EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

3 October 2024

Report by Director of Business Operations & Partnerships

BUSINESS OPERATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS DEPARTMENT
ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.   The purpose of this report is to update and advise Cabinet of the end-year performance of the Business Operations & Partnerships Department throughout 2023/24.

RECOMMENDATION

2.   Cabinet is asked to note and comment on the content of the report as a summary of the Business Operations & Partnerships Department's performance throughout 2023/24.

BACKGROUND

3.   This report contains data on progress against the department's key performance targets, and updates on the main actions we are taking to contribute to the achievement of the Council's strategic outcomes. Annex 1 gives an overview of the performance of each of the main service areas.

4.   The Business Operations and Partnerships Department, is comprised of the following functions:
- HR & Corporate Services
- ICT & Resilience
- Communities & Transformation
- Revenues, Accounts Payable/Receivable & Business Support
- Community Safety.

5.   Our priorities as a department each reflect our cross-council enabling role:

• **Efficient and effective business operations** – these are common across departments (e.g. ICT, HR/Payroll, payments, customer contact, democratic services) and the goal is to maximise

economies of scale and the use of digital technology to focus on meeting the needs of our customers (both internal and external) in the best way. In terms of staff and budgets, business operations are the most significant part of the department. In January 2024, a new Head of ICT & Resilience and a new Democratic Services Manager started in the department.

• **Council wide digital transformation** – this focuses on 3 digital priority areas: business systems & processes; customer experience and workforce productivity. As a department, we lead these programmes and manage a core group of experts who transfer their skills from project to project as required. We are also responsible for delivering a number of transformation projects in our own services. An update report on digital transformation was considered by Cabinet in September.

• **Effective community, partnership and strategy development** – the focus here is to ensure we take a long-term perspective for East Renfrewshire, which addresses the impact of the pandemic; digital opportunities; the impact of climate change; at a time of financial pressure. Our work on 'Place to Grow', East Renfrewshire's vision for 2040, approved by Council in September, has been complemented by outstanding partnerships with communities and other public sector partners. Community Planning, participatory budgeting, community empowerment as well as robust evaluation of the effectiveness of our work all contribute to ensuring that we are delivering the best possible services for our residents. We advise the Council and the Corporate Management Team and ensure the Council achieves its duties under Best Value. The national Best Value thematic review for 2023/24 was 'workforce innovation' and results were presented to elected members in September.

REPORT

6.   The Business Operations & Partnerships Department's end-year report 2023/24 (Annex 1) sets out a high-level summary of the department's performance, categorised as follows:

- **Outcomes** - these provide an overview of the department's performance, both in the progress towards achieving critical activities contributing to wider outcomes, and in performance indicators.
- **Customers, Efficiency & People** - these focus on key targets aimed at improving the performance and effectiveness of the department.

7.   Further key highlights across each area over 2023/24 include:

Outcomes
- ✓ Significant development work on East Renfrewshire's vision for 2040, 'A Place to Grow'. This signals the most fundamental review of our strategic planning framework in the last 15 years.
- ✓ Participation in Community Learning and Development (CLD) is improving year-on-year, recovering to more than 80% of peak pre-pandemic levels. Since the pandemic the team have had a strong harm-reduction focus on young people, particularly in SIMD 1-4 (bottom

20%) areas where participants and registrations are at an all-time high. In 2022/23 780 young people achieved 1443 accredited awards through CLD. For the 23/24 academic year, which has just ended, the number of young people achieving accredited awards is on-track to increase. The final CLD accreditation figures for 2023/24 will be included as part of mid-year reporting, as awarding bodies are still concluding and confirming assessments.

✓ Community Safety Officers (Wardens) responded to a total of 4,074 (3,342 last year) calls for service. There were 310 (390) noise complaints with 150 (175) of these classified as anti-social behaviour. 13 (17) of these calls, 8.9% (9.7%), were from customers who had previously reported issues with their neighbours. This is a downward trend of 0.8% on repeat calls from last year.

✓ We prepared for a successful, short-notice, General Election in July 2024.

Customers

✓ People signing up for an online 'MyEastRen' account continues to increase with over 22k registered users, an increase of just under 50% from the previous year.

✓ Online registration bookings continue to be popular with customers, with over 97% of registrations appointments now made online, although there was a slight decline in registrations from 2914 to 2821 this year.

