

Planning & Environmental Services Service Report

1. Introduction

This is Planning and Environmental Services service report for April 2009 to March 2010. The service report is a strategic document intended for:

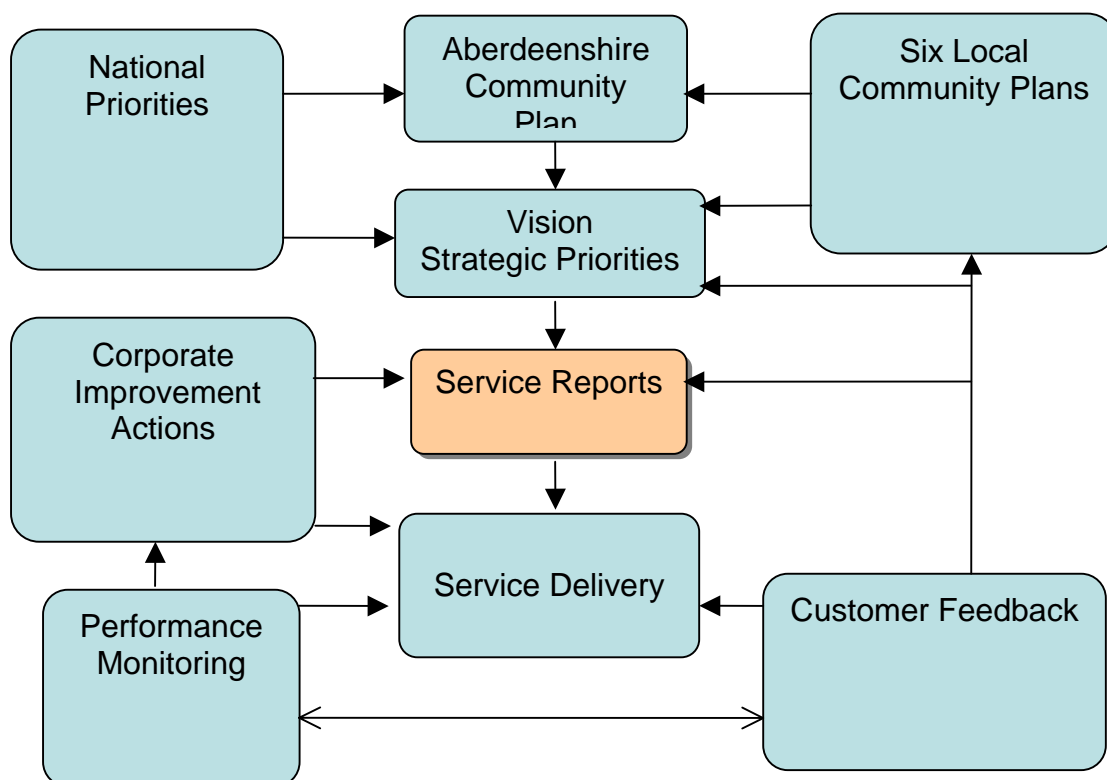
- a. Infrastructure Services Committee
- b. Planning and Environmental Services Management Team
- c. Planning and Environmental Services key stakeholders and partners.

Further information relating to the Planning and Environmental Services Service can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council Website:

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/>

2. Setting the Scene

This report forms part of the strategic plans framework that allows services and the council as a whole to monitor and report on progress towards the achievement of the council's longer term vision and strategy.



The focus of this report is service performance and service level contributions to strategic and corporate plans.

The report includes an overview of service performance during the previous year and a summary of the service's priorities and anticipated challenges for the forthcoming year. The report also includes detailed information on service responsibilities and agreed action to ensure the delivery of the following council plans:

- Strategic Priorities
- Best Value Audit Improvement Plan
- The Employee Survey Improvement Plan
- The Residents Survey Improvement Plan
- Aim Action Plan
- Equalities Action Plans

In most cases the actions listed will form part of longer-term programmes.

In addition the service report includes actions that the service will be undertaking during 2009/10 to contribute to the delivery of the local outcomes contained within the Single Outcome Agreement.

