring significant financial uncertainty and there is significant pressure on projects and resources already contained within the current Capital Investment plan. The plan is reviewed on a biannual basis and work so far has been aimed at reviewing the costs, profiling, likely costs and delivery timescales for current and approved projects already contained in the current plan

The Monitoring & Evaluation Framework will now be fully reviewed and updated, taking into training and development requirements and improvements needed to systems and processes to plan, manage, approve, evaluate and coordinate grant allocations.

The overall financial outlook continues to be extremely challenging and significant change will be needed to safeguard the financial sustainability of the Council.

3.6 Performance management

Through the Statutory Performance Information (SPI) Direction³ the Accounts Commission set out requirements on councils to publicly report their performance to their citizens and communities. Each council is required to report a range of information covering SPI 1: Improving local services and local outcomes and SPI 2: Demonstrating best value. Councils are encouraged to improve such reporting in a way that reflects their local context, while recognising the benefits of reporting benchmarking information to the public.

How are we doing?

All Services report annually to scrutiny committees on their performance. Service scorecards reflect Plan for Fife priorities, LGBF, customer, resources and operational management.

Following recommendations from the 2022/23 annual audit, a number of improvements have been made to our public performance reporting, starting with improved presentation of performance information (use of trends) in service scrutiny reports from November 2023 onwards.

³ [The Publication of Information \(Standards of Performance\) Direction 2021 Statutory Performance Indicators \(audit.scot\)](#)

A Council Planning and Performance Improvement Plan was approved in April 2024 to deliver improvements in the use of research, data and insight; a remodelled approach to Service scrutiny reporting; joined up service planning and change planning processes; self-evaluation in relation to Best Value; updated corporate performance monitoring arrangements; wider use of digital solutions and improvements in public performance reporting. A new approach to annual Service reviews and performance reporting for the scrutiny committee cycle was agreed at CET on 5th June 2024 which will bring Corporate Change Projects and 3 year rolling service plans into alignment.

Improvements have been made to the availability of performance information for both internal management purposes (through the development of Service portals in the Council's performance and risk management system, Ideagen) and in the availability and timeliness of public performance information (through improvements to the Council Performance Page <https://www.fife.gov.uk/performance>).

To strengthen Fife Council's compliance with SPI2: Demonstrating best value, we are introducing this new report: an annual corporate self-assessment of delivery against best value themes. This includes a new set of Best Value Performance indicators which will enable us to track how well we are doing as an organisation in delivery of best value, particularly in relation to effective use of resources. See section 8. Best Value Performance Indicators. As at 2023/24, Fife has improved on 9 of the 16 indicators which we will use to monitor best value.

What's ahead?

The performance framework will be updated for the Council and Partnership into a single approach: setting out the baskets of indicators aligned to the Plan for Fife 2024-27, best value, change plans and service improvement.

New style annual review reports for services will start to be rolled out from Autumn 2024, integrating change and improvement themes that will be developed through new service plans in the Spring of 2025. Stage 2 of the improvements to performance information online will focus on improving the way plans, performance, project delivery, evidence of impact and community news are linked. Analytical and assessment capability will be enhanced through training and development to support leadership teams as they consider policy and budget choices to support the delivery of the 2024-27 plan.

As part of decentralisation work, improvements have been made to how information is reported to Area Committees including introducing a common format for reporting of anti-poverty activity. From September 2024, Area Committees will start to receive Housing Reports in the new format to enable better local scrutiny and dialogue and a basis for informing policy and strategy generally.

Revised performance reporting arrangements will strengthen our approach to continuous improvement and delivery of P4F outcomes through transparent and timely information being available to Members and leaders to scrutinise.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework

The [Local Government Benchmarking Framework \(LGBF\)](#) brings together a wide range of information about how all Scottish councils perform in delivering services to local communities. The national benchmarking overview report for 2022/23 highlights that councils are facing increasingly challenging decisions around service delivery due to deepening fiscal, workforce, and demand pressures. It finds that funding for councils is failing to keep pace with increasing demand for services, growing need, and costs pressures, while workforce recruitment and retention are growing issues across much of the workforce.

An overall comparison of LGBF performance across all 32 councils across Scotland shows year to year fluctuation in the number of indicators where Fife features in the top two quartiles. The current position for 2022/23 shows 57% of indicators in the top two quartiles.

