

3 September 2024  
Agenda Item No. 6

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## **ENVIRONMENT & BUILDING SERVICES – ANNUAL SERVICE REVIEW REPORT 2023/2024**

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**Report by:** John Rodigan, Head of Environment & Building Services

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Wards Affected: N/A

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### **Purpose**

To present an overview of the Service, detail the service planning, change, and improvement work undertaken in 2023/24 and provide an assessment of performance to inform scrutiny and future service planning.

### **Recommendation(s)**

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The scrutiny committee is asked to:

- consider and comment on the remodelled 'annual service review' report format and related products
- review the progress and performance of Environment & Building Services for 2023/24 and the activity undertaken in 2024/25 to date
- note the Service planning objectives for 2024/25 and the three-year direction of travel

### **Resource Implications**

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There are no resource implications arising from this report.

### **Legal & Risk Implications**

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There are risks in not meeting Best Value requirements that can lead to additional monitoring/audit, external intervention, and/or loss of public confidence.

### **Impact Assessment**

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

### **Consultation**

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

## 1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 This is the Environment & Building Services Annual Review for 2023-24. It looks back over the previous year and assesses how the service has performed in relation to its priorities and challenges and looks forward to the changes and improvements that need to be considered next and the Service's priorities for the next 12 months.

1.2 In the report you will find

- An overview of the Service's roles and responsibilities
- Budget and workforce information to put service delivery into context
- The key priorities the Service has been working to and how these relate to the Plan for Fife and council reforms
- An assessment of how the service has performed in relation to these priorities
- Objectives and themes for service delivery, change, and/or improvement going forward

This information is then used to inform annual service planning and the strategic direction of the service over the next three years.

1.3 This approach to annual review and reporting is part of the Council's updated public performance reporting and scrutiny arrangements. More information on that and how the Council performs and compares with other local authorities can be found online here [www.fife.gov.uk/performance](http://www.fife.gov.uk/performance)

1.4 Performance information and related case studies for Environment and Building Services will be available online. [www.fife.gov.uk/performance](http://www.fife.gov.uk/performance)

## 2.0 Service Overview

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### Key role and responsibilities 2023/24

#### Fleet Services

2.1 Fleet Services are responsible for the safe and legal management and maintenance of the Council's 1550 item, vehicle, plant and equipment portfolio. Specific functions include:

- Insurance/avoidable damage management and administration.
- Vehicle procurement and disposal.
- Conformance to Operator's Licensing requirements and statutory legislation.
- Preparation of fleet specification and evaluation of tenders for new items.
- Provision of driver/operator assessment / training programmes.
- Fuel management.
- Provision of vehicle and plant hire.
- Taxi/private car hire inspection and MOT testing.
- Pool car provision.

## **Domestic Waste and Street Cleansing Service**

2.2 The Domestic Waste and Street Cleansing Service are primarily responsible for the collection of all household waste in Fife and street cleansing. Other functions include:

- Provision of a bulky uplift service.
- Fly tipping removal.
- Roadside verge cleaning.
- Cleaning of recycling points.

## **Grounds Maintenance Service**

2.3 The Grounds Maintenance Service maintains the greenspace in Fife's parks and open spaces, main activities include:

- Grass cutting.
- Tree maintenance.
- Hedge trimming.
- Floral displays.
- Pond and water course maintenance.
- Grassland management.
- Roundabout maintenance.
- Garden care.

## **Building Services**

2.4 Building Services are the Council's in-house construction contractor, providing all mainstream trade functions required to maintain and develop 30,000 council houses and 1500 public buildings, main functions include:

- 365 day / 24 hour emergency repairs service.
- Public building and housing response repairs service.
- Housing component replacement programme.
- Void / buy back / fire and flood refurbishments.
- New build housing and care village developments.
- Public building planned maintenance programmes.
- Preservation and conservation works.
- Specialist services provision and compliance.