The service report does not include detailed planning and performance information relating to all activity within the service. The service produces a number of other strategic plans, such as the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan and the Strategic Waste Plan which are reported to Committee under separate cover. The service also produces detailed operational plans monitored by the service management team and which are also available to councillors on request.

3. Our Vision, Values and Aims

Planning and Environmental Services' service vision derives from the Council Vision and states the aims of the service:

Planning and Environmental Services - supporting Aberdeenshire Council's vision to be the best area and council by providing high quality local services to residents, communities, businesses and visitors.

Planning and Environmental Services will work to enhance quality of life by:

- *Protecting the health, welfare and safety of people and the environment*
- *Managing Aberdeenshire's unique environment in the interests of current and future generations*
- *Enhancing the economic welfare of the area by supporting fair and legal trading*
- *Encouraging healthy lifestyle options*
- *Managing construction and the use of land*
- *Providing advice, information and support in all our areas of work*

It can be seen from this vision that the work of the Service encompasses a broad range of work in support of the Community Plan themes of Community Wellbeing, Jobs and the Economy, Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Environment.

4. How are we doing?

This section provides a high level statement of service performance during 2008/09. More detailed information relating to service performance can be found in the following documents:

- Audit Scotland Performance Indicators - <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/performance/>
- APSE Performance Network publications, <http://www.apse.org.uk/performance-networks>

- The service performance indicator reports (reported to committee on a 3 monthly basis).
- The Disability/Race/Gender Equalities Schemes action plans
- Revenue budget and capital plan monitoring reports to P&R Committee
- The employee and residents survey reports 2008.

4.1 Achievements in 2008/9

The major achievements of the service during 2008/09 were:

4.1.1 Community Wellbeing

- Our Public Conveniences were awarded six 4 star and nine 3 star Loo of the Year Awards, continuing the long-standing tradition of success in these awards.
- Our Waste Management Service successfully provided 39 settlements across Aberdeenshire with a Village Orderly Service over the summer period. This is a much valued service that is in great demand by villages across Aberdeenshire and once again, high levels of satisfaction were recorded by the settlements with an Orderly.

4.1.2 Jobs and the Economy

- We submitted the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan to the Scottish Government within the agreed timescale, a challenging but successful demonstration of partnership working. This plan is vital to the future coordination of work to maintain and boost the economy of the North East and this is a commendable achievement, which serves as a platform for future development and success.

4.1.3 Lifelong Learning

- The Council Ranger Service provided environmental education to nearly 15,000 adults and schoolchildren in Aberdeenshire. This translates to at least one in four schoolchildren receiving environmental education from the Service over the course of the year. This education is a vital part of our work to protect and preserve the unique environment of Aberdeenshire for present and future generations.

4.1.4 Sustainable Environment

- New household waste and recycling centres were opened in Fraserburgh and Peterhead, addressing increasing demands for recycling facilities and enabling the residents of these towns to work with the Council to achieve recycling targets and thus protect the environment.
- Our required recycling rate was reached, which reflected well on the Council and contributed to our work to protect our environment.
- A new innovative approach to food waste collection was developed and piloted in the Banff area. The approach was well received and achieved national recognition. Work continues to improve and refine this approach to enable us to roll it out in a cost effective and efficient manner.
- 4.1.5 Developing our Partnership
- New business partnerships were developed for the provision of public conveniences in Mintlaw (Happy Plant Garden Centre) and Inch (Bennachie Leisure Centre). At the time of writing another 4 agreements were in the process of being finalised, it is expected that our target of six agreements will be in place by the end of March 2009.

4.1.6 Corporate Improvement

- Best Value Reviews of Building Cleaning and School Catering services were successfully completed.
- Kaizen for Daily Improvement (KDI) pilot was conducted in one of our street cleansing depots, achieving the increased engagement of the staff and a 26% increase in capacity.

4.2 Performance and Improvement

4.2.1 Performance

The Council's performance management framework brings together the activities that contribute to continuous improvement. This report is one element of the framework and links to the Council's Strategic Priorities. The service uses all elements of the framework as follows:

- Performance indicators are reported quarterly to the policy committee and highlight any areas of note.
- Strategic performance indicator data is provided to Audit Scotland and the information is published on their web site to provide comparisons

with other Councils and is reported to Committee annually in appropriate performance reports.