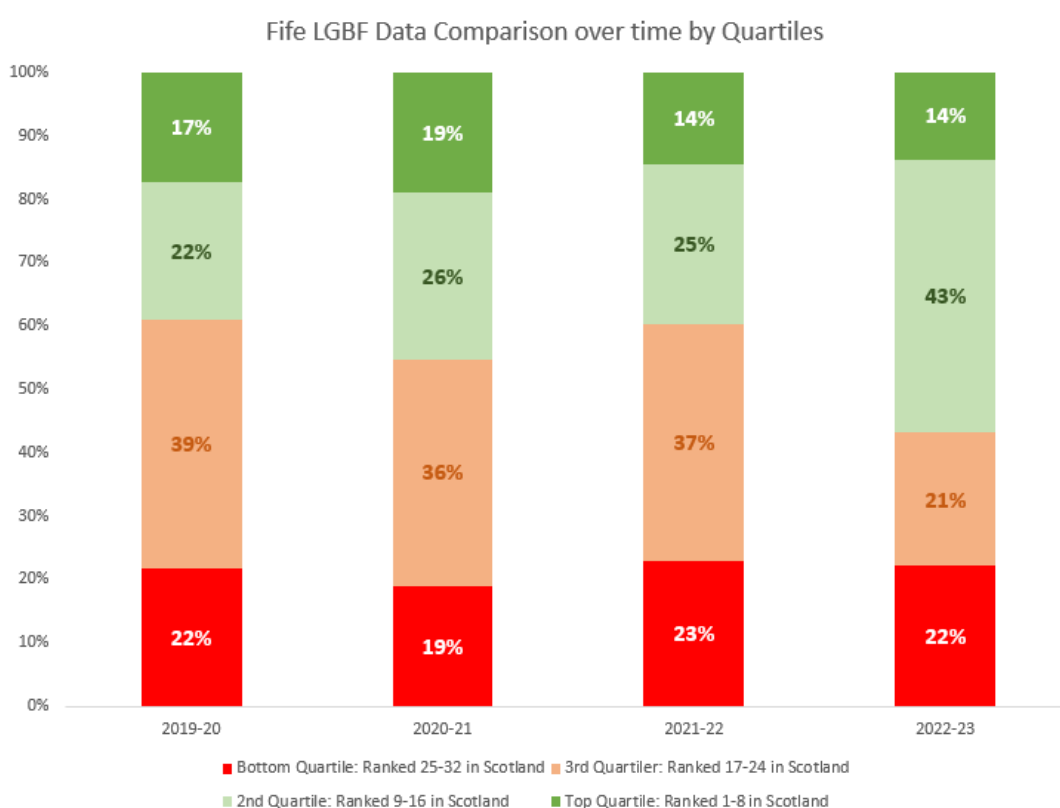


Figure 3.6.1 – LGBF data comparison across all 32 Councils by quartile (note analysis of LGBF data available as at May 2024)

Note - Caution is needed in interpreting performance relating to 2020/21. As at 1 May 2024 there remain 13 of 108 LGBF indicators for which data is still to be published for 2022/23 which may change the overall position.

While Fife has improved its performance over time on 59% of the LGBF indicators, it has only improved on 41% of indicators relative to its Family Group and 42% compared to Scotland, suggesting other Councils are improving their performance to a higher level. As with the national data, there are signs of a slowdown in improvement of performance, with some areas, such as Financial Sustainability; Children's Services and Adult Social Care all declining due at least in part, to the deepening fiscal, workforce and demand pressures facing councils. These challenges are already impacting service performance, and if the current trend persists, the hard-won progress achieved so far may be at risk, potentially leading to a decline in council service performance over the longer term.

Views on Council Services

In February 2024, via a [Fife People's Panel](#) Survey, we asked people for their views on their local council and the services that it provides.

Around two thirds of people believe that Fife Council provides high quality services. This rating has improved to **65.6%** from **48.1%** in 2022.

Other ratings which are showing improvement since 2022 are that the Council is addressing the key issues that affect the quality of life in local neighbourhoods (44.6% from 27.7%) and it designs its services around the needs of the people who use them (31.9% up from 20.7%).

Just under half agree that the Council does the best it can with money available, and a third believe the Council is good at letting people know about the services that it provides. Both of these ratings are similar to what they were in 2022.

Results which show a slight reduction since 2022 are in relation to how good the council is at letting people know how it is performing (22.4%), listening to local people's views before it takes decisions (20.4%) and keeping people informed about what is happening in the local area (17.8%). This is consistent with findings on influence and sense of control from the [Our Place survey, 2023](#).