✓ 12% of customer contact was face to face (same as last year); with 41% via phone (43%); 16% email (15%) and 31% online (30%).

✓ There was a temporary move of customer services to The Foundry whilst works were undertaken to the Barrhead Service Centre. Staff absence has however been high and this has impacted service delivery. There have been increased enquiries and increased complexity of enquiries this year, mainly due to cost-of-living issues. In addition, there has been an increase in customer frustrations which can be unpleasant for our staff to deal with. Where necessary we continue to apply the Unacceptable Actions Policy, Concern Warning Markers and we also use voice recording to monitor calls.

✓ The average call waiting time was 5 minutes, which was an improvement of 1 minute on last year and 80% of calls were answered first time. The first phase of our new telephony platform (Unified Communications) was successfully completed after technological challenges caused an initial delay.

✓ Our department's Stage 1 complaints were answered in an average of 3.7 days; 14.5 days at Stage 2 an improvement on last year (4.8 and 15.5 respectively).

✓ The Money Advice & Rights Team (MART) supported 6433 residents and staff, with financial gains of £8M. Despite a 39% increase in enquiries (to 6443), the service managed to reach out to 98% of customers within 5 working days and there was a 91% success rate of benefit awarded after income maximisation intervention.

✓ MART continue to deliver training and awareness sessions for Poverty Awareness and dedicated in-school support at 4 primary schools (Thornliebank, Cross Arthurlie, Mearns & Carlibar) achieved £227K in financial gains for parents.

✓ Free under-22 year-old bus travel uptake increased by 19% to 75%.

- ✓ We continue to facilitate high engagement on social media, especially in X and Facebook. The largest increase this year has been in LinkedIn, with followers up 13.5%, - we have been trialing this as a way of boosting recruitment advertising.
- ✓ We were successful in a national bid to the Scottish Government (Digital Academy) and Digital Office to undertake service design training during a child poverty project. This will be the basis of a key data-matching project over the next year.
- ✓ There was substantial work to develop staff and community equalities networks; work with the Deaf community on BSL videos and to deliver Equality, Fairness & Rights Impact Assessment (EFRIA) training.
- ✓ Education Scotland conducted a 3-day progress inspection of Community Learning & Development (CLD) in October 2023. It looked at how youth work, adult learning and community capacity building/development services are being delivered by the Council and partners to benefit local people and communities and included work with vulnerable young people, adult learners, refugees, and support for local community-led groups. The CLD service received the highest ratings and inspectors praised leadership at all levels, partnership working, planning, person-centred approaches, progression pathways, strategic focus and ambition, use of data, performance monitoring, and embedding of self-evaluation. They noted the high quality universal and targeted services which had, for some local people, proven to be "life changing" and highlighted two areas of highly effective practice to share nationally: the partnership between CLD youth work staff and Barrhead High School, and the Council's partnership with the Linking Communities group to oversee the grant-making Participatory Budgeting process.
- ✓ There was positive feedback from grant-making Participatory Budgeting events, with new areas of Busby, Eaglesham and Mearns Village covered.
- ✓ There has been positive impact of prolonged partnership work around antisocial behaviour, including CLD funding 2 Firereach courses.
- ✓ The number of Telecare clients has consistently approximated 3000 (currently 2,673)(2,627). The total number of calls handled in 23/24 was 177,521 (173,221). There were 151 (160) calls passed to Scottish Fire & Rescue Services (SFRS) from a total of 2585 (2498) fire/smoke alarm activations; therefore staff helped avoid false alarm call outs on 94% (93%) of these types of call, resulting in cost avoidance to SFRS of around £418k (£401k).

Efficiencies
- ✓ A number of key projects are underway in ICT including a fundamental infrastructure review, following 2 significant outages earlier in 2024 – a separate report is on today's agenda.
- ✓ We are building out our cloud-presence to open up future strategic technology opportunities.
- ✓ The Council successfully achieved its Public Services Network (PSN) accreditation, which is needed to ensure continued access to sensitive national datasets (e.g. DWP).
- ✓ There was a successful roll-out of CityFibre across East Renfrewshire, with ongoing discussions with suppliers and the Scottish Government about key residential areas. Work is also underway to connect council buildings to the fibre network.