- Internal and external audits are conducted and findings reported to Committees.
- Scrutiny and Audit Committee conduct reviews and ask for reports on various aspects of the service, the most recent being Public Conveniences.
- The Service utilises the full range of Kaizen improvement tools including Kaizen Blitz and 5S. A recent successful pilot of Kaizen for Daily Improvement has been held in the waste section and a full programme of KDI activities is about to be launched, throughout the service.
- Risk management arrangements are in place, including the corporate and service risk registers.
- The Council's EDRS process provides the opportunity for all staff to review their work and training and development needs within a structured framework.
- Strategic and operational actions were identified in the last service plan and a progress update was provided to Committee in March 09.

Additional points of note on performance in relation to specific sections of the service:

- Development Management – Clearly the performance in development management has suffered for a number of reasons and this matter has been the subject of much discussion at Infrastructure Services Committee. 3 new senior planners have been appointed and an improvement plan has been developed to address our performance and culture change requirements in advance of the implementation of all of the elements of the new Planning Act.
- Waste Management – Aberdeenshire Council currently has difficulty in achieving European or Scottish Government targets for reduction in the amounts of waste disposed of to landfill and, although targets were successfully met last year, it seems likely that they will not be achieved in this current year. Steps being taken to address this issue include increased recycle collections, new initiatives in food waste recycling and the development of additional household waste and recycling centres. In the longer term there are plans to contract out disposal of residual waste to the private sector stipulating landfill avoidance and it is estimated that the combined effects of these initiatives will bring us on target in future years, commencing 2013.

- Cleaning Service – Productivity levels in the cleaning service for Aberdeenshire Council do not compare well with the Scottish Council average, mainly due to our widely dispersed premises and the age and nature of many of our buildings, particularly schools. This has been recognised in our Best Value Review and steps are being taken to improve productivity by means of a re-measuring exercise.

4.2.2 Improvement

Points of note on improvements in relation to specific sections of the Service:

- Building Standards and Development Management - The Balanced Scorecard for Building Standards is a formalised improvement/ business plan which is revisited annually. The principles of the Balanced Scorecard are to be exported into the development management function in order to extend the benefits across a wider tranche of the Service.
- Waste Management – A successful first implementation of the Kaizen for Daily Improvement (KDI) technique is currently being conducted in the Central Aberdeenshire Street Cleansing team. Between September 2008 and January 2009, the team identified a 26% increase in their capacity through elimination of non-value added activity – generating 7,400 additional man-hours for the team over a year. KDI is to be rolled out to our other street cleansing teams over the course of this year and it is planned to extend KDI to other parts of the Service once this has been achieved.
- Waste Management – A successful pilot on a new method for collection of food waste was conducted in the Banff area last year. This is now to be incorporated with recycle collections and will boost our recycling levels.
- Catering Service – new food supply contracts arranged through Scotland Excel have delivered cost savings which are driving down the costs of producing school meals.

5. Looking Forward

5.1 Service Priorities

Planning and Environmental Services are working to deliver the Council's Strategic Priorities and the local outcomes contained within the Aberdeenshire Single Outcome Agreement. In addition, following analysis of

external requirements, national and local priorities, service performance and customer feedback, the service has identified a number of high level priorities for 2009/10.

These are:

- Produce and consult on a proposed Local Development Plan by February 2010.
- Achieve improvement in the performance of our Development Management service.
- Implement the requirements of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006.
- Progress work on Trading Standards shared service with Aberdeen City Council.
- Establish an alternative Recycling and Waste Disposal site to replace the Crows Nest Landfill Site.

5.2 Service Challenges

Over the next five years the service will need to confront the following challenges:

- Planning Policy and Environment - Contribute to the production of a new Strategic Development Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire.
- Planning Policy and Environment - Implementing the 2010 Local Development Plan and preparing for its review – i.e. produce master plans, supplementary guidance, action programme etc.
- Waste Management - Improve waste recycling rates sufficient to meet EU and Scottish Government targets.
- Cleaning Service - to establish a further number of partnerships with businesses to increase the number of publicly available toilets.
- Catering Service - to prepare for the introduction of free school meals for primary 1-3 pupils.
- The Service as a whole will work to fully exploit the benefits afforded by the Worksmart programme and the Kaizen for Daily Improvement management technique.