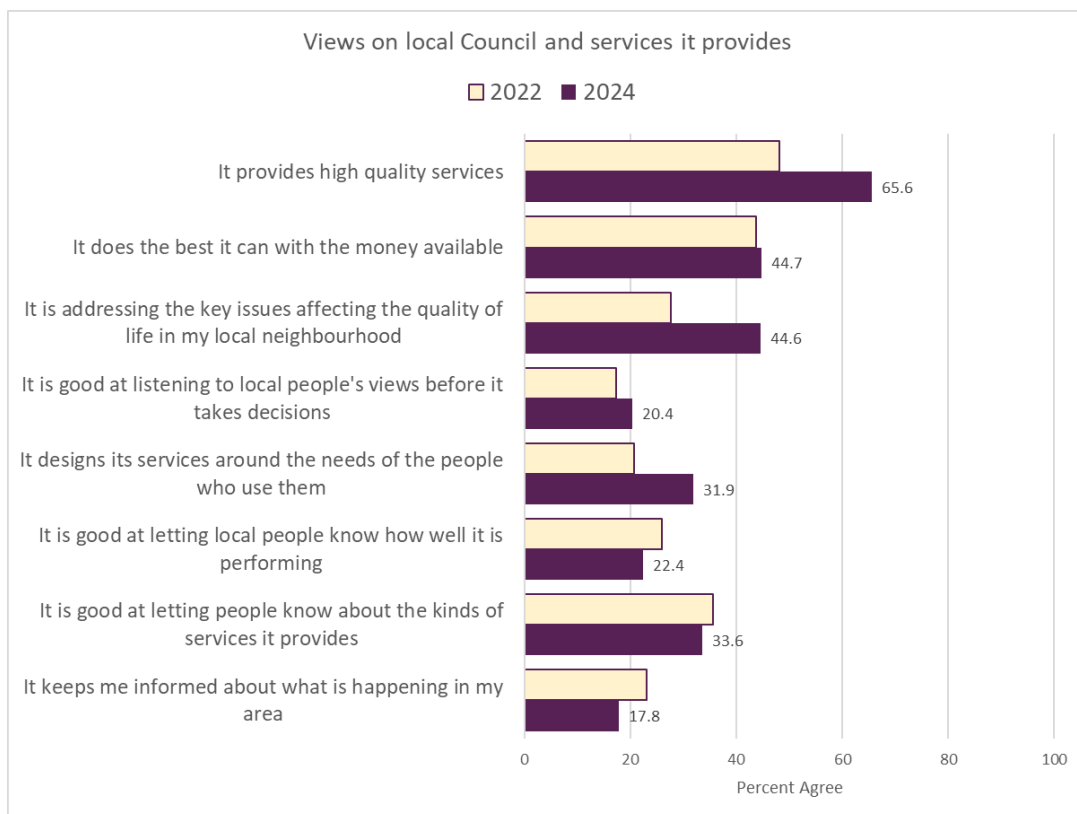


Figure 3.6.2 – Views on local Council and services it provides (Fife People's Panel, 2024 vs 2022)

4. Partnerships and collaborative working

What is required?

In achieving Best Value, a local authority will be able to demonstrate the following:

- Members and senior managers have established and developed a culture that encourages collaborative working and service provision that will contribute to better and customer-focused outcomes.
- Effective governance arrangements for Community Planning Partnerships and other partnerships and collaborative arrangements are in place, including structures with clear lines of responsibility and accountability, clear roles and responsibilities, and agreement around targets and milestones.



Our overarching vision is for "a fairer Fife". The Plan for Fife is both the Partnership and the Councils' strategic plan, addressing inequalities by focusing on three priorities within an overarching community wealth building approach:

- tackling poverty
- leading economic recovery, and
- addressing the climate emergency

How are we doing?

Partnership groups are taking forward action on 13 ambitions across four themes - opportunities for all, thriving places, inclusive growth and jobs, and developing community-led services, and addressing the climate emergency. Progress is reported through an annual Ambitions report.

The first phase of Fife Partnership Leadership Summits in 2023 sought to broaden the involvement and commitment of leaders from across the Partners and explore opportunities to work together on public service reform. From this four strategic change ambitions and Leadership commitments emerged:

Fife Partnership Strategic Change Ambitions and Leadership Commitments 2023

1. Put **Community Wealth Building (CWB)** at the heart of what we're doing, so we actively engage and work with local business, start-ups and third sector to win more of our work; reach out our recruitment to local communities; prioritise CWB within our key strategies e.g. economy, climate, health.
2. Live up to the **Place Principle**, so we work through a shared approach to how we inform, plan, review and engage locally; adjust our structures and operating arrangements to enable locally responsive teamwork; make resource decisions together.
3. Implement **system change in how we are supporting people and families** to improve their quality of opportunity and life, so we commit to share knowledge, review our referral approaches, and redesign processes; join up our access and information; lead and invest in multi-service team working and skills.
4. **Prioritise health and wellbeing** when we plan our places and services, so we invest in local community groups to facilitate local action; design our workplaces and the services they deliver to improve physical activity and health and wellbeing; work to create community networks and use all our assets to support physical activity and health and wellbeing, especially our green spaces.

A commitment to Community Wealth Building was confirmed by key public and third sector anchor organisations through the implementation of a Fife Anchor Charter in 2021, with partners moving to active delivery across all five pillars of Community Wealth Building.

Every three years, there is an update to the Fife Strategic Assessment to support the Plan for Fife (local outcome improvement plan). This brings, into a single document, a definitive synthesis of the latest research, evidence and assessment about Fife, to highlight the shared challenges facing local communities and partner agencies.

The [2024 assessment](#) provides an evidence-based snapshot of the state of Fife, in the context of many contributing factors. It is intended to provide insight and constructive challenge to encourage us to think about problems and opportunities in new ways. It highlights that there are complex and persistent issues affecting Fife's communities, which can only be addressed through collaborative action across partners.