## Budget Breakdown 2023/24

### 2.5 Table 1 – Year End Variances

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	Budget (£)	Actuals (£)	Variance (£)
A20053: GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE	7.096	7.727	0.630
A20056: CORPORATE STORES & MPDS	-0.487	-0.844	-0.357
A20057: BUILDING SERVICES	-11.767	-12.015	-0.248
A20079: FLEET SERVICES	-0.917	-0.443	0.474
A20080: DOMESTIC WASTE AND STREET CLEANING	18.483	20.049	1.566
<b>A15002: ENVIRONMENT &amp; BUILDING SERVICES</b>	<b>12.408</b>	<b>14.474</b>	<b>2.066</b>

### Table 2 – Component Variances

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	Budget (£)	Actuals (£)	Variance (£)
Employee	67.872	67.245	-0.626
Premises	1.796	2.290	0.494
Transport	19.087	22.705	3.618
Supplies & Services	65.519	69.691	4.172
Third Party	0.020	0.040	0.020
Support Services	0.027	0.091	0.064
	<b>154.321</b>	<b>162.062</b>	<b>7.742</b>

2.6 **Grounds Maintenance** - £630k overspend was mainly caused by the successful recruitment of staff to vacant positions and emerging priority maintenance works.

2.7 **Building Services** - £248k over-recovery came from additional works being commissioned by client services.

2.8 **Fleet Services** - £474k overspend can be attributed to the growing repair costs associated with an aging fleet.

2.9 **Domestic Waste and Street Cleansing** - £1.566m overspend was caused by rising fuel costs and expensive repairs to aging refuse collection vehicles.

## Workforce profile 2023/24

### Fleet Services

2.10 Fleet Services have 76 staff, comprising 37 mechanics, 13 apprentices, and 26 back-office support staff and managers.

### Domestic Waste and Street Cleansing Service

2.11 The Domestic Waste and Street Cleansing Service have 385 staff, comprising 196 refuse collection workers, 163 street cleaners and 26 back-office support staff and managers. During the summer months, 62 seasonal workers are employed.

**Grounds Maintenance Service**

2.12 The Grounds Maintenance Service have 197 staff, comprising 170 grounds maintenance operatives, 8 apprentices and 19 back-office support staff and managers. During the summer months, 61 seasonal workers are employed.

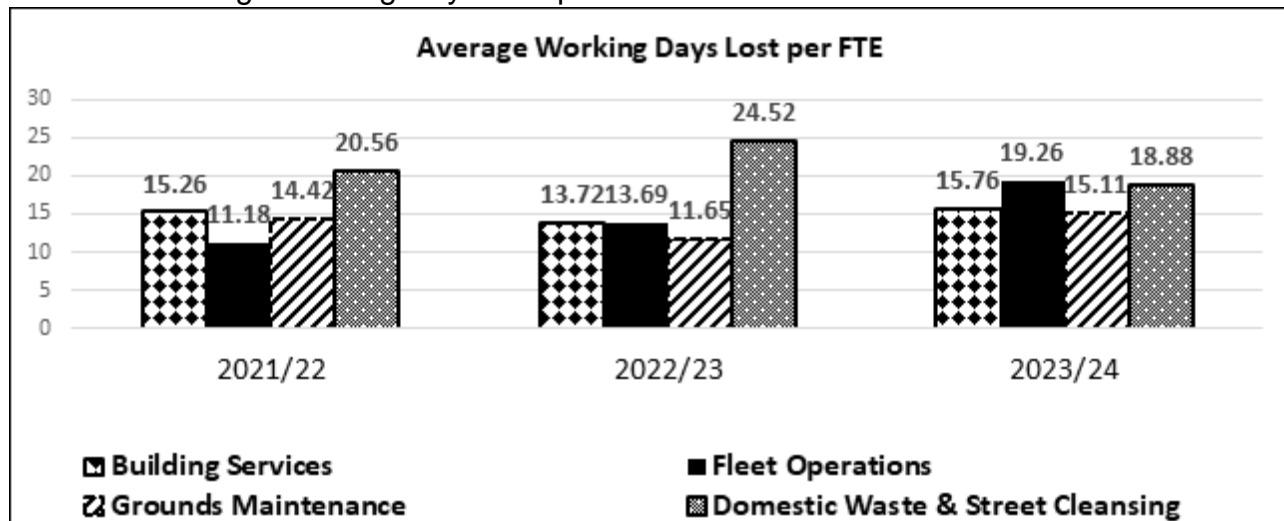
**Building Services**

2.13 Building Services have 844 staff, comprising 533 tradesmen, 110 apprentices and 201 back-office support staff, supervisors and managers.

**Staff Absence**

2.14 Staff absence in all four services is high, and particularly so in the Domestic Waste and Street Cleansing Service. The physical nature of the frontline work in each service means that musculoskeletal injuries are a significant issue despite comprehensive manual handling training programmes. Personal and workplace stress is also a major factor, which is being monitored and analysed through the stress framework policy. The new Attendance Support Unit is also focussing on E&BS in a pilot project to try and reduce absence. It is also hoped that the forthcoming introduction of a single shift pattern for waste collection staff will improve attendance in that group.