5.3 Service Resources

The Service manages a range of physical assets including licensed waste management facilities and public conveniences and has 2,629 posts, filled by 2,124 individuals. The Service faces some challenges that will impact upon budgets and will require additional resources, these include:

- Catering - The introduction of free school meals for primary 1-3 pupils will put pressure on the schools dining rooms and kitchens and bring additional costs.
- Provision of Public Conveniences (PCs) - Establishing PC business partnerships with local businesses will bring additional costs.
- Development Management and Building Standards - The reduction in income in both development management and building standards is acknowledged as being outwith our control and the extent of the downward turn cannot yet be forecast with accuracy.
- Waste Management – The replacement of Crow's Nest landfill site is the subject of a tender for disposal of waste, which will have significant budgetary implications.
- Recruitment and retention of professionally qualified officers remains a challenge for this service, particularly in the areas of planning, environmental health and trading standards.

Action Plans

This section shows the 2009/10 strategic and corporate actions for which Planning and Environmental Services are accountable during 2009/10. The committee will receive a progress report for the 2009/10 actions in October 2009.

Strategic Priorities

Theme	Sustainable Environment			
Strategic Priority	Service Plan Identifier	Key Action	Senior Responsible Officer	Actions 2009/10
Achieving sustainable development.	SE2.2	Raising awareness of sustainability.	Robert Gray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of Council Climate Change Action Plan and Sustainability Charter 2008/12. • Develop and deliver programmes and individual events linked to environmental education through Ranger Service.
	SE2.4	Manage sustainable development through effective land use planning.	Robert Gray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generation of the first Local Development Plan. • Continuous monitoring of socio-economic environment and the supply of individual research for other services. • Deliver corporate programme of Strategic Environmental Assessments for Council (SEAs).

Protect and Promote the historical environment.	SE3.1	Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's cultural heritage and historical environment.	Robert Gray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and continually updating the Archaeological Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for Aberdeenshire and other clients. • Deliver an agreed rolling programme of works under the Kirkyards Project.
	SE3.2	Seek, where appropriate, to retain and reuse old buildings in Aberdeenshire.	Robert Gray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of sustainable business plan for materials store and relocation to Fyvie Traditional Skills Centre. • Deliver the priorities in our overall strategy for the Built and Historic Environment, including Banff Renaissance and Peterhead Conservation Area Regeneration projects (CARS).
Protect and promote the natural environment.	SE4.1	Manage access to our natural environment.	Robert Gray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Outdoor Access Strategy, through completion of Core Paths Plan and Deeside and Formartine & Buchan Ways.
	SE4.2	Protect and promote biodiversity.	Robert Gray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support implementation of Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act and Scottish Biodiversity Strategy through local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPS).

Managing Waste.	SE5.1	Campaign to reduce the amount of packaging.	Ian Robertson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased public awareness of and participation in waste reduction, refuse and recycling opportunities through Waste Aware campaign. • Correspond with Scottish Government on waste reduction.
	SE5.2	Increase diversion of waste from landfill in order to exceed the Aberdeenshire Strategic Waste Fund target and improve levels of recycling beyond what is agreed.	Ian Robertson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of interim and long term waste strategies and implementation plans. • Waste Aware Campaign for Households. Delivery of Waste Promotions Schedule. • Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRC) Network enhancement. • Introduction of enhanced refuse and recycling service. Ongoing monitoring of kerbside collection and capacity review to include additional households in recycling collections. • Achieve a recycling level to be set in conjunction with the Council Waste Management Working Group.
	SE5.3	Work with businesses to reduce the volume of trade waste disposed to landfill.	Ian Robertson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of trade waste arrangements.

Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement 2009/10

The action plan below only includes local outcomes where service officers are named as the senior responsible officer. Our partners will be responsible for ensuring other local outcomes are achieved. Progress towards the achievement of all the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) local outcomes is reported through the Single Outcome Agreement monitoring report.