The evidence in the assessment was a key input to the Plan for Fife review, and informed Fife Partnership Board decision in May 2024 to maintain focus and action against the existing Recovery & Renewal Priorities for 2024-2027.

Fife Partnership Board also agreed to explore building the next Plan on the social determinants of health using the developing approach of Professor Michael Marmot and the Institute of Health Equity. This is being explored further with Public Health Scotland to embed a system wide focus on prevention at community planning level.

Following the Plan for Fife review, improvements to Plan for Fife governance arrangements to sharpen delivery focus were approved by Fife Partnership Board in August 2024. While these changes did not amount to a fundamental change to partnership structure and roles, further changes may be needed in terms of shaping the 2027 Plan for Fife.

What's ahead?

The Plan for Fife review has set the direction for 2024-27. As Partnership focus sharpens on priorities and delivery over the next three years, work needs to start on shaping the next plan.

Two proposals have been discussed at the Leadership Board to develop this work. Firstly, the creation of a leadership group to begin the task of shaping the next Plan for 2027. This could include working alongside Public Health Scotland and the Institute of Health Equity on the approach.

Secondly, a new Collaborative Programme will be developed by Fife Partnership based around projects that could be scaled to enable us to deliver a greater impact against priorities, more quickly. Three initial projects are proposed as tests of change:

1. Accelerating Community Wealth Building benefits through procurement
2. Maximising Life Chances through joint progressive recruitment practices
3. Creating Sustainable Places through whole-system place-based design/delivery

The next Fife Local Development Plan is being created over a similar timeframe as the new community plan. This opens up a new opportunity to align policy, asset and land use more deliberately and ways to better support community wealth building and priority objectives.

The strong and ongoing theme of inequality coming through the Fife Strategic Assessment indicates value in taking a whole system approach to shape investment, redesign opportunities and resource allocations.

5. Working with communities

What is required?

In achieving Best Value, a local authority will be able to demonstrate the following:

- 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.
- A commitment to reducing inequalities and empowering communities to effect change and deliver better local outcomes.
- That engagement with communities has influenced strategic planning processes, the setting of priorities and the development of locality plans.

Community empowerment is at the heart of the Plan for Fife and underpins our work to develop a no wrong door approach, place-based delivery, decentralisation and local community planning. Councillors and managers work with communities on an ongoing basis through local community planning and area committee arrangements to reflect citizen priorities in planning and decision making.

Our Place

During October and November 2023, we asked Fife People’s Panel and the wider public to rate the need for improvement in 14 different aspects of place (on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 needing lots of improvement, and 7 needing little improvement). This provides a good overview of community perceptions of the relative need for improvement in places and spaces in Fife, and how this is changing over time.