Table 2 – Average Working Days Lost per FTE



## 3.0 Priorities and Performance

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### 3.1 Service Priorities 2023/24

The Service had 4 strategic priorities in 2023/24.

1. Support client service delivery through sustainable fleet provision.
2. Maintain a reliable domestic waste collection service.
3. Maintain street cleanliness and greenspace to a good standard.
4. Provide value for money repairs and construction services.

### 3.2 How we delivered

#### 3.2.1

##### Priority 1: Support client service delivery through sustainable fleet provision.

##### What we said

We would:

- Ensure compliance with the Operator's License requirements.
- Support client service delivery through fleet services provision.

##### What we achieved

Fleet Services continued to struggle with the backlog of repairs caused by the retention of older vehicles and shortage of capital investment to maintain the 7-year replacement cycle.

Despite several recruitment campaigns, not all mechanic vacancies were filled. However, new procurement arrangements with external garages did help with maintenance pressures.

Fleet assets reduced by over 100 items which will over time reduce maintenance and repairs costs.

Operator's License performance failed to meet the 100% compliance requirement. The introduction of a compliance officer role within the new management structure will improve performance.

##### How we know

Description	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Target
Total number of fleet items	1,531	1,511	1,499	1,387	-
Compliance with Operators License	97%	99%	97%	96%	100%

## 3.2.2

### Priority 2: Maintain a reliable domestic waste collection service.

#### What we said

We would:

- Maintain a reliable scheduled domestic waste collection service.
- Maintain a reliable free of charge bulky uplift service.

#### What we achieved

Consistent levels of service provision remained a challenge for domestic waste collection in 2023-24. Despite coming out of Covid, staff absence remained high, and a shortage of qualified HGV drivers caused disruption to the service in some areas.

Deployment of new refuse collection vehicles as part of the fleet replacement programme improved the reliability of the fleet and service provision.

The free bulky uplift service performed well since implementation in April 2023 and has managed a fourfold increase in demand in the first 12 months.

#### How we know

Description	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Target
Satisfaction with waste collection	80.77%	80.33%	79.7%	N/A	78%
Total household waste being recycled	43.70%	43.60%	46%	N/A	43.3%
Waste collection cost per house	£46.97	£55	£61.92	N/A	£75.64
Waste disposal cost per house	£85.52	£87.10	£85.11	N/A	£95.28

## 3.2.3

### Priority 3: Maintain street cleanliness and greenspace to a good standard

#### What we said

We would maintain street cleanliness and greenspace to a good standard

#### What we achieved

##### Streets

Street cleaners slowly tackled the legacy backlog of weeds on streets, but resource limitations prevented the delivery of a consistent standard across all areas. However, there was evidence of improvement in many localities.

A new digital asset management system was introduced to enable accurate data recording and more efficient work scheduling and performance management in street cleansing.

The Environmental Training Academy continued to train long term unemployed young people in street cleansing.

The dedicated verge cleaning teams continued to make a material difference to the environment. Their work was highly visible, and feedback has been very positive. Roadside verges and reservations that have never been cleaned, were regularly attended.

The dedicated fly tipping teams continued to ensure that illegally dumped rubbish was lifted at the very earliest to avoid blighting the environment.

Additional cleansing resources were deployed to tourist hotspots to mitigate visitor impacts over the summer months

## Greenspace

The core Service Level Agreement specification was met in most areas. Inclement weather over the late summer months disrupted grass cutting and weed management operations. Limitations in the supply chain for machinery spare parts restricted the deployment of specialist equipment and inhibited performance.

Local teams continued to provide positive support to Elected Members through reactive and ad-hoc work requests enabling delivery of local priorities.

Building on the success of the Housing Estate Improvement work in 22-23, the Grounds Maintenance Service in partnership with the Housing Service resourced a dedicated team delivering a programme of environmental improvement works on Housing owned land.

The employment and retention of seasonal staff remained a challenge during the peak period of grounds maintenance activities. The Service worked with partner agencies such as Rural Skills Scotland and Fife Council's Employability Team to provide work placement opportunities for short term and longer term unemployed.