- ✓ Discussions have commenced with BT over potential migration of our Scotland's Wide Area Network (SWAN1) to SWAN2. This will be a significant piece of work over the next year.
- ✓ We delivered the ICT element of the new Neilston Campus and Barrhead office refurbishment.
- ✓ There has been substantial progress on developing strategic and management insights including live data dashboards for managers on topics such as cost of living; complaints; FOIs; and invoice payments.
- ✓ Customer Services continued to deliver services whilst achieving a planned budget saving of 5FTE.
- ✓ There was good performance across the range of indicators in Revenues & Benefits, including Council Tax Reduction processing times improving from 11 days to 3.9 days (Change of Circumstance) and from 35.2 days to 26.8 days (New Claims). Council Tax recovery remained strong at 97.5% received by year-end, with £4.2M of additional cash collected compared with last year. Council-wide (and BO&P) invoice payments within 30 days were 89.5% (compared with 89.3% council-wide and 89.1% BO&P last year).
- ✓ Housing Benefit new claims were impacted by the introduction of the new Housing system, reducing from 20.8 days to 36.4 days.
- ✓ Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grant applications increased slightly (1409 to 1418), with 99.39% of decisions undertaken within 1 working day. There was a reduction in Community Care grants from 706 to 604.
- ✓ 2211 clothing grants were issued (2213 last year) and drop-in sessions delivered improved customer experience and earlier payment.
- ✓ Following a service review, a Community Safety Officer (Wardens) new structure was implemented resulting in a reduction of overtime by 75%.
- ✓ Phase 2 of the Analogue to Digital Telecare (A2D) programme, which is the roll out of digital devices to clients' homes, was at 75% complete at year-end. The rollout was awarded national 'Gold One' status, one of the first in the country and we expect to apply for 'Platinum' status later this year.
- ✓ There have been challenges with the Community Safety budget due to combined use of overtime and agency staffing due to long term sickness and absence and the need to cover overnight shift patterns. A service review of the Control Room is currently underway.

People
- ✓ Our HR team supported all organisational change including VR/VER processes across the council - Education, HSCP and BO&P.
- ✓ There were 587 jobs advertised on MyJobScotland (558 last year) and 2699 contracts produced including full, variation and extensions (2837).
- ✓ There was a slight reduction in the overall absence PI for the Council (11 days per FTE compared with 11.15 last year). Absence in Business Operations & Partnerships was 9.22 days per FTE compared with 11.13 the previous year
- ✓ Occupational Health referrals were up (747 vs 715 last year) and contracts for Occupational Health and Employee Assistance were completed.

- ✓ E-learning is up on last year (2042 employees accessed courses compared to 1686) and course content is being systematically reviewed.
- ✓ Complex HR case matters have been resource intensive across the year and it has been challenging to attract HR professionals to both permanent and temporary positions, with jobs being advertised multiple times across the year.
- ✓ We agreed a Fair Work Statement with our trade union partners and a Real Living Wage exemption was approved by Scottish Government meaning that grant applications can be approved until March 2025.
- ✓ Good progress has been made with the Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) staff network, which meets 4 times a year and now has over 50 members.
- ✓ There have been several reports to Corporate Management Team across the year to keep HR policies and procedures up to date, including payroll overpayments, changes to holiday pay and leave policies and a review of the sickness policy.
- ✓ Organisational Development resource has been focused on leadership development, manager upskilling and the priorities of our new People Strategy.
- ✓ New live data dashboards have been implemented for sickness absence and highlighted by external auditors in their Best Value work as an example of good practice.
- ✓ The HR/Payroll system (iTrent) was developed to cover annual and flexi leave allowing us to rationalise systems and streamline processes.
- ✓ Senior HR staff facilitated a number of Chief Officer recruitments across the year.
- ✓ Our teams delivered the employee health and wellbeing survey and the We Are East Ren staff awards.
- ✓ A new external partnership is bringing learning and development opportunities for our ICT and digital teams.
- ✓ We supported two graduate apprenticeships in the Business Operations & Partnerships Department.

PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

8.   Key priorities for the year ahead (2024/25) include:

- Launching 'A Place to Grow', including preparations for a community conference in Spring 2025.
- Reviewing Community Planning Partnership structures to support leadership, governance and performance of 'Place to Grow' and key strategic priorities including child poverty.
- Developing a new delivery plan to replace the Outcome Delivery Plan from April 2025.
- Implementing the People Strategy action plan including a review of Leadership Development, including supporting leadership sessions.
- Reviewing and implementing key strategies including the CLD 3-year statutory Plan; a new Digital Strategy and implementing the Customer and Communications strategies.
- Preparing budgets & Capital requirements for 2025/26, including preparing budget engagement and communications.

- Supporting further organisational change activity to achieve budget savings across the Council & HSCP.
- Restructuring of our own services to deliver savings and meet business requirements: incl. Revenues & Benefits; Community Safety; ICT & Transformation structures and Licensing (which is temporarily with the BO&P Department following the departure earlier this year of the Chief Executive's Business Manager).
- Developing options and costings for ICT infrastructure and the shift to cloud-hosting incl. Education tenancy and Scotland's Wide Area Network (SWAN) 2.
- Continuing work to digitise and modernise our services, including the next phase of Unified Communications (telephony); supporting the new licensing system; developing Benefits Online and developing new business intelligence, data matching, automation and artificial intelligence capabilities and projects.
- Working closely with the Corporate Management Team to develop shared ambition on community capacity building, including Community Wealth Building; participatory budgeting; local action planning; and LDP3. There will also be a need to engage and upskill employees in these areas.
- Ensuring delivery of Best Value, including progressing our equalities commitments and networks and working with external auditors on the national BV theme for the year ahead, i.e. transformation.
- Reviewing workload and priorities with our departmental managers. The need to balance drive and ambition with employee workload and wellbeing came through strongly in our employee survey results, especially on the back of successive years of budget cuts.

FINANCE & EFFICIENCY

9.   There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

10.   Whilst this report focuses specifically on the Business Operations & Partnership Department's contribution to the delivery of the ODP, it is recognised that ongoing strong performance is only achieved through the excellent, well-established partnership working across the Council and with its external partners.

CONCLUSION

11.   This report summarises the performance of the Business Operations and Partnerships Department 2023/24. Whilst focusing primarily on the department's contribution to the Outcome Delivery Plan, the report demonstrates the wide-ranging work being undertaken across the department to deliver efficient and effective business processes; council-wide digital

transformation and effective community, partnership and strategy development. It also sets out a high level overview of the department's key priorities for the year ahead.

RECOMMENDATION

12.   Cabinet is asked to note and comment on the content of the report as a summary of the Business Operations & Partnerships Department's performance throughout 2023/24.

Director of Business Operations & Partnerships
September 2024

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Annex 1: End Year Performance Report 2023/24

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- A Place to Grow Strategic Vision & Community Plan, Council 11 September 2024
- Strategic End Year Performance Report & Annual Community Planning and Fairer East Ren Report for 2023/24, Council 11 September 2024
- Local Child Poverty Action Report: Year 6, Council 11 September 2024
- Update on the Digital Transformation Programme, Cabinet 5 September 2024
- Convenor's Update to Council (CLD Progress Inspection), December 2023
- Business Operations & Partnerships Department, End Year Performance Report 2022/23, Cabinet 7 September 2023.

Business Operations and Partnerships Department Plan End-Year 2023-24

East Renfrewshire COUNCIL

Description
The Business Operations and Partnerships Department delivers a dual role – we lead on a wide range of corporate initiatives such as the Digital Transformation Programme and organisational development. We also provide a range of frontline and support services. Our Vision As we work towards achieving our vision of "a modern ambitious council, creating a fairer future with all", our Department will play a key leadership role for the Council. Our work to develop the organisation and to lead and support change will be pivotal to the successful achievement of our vision. We will balance our different roles delivering front line, support and corporate services as well as facilitating the changes that need to take place across the whole organisation. Business Operations and Partnerships will use the 3 capabilities to develop our Department and ensure that all our services are embarking on an ambitious journey of change so that they remain relevant, responsive and efficient meeting the needs of customers both internal and external. In times of reducing public resources, this journey is more important than ever to ensure the sustainability of these services into the future. Below are the key strategic indicators and activities that we are working to deliver, including our contribution to the ODP and Community Plan and departmental level indicators.