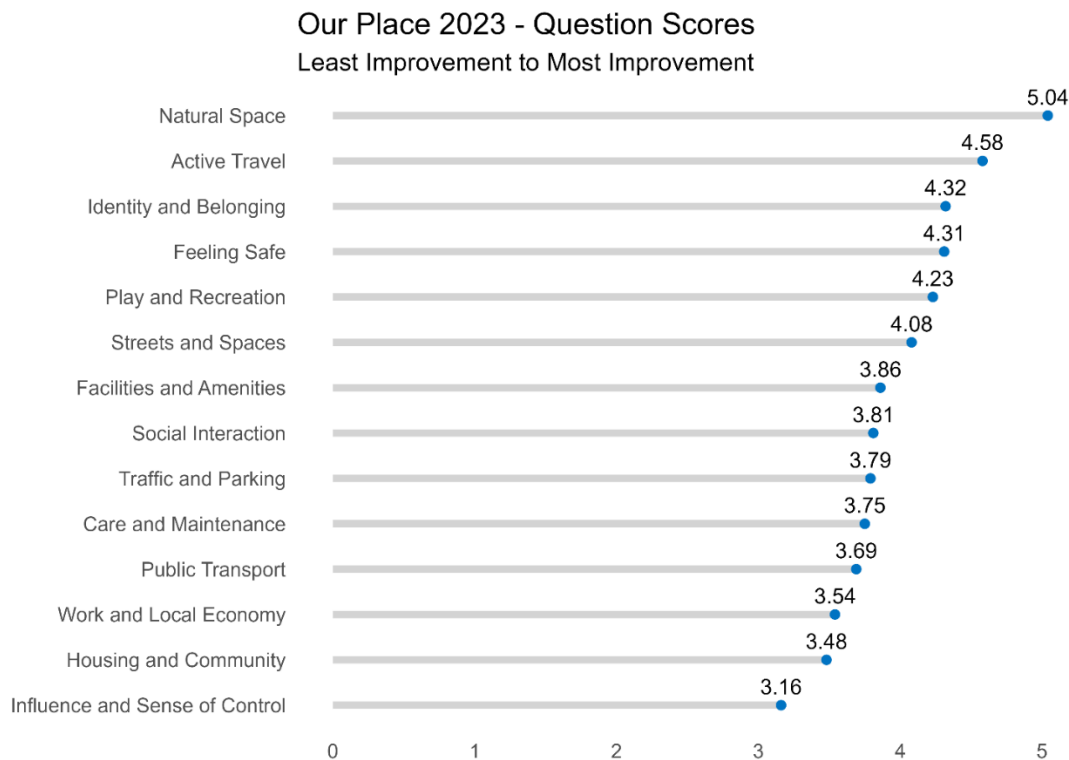


Figure 5.1 - Our Place Survey 2023, Fife scores on different aspects of place

The results from the [Our Place survey 2023](#) show people in Fife generally view where they live as being ok but with room for improvement. On a positive note, Fife is seen as a place with good natural spaces and active travel options, with these consistently rated more highly than other aspects of place over time.

In 2023, the perceived need for improvement was growing, and the gaps focused on work and the local economy, housing and community, and the extent to which people felt they could influence what is going on around them to provide a greater sense of control. There are similarities and differences across Areas.

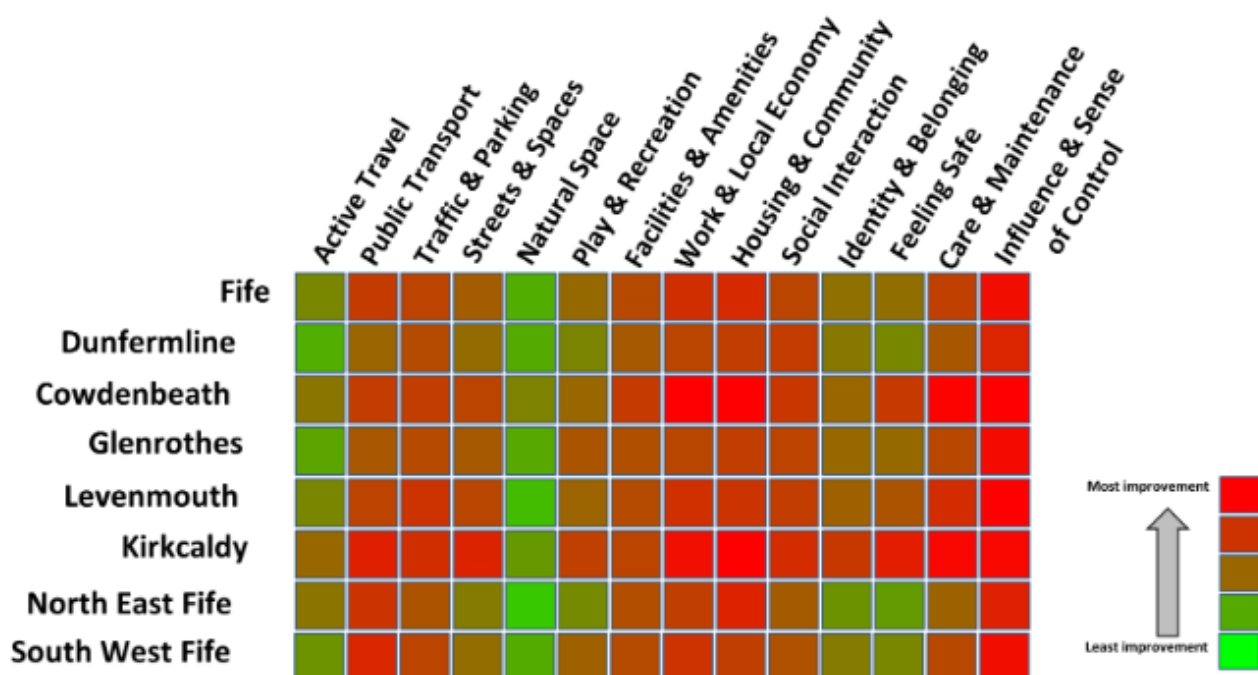


Figure 5.2 – Relative need for improvement in aspects of place by Area, 2023

For the first time, we can start to track the new [Place and wellbeing outcomes](#), which are built up from the place standard tool:

1. [Movement](#) – active travel; public transport; traffic and parking
2. [Spaces](#) – streets and spaces; natural spaces; play and recreation
3. [Resources](#) – services and support; work and economy; housing and community
4. [Civic](#) – identity and belonging; feeling safe
5. [Stewardship](#) – care and maintenance; influence and control

Across place and wellbeing outcomes, our Spaces are ranked the highest (least in need of improvement) and Stewardship the lowest (most in need of improvement).

Table 5.3 – Place and wellbeing outcome scores for Fife 2023 and change from 2021

Outcome	Movement	Space	Resources	Civic	Stewardship
Fife	4.02	4.45	3.67	4.31	3.46
Change	-0.20	-0.26	-0.42	-0.25	-0.26

Note, at the Fife level, all outcomes have decreased in the last two years with Resources showing the biggest drop (-0.42) indicating that the areas in this outcome would benefit most from a focus for collaborative effort.