The Service minimised the use of herbicides as part of an integrated weed management approach. The Service continues to monitor the development of new alternatives to replace the more traditional control measures employed. Dialogue with communities will assist in delivering local plans that consider an appropriate range of weed management criteria and a level of vegetation acceptable within a geographical space.

Grounds maintenance specifications and schedules were shared and discussed with Area Committees as part of the Council's decentralisation agenda. Area Committees and sub-groups are now able to influence works in their communities, recognising the impacts and opportunity costs of resource deployment choices.

## How we know

Description	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Target
Grounds maintenance cost / 1000 pop	£15,070	£18,106	£24,556	N/A	£23,311
Adult satisfaction with parks & open spaces	86.70%	89.70%	87.7%	N/A	87.30%
Cost of street cleaning / 1000 pop	£12,047	£14,554	£17,132	N/A	£16,068
Satisfaction with street cleaning	70.17%	69.33%	66.7%	N/A	58.3%



## Priority 4: Provide value for money repairs and construction services.

### What we said

We would:

- Respond to repairs within category times and fix at first visit
- Deliver a quality standard of workmanship
- Provide value for money on all jobs
- Maintain an excellent apprenticeship training scheme.

### What we achieved

Building Services performed well in 2023/24, delivering high quality flagship projects such as the £17m new build Methilhaven Care Village and the £8m refurbishment of the Adam Smith Centre in Kirkcaldy.

Over 200 public buildings projects were undertaken in 2023/24, with 100 of those started and completed in schools during the summer holiday break.

Over 160,000 housing repairs were delivered, with 98% of them within target response timescales.

Large volume housing component replacement programmes were delivered on time and to budget.

- Kitchens - 551
- Roofs - 175
- Windows & Doors - 357
- Roughcast - 34
- Central Heating - 842
- Rewires - 245
- Bathrooms – 592

Void property refurbishments saw 2,352 houses brought back up to a habitable standard.

The apprenticeship training scheme recruited 28 young people over 6 trades and saw 29 4<sup>th</sup> year apprentices qualify as tradespersons. Regional and national training awards were won by the apprentices and the scheme continues to be recognised by the Association of Public Sector Excellence as one of the best in the UK.

### How we know

Description	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Target
Tenant satisfaction with housing repairs	99.28%	99.70%	99.83%	98.04%	99%
Apprentices becoming tradespersons	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Apprentices recruited annually	29	32	30	28	25

## 4.0 Priorities ahead

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### **Fleet Services**

- 4.1 Insufficient capital investment and the extended vehicle replacement cycle have created a backlog in repairs which has been exacerbated by staff retention and recruitment difficulties with HGV mechanics. Additional investment, a new recruitment policy and private sector garage support arrangements will improve service provision and minimise vehicle downtime impacts for client services.
- 4.2 Decarbonising the fleet and installing alternative fuel infrastructure will be a priority over the next three years and the preparation of a Green Fleet Strategy will be central to plans.
- 4.3 A new and fit for purpose back-office management structure has been introduced to ensure more efficient and effective customer facing service. New roles will provide greater challenge to clients on compliance and fleet hire demand. This will improve safety and reduce costs as fleet volumes drop.

### **Domestic Waste and Street Cleansing**

- 4.4 Absence challenges have seen sporadic failure in domestic waste service provision over recent years, the introduction of a single shift pattern in October 2024 will create stability and improve performance.

### **Grounds Maintenance Service**

- 4.5 The Service is committed to the implementation of a formal process for recording grounds maintenance activity standards in partnership with the Association of Public Service Excellence. The new Land Audit Management System will assist in monitoring and benchmarking service performance both at a local and national level.
- 4.6 A review of back-office management systems has concluded that the current approach is fragmented and does not facilitate the Service's move to a digital platform. Investment in a single host system will provide efficiencies through the digital scheduling of work activity and data capture.
- 4.7 £350k capital investment in grass cutting equipment will provide greater business continuity and increased performance outputs.
- 4.8 A new 'place making' approach to the management of greenspace is being developed. All staff responsible for greenspace across the Council will be working together in a much more coordinated way, and new management structures are being explored.

### **Building Services**

- 4.9 Upskilling of tradespersons and training of apprentices in the installation of renewable energy technologies will be a priority in the next few years. This will ensure future housing investment in energy efficiency measures remains in-house and supports local skills development.
- 4.10 New management structures and operating models to bring the Housing Service and Building Services closer together are being explored. Streamlining processes, removing duplication and maximising efficiency will improve customer experience and reduce costs.

### **Report Contacts**

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