National Outcome	<i>1. We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.</i>			
Local Outcome	Relevant Indicator	Senior Responsible Officer	Local Targets & Timescales	Actions 2009/10
Local Outcome 1.4: A pro-development approach to planning with a streamlined, fast and efficient decision-making process.	Local indicator 1.4.1 Percentage of major planning applications determined within 4 months. <i>(Annual/Aberdeenshire Council)</i>	Raymond Reid 24%	Aberdeen City and Shire Environmental Forum (ACSEF) planning “culture change” approach to assist to speeding up planning applications.	80% of major planning applications determined within 4 months.

National Outcome	<i>12. We value and enjoy our natural and built environment and protect and enhance it for future generations.</i>			
Local Outcome	Relevant Indicator	Senior Responsible Officer	Local Targets & Timescales	Actions 2009/10
Local Outcome 12.3: Promotion of Aberdeenshire Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment from the reuse of old buildings.	Local indicator 12.3.1 Banff renaissance and the Peterhead Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) Projects. <i>(frequency varies with project/ Aberdeenshire Council)</i>	Robert Gray New projects.	Projects completed on schedule.	Projects completed and outcomes achieved.

National Outcome	<i>14. We reduce the global and local environment impact of our consumption and production.</i>			
Local Outcome	Relevant Indicator	Senior Responsible Officer	Local Targets & Timescales	Actions 2009/10
Local Outcome 14.1: Waste is managed effectively in accordance with the Waste Hierarchy.	Local Indicator 14.1.1 Tonnage of municipal waste collected. <i>(Annual/Aberdeenshire Council)</i>	Ian Robertson 143,342	Target to 2007/08 153,731	To be confirmed.
	Local Indicator 14.1.2 Tonnage of Biodegradable Municipal Waste landfilled. <i>(Annual/Aberdeenshire Council)</i>	Ian Robertson 110,303	Meet the 54,900 tonnes landfill allowance target by March 2010.	Meet the 54,900 tonnes landfill allowance target by March 2010.
	Local Indicator 14.1.3 Tonnage of municipal waste recycled. <i>(Annual/Aberdeenshire Council)</i>	Ian Robertson 30,568	Year on year increase.	By 2020 more than half of municipal waste will be recycled.

Corporate Outcomes and Actions

The following are actions that are included in corporate action plans (Best Value Audit Improvement Plan, Inspection Action Plans, Employee Surveys Improvement Plan, Resident's Survey Improvement Plan, Aim Action Plan, Equalities Action Plan).

Intended Outcome	Action Required	Senior Responsible Officer	Source Action Plan(s) <i>(The plans in which the action(s) are listed)</i>	Action milestones 2009/10
The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions across Aberdeenshire.	Implementation of Sustainability Charter.	Christine Gore	Aberdeenshire Council Sustainability Charter 2008/12.	Progress actions of Sustainability Charter and measure progress against 2007 baseline figures.
Transformation of workstyles across the Council to facilitate improved efficiency, effectiveness and customer service and improve workforce work-life balance.	Implementation of Workstyle Transformation Programme.	Christine Gore	Project Plan to be completed and agreed during 2009.	Policy & Resources report June 2009 outlining programme over 5 year period 2009/2014.
Improved administrative efficiency and quality of customer services to residents, including electronic service delivery.	Implementation of Customer First Programme.	Christine Gore	Customer First Programme.	Progress National Infrastructure (NI) Programme as part of Scottish Public Sector National Infrastructure Initiative.

Intended Outcome	Action Required	Senior Responsible Officer	Source Action Plan(s) <i>(The plans in which the action(s) are listed)</i>	Action milestones 2009/10
The regime for recycling and refuse collection should be reviewed with the aim of continuing to improve recycling rates.	The Review to ensure that the service model for recycling and refuse collection is appropriate and provides the necessary support to individuals to address their reasonable waste disposal needs and to help them to recycle more.	Waste Manager	Best Value Audit Improvement Plan – Area 3.	By September 2009.