How are we doing?

We're encouraging communities to play an active role in designing and producing services – from Local Place Plans and regeneration projects that will define whole areas, to participatory budgeting processes, employability projects and facility improvements that meet the specific needs of target groups. We've learned from communities' experiences and actions during the pandemic and are continuing to build community resilience. We are designing more locally responsive services, supporting community-led initiatives and providing funding to local groups so they can use their assets to meet community needs (for example warm places).

Findings from a CLD inspection visit of Fife Council in December 2023⁴ highlighted that CLD Partners in Fife know their communities well, with an improved and shared understanding across professional disciplines of who is best placed to meet individual and community needs. This is helping to address barriers to accessing provision and improving timely access to resources and services for those most in need.

Strategic leadership for community engagement and participatory budgeting is effective. A high number of multi-agency partners network effectively to develop community engagement approaches and provide training for practitioners and community members. This is having a positive impact and increasing ways to engage with communities. The Council are also using effective approaches to support online community engagement.

There are strong examples of community led initiatives making a difference for local communities and increasing participation through the development of community forums. This includes summer programmes and joint work between CLD and Police Scotland to establish detached youth work. As a result, approaches to tackling anti-social behaviour is reducing the numbers of young people entering the youth justice system. Young people who originally developed the concept of a Pump Track in Dalgety Bay are now leading on managing and delivering this project.

Best practice case study of community led initiative making a difference for local communities - highlighted in CLD visit

The Fife Alcohol and Drugs Strategy 2020-2023 highlights the need for a locality-based approach to ensure equity of support for those at risk of drug related death and harm. In response, the Levenmouth project worked with key partners to introduce services within the Sandy Brae Community Education Centre. Partners have increased the presence of drugs and alcohol prevention and pathways provision to the area. For example, Restoration Fife, KY8 Adapt and other relevant services are providing individual and recovery support for those who would benefit most. A drop in café, access to medication assisted treatment and other relevant services is helping reduce stigma associated with problem drug use, which can prevent users and their family from accessing services. As a result, between 2019-2023 there is a decrease in drug related deaths in the area.

The North Queensferry Community Forum have developed a local action plan. They link closely with the Forth Bridges Area Tourism Strategy and other partners, including Scotrail, to improve transfer links between the village and Ferrytoll. Wellbeing ambassadors, in a few secondary schools, are providing social and emotional support to those young people who

⁴ Fife Council Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report 13/02/24
<https://education.gov.scot/media/2pobetrk/cld-fife-council-pv-130224.pdf>

need it. Skilled, active and committed volunteers are supported well to improve community facilities, such as Kennoway Pump Track. This is improving the health and wellbeing of residents and increasing their social skills and networks of support.

Communities are actively engaged and consulted in the development of community facilities and have had a major influence on the design of buildings. For example, local agencies and groups are actively influencing the design of a new community hub at Abbeyview. This will increase accommodation available for groups being displaced from other community facilities. Together with

In addition to the regular Parentwise and Pupilwise surveys, a Fife Young People's Health and Wellbeing Survey was carried out through schools in March and April 2023. The findings from this are being used to understand the wellbeing needs of children and young people across Fife and to inform the work of organisations in Fife to improve services for children and families.

What's ahead?

Community forums are at different stages of development. There is more to do to further develop learning opportunities and share expertise and knowledge to enhance their work. For example, community food initiatives that are at an early stage could be developed further.

Youth Work Research in 2023 was underpinned by a participatory action research model with young people taking a lead role in the process as part of the overall planning and as young researchers. This approach has been a key strength and this research and other data will be used to inform partnership work on a youth work strategy as part of the overall development of the new Community Learning and Development (CLD) Plan, supporting our commitment to Community Led Services as set out in the Plan for Fife.

Participatory budgeting processes are being planned in Cowdenbeath, City of Dunfermline, Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy Areas where local people will have an active role in allocating Community Recovery Funding.

Services are continuing to be supported to improve their community engagement practice through the development of a new community engagement toolkit and resources, all underpinned by the national standards. The Council will be trialling a new digital platform – Citizen Space - to support improved community engagement. Training on the new platform is currently being rolled out but there are plans to use this for participatory budgeting in Kirkcaldy Area and consulting on the Community Learning and Development Plan.

The council is preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP) which will be shaped by the views and aspirations of communities across Fife. The plan will replace the current plan approved in 2017 and will set out planning policies and proposals for the use and development of land across Fife. We aim to adopt the plan in 2026 and it will look ahead for 10 years from then.

The success of the LDP depends on the participation of the people who live in Fife as they understand where they live the best. Our new Local Development Plan will consider any registered Local Place Plans, to allow communities to have a more direct role in the decisions that influence their place. Communities have been invited to prepare Local Place Plans so that they can play a proactive role in defining the future of their places.