PI Status of last available data:	
🔴	Off target
⚠️	Target still to be achieved
✅	On Target
📈	For monitoring/ only

Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP)

1. ODP Critical Indicators

1 Intermediate outcome 2.3

PI Description	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2023/24 Value	2024/25 Target	Status	Notes and benchmark
Number of awards achieved by young people participating in school and community based targeted programmes (e.g. Youth Achievement Awards, ASDAN and Duke of Edinburgh)	473	1443	1468	1500	✅	Awards figures are reported on the academic year 1 Aug – 31 July. 2023/24 Figure is preliminary. Final 23/24 accreditation figures will be included as part of mid-year reporting as awarding bodies are still concluding and confirming assessments.

Intermediate outcome 4.2

PI Description	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2023/24 Value	2023/24 Target	Status	Notes and benchmark
% of total complaints reporting anti-social behaviour which has recurred	10.4%	9.7%	8.9%	8%	⚠️	There was a reduction of 0.8% in proportion of recurring complaints compared to last year, however missing 8% aim to minimise target

Intermediate outcome 4.4

PI Description	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2023/24 Value	2023/24 Target	Status	Notes and benchmark
% of respondents who agree/strongly agree that they feel a strong sense of belonging to their local community	49%	53%	59%	54%	✅	23/24 Target met. Respondents' perception of having a strong sense of belonging has increased since last year and is above target level.

Customer

PI Description	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2023/24 Value	2023/24 Target	Status	Notes and benchmark
% of customer contact made online (excluding payments)	34%	30%	31%	30%	✅	23/24 update Target met, although there was a decrease of 5852 in the overall total of customer online contacts (58,185). This figure was impacted by timing of annual garden waste renewal.
Citizens' panel - percentage of adults satisfied with council services	67%	63%	65%	65%	✅	End year 2023/4 Overall satisfaction with Council services has improved and has reached the target set.

People (ODP indicators)

PI Description	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2023/24 Value	2023/24 Target	Status	Notes and benchmark
Sickness absence per days per employee (not	8.86	11.15	11.0	No target set	📈	Target not set for 2023/24. There has been a slight reduction in absence levels

PI Description	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2023/24 Value	2023/24 Target	Status	Notes and benchmark
including teachers– Council)						from last year. There continues to be a focus on this area with employee support, management training and ongoing policy review. The top absence reasons continue to be stress (non work related), musculoskeletal except back pain and influenza colds.
Gender pay gap	5.1	4.6	4.8	n/a		There has been a small increase of 0.2% in the gender pay gap for 2023/24 from last year. The council will continue to monitor performance in this area.

2. ODP Critical Activities

1 Intermediate outcome 4.2

Activity	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
Enhancing partnerships and improving use of data-sharing with police and other key partners (including through GRIP) to support operational and renewal planning	100%	31-Mar-2024	Weekly Monday 'GRIP' and Thursday 'Weekend Youth Action Plan' meetings took place throughout the year and focus on intelligence led tasking of resources by partners. These forums also allow the disclosure of information to the Council to assist in dealing with relevant issues.
Developing a wider range of opportunities for residents to communicate with community safety partners including digital	100%	31-Mar-2024	2023/24 End year update A new online process for Firework Control Zones went live in April 2024.
Providing community-based youth work across East Renfrewshire which is informed by local data and meets the needs of young people	100%	31-Mar-2024	By April 2024 300 young people from across East Renfrewshire took part in community-based activities led by Community Learning and Development during this period. This has risen to 425 as at Sept 2024.
Delivering targeted youth work programmes including problem solving detached youth work which responds to and engages young people and helps address anti-social and risk taking behaviours	100%	31-Mar-2024	91 young people have participated in targeted youth work programmes which focussed on risk-taking behaviour. This has helped reduce ASB in Barrhead, however risks remain and work is ongoing. We have provided an ongoing programme of street work in 4 areas, making 2619 contacts with young people during this time. This also includes weekend detached youth work provision.