6. Sustainability

What is required?

In achieving Best Value, a local authority will be able to demonstrate the following:

- Sustainable development is reflected in its vision and strategic priorities.
- Sustainable development considerations are embedded in its governance arrangements.
- Resources are planned and used in a way that contributes to sustainable development.
- Sustainable development is effectively promoted through partnership working.

The Climate Change Act (Scotland) 2009 introduced mandatory duties for local authorities to contribute to climate change mitigation and to climate change adaptation, and to act sustainably. This has been integral to Fife Council's priorities in the Plan for Fife and associated governance, and in previous strategic plans.

The Plan for Fife includes "Addressing the Climate Emergency" as one of the four key objectives. The Addressing the Climate Emergency Board, comprising Heads of Service, Senior Managers and representation of partner organisations, provides an oversight of delivery of the priorities from Climate Fife Strategy to ensure delivery of the Plan for Fife.

How are we doing?

In 2019, Fife Council declared a Climate Emergency, committing to the target of net-zero by 2045. This was closely followed by "Climate Fife" our Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (2020-2030), outlining our ambition and actions to tackle the climate emergency over the long term.

A new Climate Fife strategy⁵ was agreed in 2024 which sets out six themes of climate actions and three big moves. The big moves are key transformations that we need to make over the period of the strategy, including where we need to agree or change policy, develop new delivery models, and adopt a place-based approach.



Energy

where we will begin to transform the energy system in Fife to low carbon



Resilience

where we will transform how we protect Fife from the unavoidable impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, including through nature-based solutions



Community

where we will transform our approach to supporting community climate action, empowering our communities to transform local food, waste, transport, and energy generation systems to create community wealth and wellbeing

⁵ [Climate Fife 2024 Strategy and Action Plan](#) (Accessed 3rd April 2024)

Supporting communities to make long term changes and building resilience is key to achieving the vision for Climate Fife, with the six action programme themes outlined including buildings, low carbon energy, zero waste, transport and travel, nature and land, and protecting and supporting our communities.

Fife Council footprint reduced by 9% by 2022/23 from 2021/22. This is primarily the result of reduction in emissions from building energy, with electricity being at its lowest figure since the baseline. However, it should be noted that whilst electricity consumption from our estate has decreased through energy efficiency measures and reduction in estate by over 25% between 2014 and 2023, we have also benefitted from the decarbonisation of the National Grid which accounts for around half of the reduction. The total Carbon Footprint has reduced by 49% against the baseline in 2014/15. This is ahead of the current target for 202/23 of 36%. Fife Council's carbon footprint remains on track to achieve target for 2030 of a reduction of least 75%.

The council recognises the need for action around climate change adaptation and, as a result, a range of actions and training have taken place to enhance Fife's ability to adapt to climate change. Fife Council's corporate risk register covers the risks of climate adaptation, which are further progressed through for example, Shoreline Management Plan, Flood Emergency Procedure, Local Flood Risk Management Plans. Fife Council has produced a targeted asset management plan to allow us to meet climate change objectives as we push towards Net-Zero by 2045.

Changes Fife Council itself is making in relation to operating more sustainably include delivering Climate Literacy training to engage officers from throughout the council to identify deliverable climate actions within their Service, and Directorate. Since Climate Literacy training started in 2021, as at March 2024, 221 (of whom 178 completed the pledge and are accredited) Fife Council Staff and Councillors completed the course.

Fife's Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy ⁶ was published in December 2023, setting out Fife's strategic vision and plans for moving all of Fife's energy to net zero. This is being augmented by Local Area Energy Plans, with initial focus in Dunfermline area.

A Property Flood Resilience Grant was introduced on 24th April 2024, This offers home owners and business the opportunity to apply for grant funding up to £5k to install property flood resilience measures to help protect their homes against the risk of flooding. This work complements the work of Housing Services to improve resilience of council owned properties.

What's ahead?

The Big Moves for Energy, Resilience and Community will be progressed, developing collaborative routes to transformational climate actions, including identifying policy changes to support the transformations.

The Delivery Plan for the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy is being developed throughout 2024/25 and will set out strategic steps to reduce energy demand and decarbonise energy supply throughout Fife.

A Coastal Change Adaptation case study is underway to inform Fife Council's understanding of coastal value in terms of health, wellbeing and economy. This will also inform future communication of coastal adaptation and how Fife Council responds to that. Work continues

⁶ [Local heat & energy efficiency strategy \(LHEES\) and delivery plan | Fife Council](#)

to deliver on the Local and Flood Risk Management Plans and progressing with Surface Water Management Plans, as well as progressing towards a coastal change adaptation plan, all challenged by the increasing impacts of storms and sudden deluges exacerbated by climate impacts.

Throughout 2024/25 efforts are underway to create a trial Reuse Hub to remove usable items from the waste stream and create local community benefits and skills opportunities. Lessons from this will inform deployment from 2025 onwards.

The Fife Climate Forest (FCF) is an initiative to combat climate change and protect nature in the Fife region by planting trees, hedges, and restoring woodlands. It supports Fife Council's Forest & Woodland Strategy and wider climate goals, including enhancing resilience and linking fragmented woodland habitats per Fife's Biodiversity Action Plan. The project aims to improve health, wellbeing, skills development, and community wealth building, offering volunteering opportunities. FCF's framework, 'Connect, Grow, Thrive,' resonates with community partners.

A new Local Development Plan will be prepared to replace the current FIFEplan (adopted in 2017) and will represent the spatial and land use aspects of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Plan for Fife.

The publication of the Local Development Plan Evidence Report⁷ is the first stage of this task, the purpose of which is to support the quality and effectiveness of the local development plan. It sets out the information on which the new plan will be founded and what the Council needs to plan for. This sets out the local issues and how these will be addressed.

The next stage is the Proposed Plan which will set out where development could go, how places could change and the policies to support that change. There will be consultation on that with local communities, informed by local place plans.

⁷ [Local Development Plan Evidence Report Fife Council Committee 21 March 2024 \(Item 8\)](#)

7. Fairness and equality

What is required?

In achieving Best Value, a local authority will be able to demonstrate the following:

- That equality and equity considerations lie at the heart of strategic planning and service delivery.
- A commitment to tackling discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and promoting good relations both within its own organisation and the wider community.
- That equality, diversity and human rights are embedded in its vision and strategic direction and throughout all of its work, including its collaborative and integrated community planning and other partnership arrangements.
- A culture that encourages equal opportunities and is working towards the elimination of discrimination.

Fairness is at the heart of the vision of the Plan for Fife, and reflected in our priorities of tackling poverty, leading economic recovery, and ensuring a just transition as part of addressing the climate emergency. We use equality impact assessments as part of our policy development and committee reporting / decision making process.

How are we doing?

The Fife Strategic Assessment 2024 highlights that Fife continues to face a number of key challenges. These are historic, longstanding issues that take time to turn around. The Plan for Fife has a strong focus on inequalities, and although some areas have shown improvements, inequalities in Fife persist and are widening. Poorer outcomes are firmly grounded in Place, with Mid-Fife continuing to fall behind other areas of Fife.

A range of work is delivering on our focus to reduce inequalities, from preventing homelessness to closing the attainment gap. We report on progress with this in a range of ways including publishing a Tackling poverty annual report, and a Children's services annual report which includes new requirements in relation to children's rights in line with the UNCRC.

What's ahead?

Equality impact assessments on service change plan proposals will inform the next round of budget setting

















Fife Council will be reviewing and developing new Equality outcomes in 2025. This will include proactive action to address workforce equality and diversity issues. Action to address equalities issues is through partnership with Fife Centre for Equalities.

Fife Partnership and Public Health Scotland are exploring options to partner with Prof Sir Michael Marmot and team at the Institute of Health Equity⁸ to embed a system of health equity in strategy and delivery to drive partnership action on the social determinants of health.

⁸ [Home - IHE \(instituteofhealthequity.org\)](https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/)

8. Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI)

Our Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) are a focused set of organisational performance indicators which help to assess on an annual basis how well we are doing in delivering best value to our communities and are used for both internal management and public accountability. Assessing performance against target for 2023/24, 9 of the core set of 16 best value indicators have a green RAG status, 3 are amber and 4 are red.

Best Value theme	PI code / name	Value	Target	RAG	Trend
Workforce/Staff	Education (Teachers) – Average Working Days Lost per FTE	9.28	8.7		Declining
	Fife Council – Average Working Days Lost per FTE	14.94	14.6		Declining
Asset Management	Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for current use (%)	83.8%	86.1%		Improving
	Percentage of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition	91.1%	89.7%		Improving
Financial Management and Planning	Percentage of income due from Council Tax received by the end of the year	95.8%	95.7%		Improving
	Invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days (%)	96.4%	95.2%		Improving
	Actual Outturn as a % of budgeted expenditure	92.49%	98.3%		Declining
	Uncommitted General Fund Balance as a % of annual budgeted net revenue	3.8%	3.5%		Improving
	Support services as a % of total gross expenditure	3.91%	4.1%		Improving
Fairness & Equalities	Gender Pay Gap	1.13%	3.5%		Improving
	Proportion of highest paid 5% employees who are women	61%	59%		Improving
Customer responsiveness	Stage 1 Complaints actioned < 5 days	86%	90%		Declining
	Stage 2 Complaints actioned < 20 days	75%	85%		Declining
	Call Volume - % of Contacts Answered – Contact Centre	91%	90%		Improving
Digital / information	% Freedom of Information requests completed on time	88%	95%		Improving
Sustainability / Climate	Total Fife Council Carbon Footprint – tCO ₂ e	49106	75848		Improving

Note: this is a new set of indicators which will be used to assess delivery of best value over time.