2 Intermediate outcome 4.4

Activity	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
Working with partners to provide support to new and existing networks	100%	31-Mar-2024	The Digital Inclusion Partnership whose members include the HSCP Barrhead Housing Association, West College Scotland, RAMH (Recovery Across Mental Health) and East Renfrewshire Citizen's

Activity	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
			Advice Bureau, continues to evolve with a focus on digital inclusion. The Cost-of-Living working group continues to meet, albeit less frequently. A steering group was convened over winter to ensure the most efficient allocation of Covid Reserves allocation which included VAER, BHA, CAB and the Police and Fire services. We have worked with partners across the HSCP, Fire Service and Trust and members of the deaf community our BSL plan with shared commitments and have facilitated development of an Equality Forum for East Renfrewshire of partners.
Supporting community groups and organisations to provide services in their local community in response to local needs.	100%	31-Mar-2024	Community Learning and Development supported 23 community organisations on a range of topics to develop their skills and capacity, this includes support with, funding applications, governance and volunteers.
Supporting communities and groups to engage in community led decision making processes e.g. Participatory Budgeting	100%	31-Mar-2024	127 local groups and projects benefited from over £184k of grant-making PB. Busby, Eaglesham and Newton Mearns had local PB for the first time. £20k went to green activities and £14k was decided exclusively by young people. Almost 2900 residents voted. We will work with the groups to evaluate the impact of the funding. 10 community events have taken place to develop and support a community-led equality forum.
Establishing structures to ensure local people are involved in the locality planning process, Vision for the Future and local action plans.	100%	31-Mar-2024	CLD have held 8 community events in Locality Planning areas to identify local priorities with residents. ADD2Barrhead: (Auchenback, Dunterlie & Dovecothall) Work is underway to bring together communities and partner organisations together to identify and address priorities. Thornliebank Together have had support to undertake a survey for Locality Planning. Neilston has a steering group of 19 people developing ideas and actions around their local priorities – • Accessible leisure for health & wellbeing; • Community pride in the built-up; • natural environment; and • Life-long learning, skills & rights.
Providing training and support for council and partner staff to enable them to work effectively in partnership with communities	100%	31-Mar-2024	We delivered 8 sessions to council and partner staff on a range of topics including community engagement, PB and Locality Planning. In total, across all these sessions 35 representatives, council teams and partner organisations have participated. Further training for ERC employees is taking place in 2024/25.

3 Customer

Activity	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
Adopting user research methods and strengthening data reporting and analysis to help design services	90%	31-Mar-2024	The council's Service Design Network continues to promote and support service design and user research methods by sharing resources, good practice and customer feedback for service improvement. Our Service Designer has been helping improve our processes for licensing, missed bins, birth and marriage registrations and moving some benefits services to the online customer portal. New reports and dashboards have been developed to support quicker insights and performance improvements in areas such as invoices payments, FOIs, complaints, compulsory staff training and supporting service improvement actions. The council was successful in a bid for external service design expertise and mentoring in January to better understand families living in, or at risk of, poverty; using service design approaches to solve data challenges. This ran until May and the team are applying the learning to poverty related data challenges.
Embedding the Equality, Fairness and Children's Rights Impact Assessment to demonstrate our commitment to making equalities core to the delivery of our functions	100%	31-Mar-2024	Equality, Fairness and Rights Impact Assessments (EFRIAs) are routinely undertaken when making key decisions or policy changes. Training continues to be delivered to officers to ensure EFRIAs are completed to a high quality. Between April 2023 and March 2024, 24 staff and 11 Elected Members attended training. Additionally, EFRIA guidance has been produced and published to provide further support to officers when undertaking an EFRIA
Developing and improving My East Ren and online services for customers, introducing new functionality to include online appointments	100%	31-Mar-2024	This work is ongoing with the 23/24 activities complete. My East Ren sign ups continue to increase with over 22k registered users, an increase of just under 50% from the previous year, widening access to a range of online services such as Council Tax, Benefits, and ParentsPortal. Online Appointments continue to be popular with over 97% of registration appointments being made online. Housing have introduced online rent accounts, we will continue to work with the service to increase the uptake of myaccount, whilst supporting customers to sign up for council tax online.
Promoting online customer services to support channel shift and reduce face to face contact levels	55%	31-Mar-2024	Continuing to support customers' to access online services, promoting council tax online and housing (rents).
Refreshing and updating our customer strategy	100%	31-Mar-2024	Completed. Implementing the customer strategy is aiming to drive the channel shift required to make it easy for the customer to access, improve our online offering, improve the back-end processes and realise quantifiable benefits for customers and the council.
Introducing a unified communication platform to improve customer experience contacting the council and improved ways of working for staff	100%	31-Mar-2024	Unified Communication platform went live in December 2023 with the first phase including telephony and e-mails. We continue to work with ICT and partners to develop our backlog and plan future phases.

4 Efficiency

Activity	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
Sourcing and providing best value, secure and reliable technology and user centric ICT services	100%	31-Mar-2024	Latest customer survey shows 82.1% scored their satisfaction with their ICT support experience as excellent with a further 10% rating their experience as good. Fresh Service provides comprehensive reporting on all aspects of ICT service management and the project also delivered new standards for customer communications, refined SLA documentation and developed an ICT Customer charter. ERC's use of the Fresh Service platform will be continually reviewed and developed to ensure that ERC takes advantage of new functionality available in the product suite. New ICT satisfaction surveys have been completed by schools and Council managers.
Delivering benefits and business change through digital transformation with a particular focus on customer experience, business systems and processes and workforce productivity	100%	31-Mar-2024	Our recent Cabinet report reflected the broad range of projects within the Transformation programme. Significant work has been developed to improve benefits capture and tracking, project prioritisation, and capacity planning. We are using the newly developed capacity tool in the Digital Transformation section alongside our Project Prioritisation matrix to help manage key shared Council resources.
Embedding Council's approach to managing the Council's programmes of change, including project prioritisation, resources and benefits realisation to manage capacity	100%	31-Mar-2024	This work is ongoing with the 23/24 activities complete. We are continuing to manage the Digital Transformation Programme through our Boards and regular updates to the Corporate Management team. Our project prioritisation matrix lets Boards and Departments ensure projects are scored and implemented based on need to do as well as ensuring benefits are gained.
Embedding a culture of good information stewardship and management	100%	31-Mar-2024	This work is ongoing with the 23/24 activities complete. Employees and services continue to engage positively with data and information management. Annual mandatory data protection training has been introduced, which 1624 employees have completed. A new dashboard helps monitor uptake. Additional training is offered via the corporate training calendar and for specific roles, including elected members. Subject access response timescales has improved from 72% to 87%.
Developing data governance, technical infrastructure and data solutions to improve business processes and customer outcomes	100%	31-Mar-2024	The M365 project has developed sensitivity labelling for M365 content and is working on retention and sharing control.

5 People

Activity	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
Using employee feedback to focus on positive health and wellbeing for our employees and continue to develop our health and wellbeing action plan.	100%	31-Mar-2024	Funding for a council wide Wellbeing Officer was approved for a further 2 years to allow further work on Health and Wellbeing to be undertaken. A Health and Wellbeing Plan has been developed for Council (excluding HSCP). Wellbeing staff survey results are currently being analysed and an action plan will be identified.
Promoting our capabilities and values with regular communication and engagement to break down barriers and promote collaborative working across the workforce.	85%	31-Mar-2024	Values week communications sent out throughout the week 18th September 2023. Communications included wellness sessions staff could attend to support the value of 'Kindness', Climate change action webinars to support 'Ambition', and a charity cooking fundraising activity for our corporate charity 'Doing it for Daniel' which supported 'Kindness'. For our value of 'Trust' we organised financial education webinars about helping money go further and awareness sessions on saving energy and water in the home. We are East Ren awards took place in December 2023.
Encouraging workforce planning to drive forward skills and leadership development, recruitment and retention to ensure the organisation has the right people with the right skills	90%	31-Mar-2024	Workforce planning guidance was developed and included in the service improvement planning guidance. A new workforce planning dashboard was developed and gives an oversight of key people metrics. A new People Strategy was completed which includes specific tasks to address skills and leadership development. Some leadership training has been undertaken with grades 18 and above, with a second session for grades 16 & 17. A review of the recruitment procedures is underway, which will include a new competency interview framework. There will be a closer focus on leadership development, which ties in with the people strategy and action plan in 24/25. Recruitment will continue to be a focus in the coming year**.** Work with external auditors on the national Best Value theme of workforce innovation was completed and reported to Members in September 2024.
Empowering the Staff Equality Network to shape and influence Council policy	100%	31-Mar-2024	This work is ongoing with 2023/24 activities complete. The forum has met 4 times in 23/24 covering themes such as allyship, Black History Month and understanding intersectionality. Though we have 50 members signed up attendance has varied. Additional work required to ensure membership reflects a more diverse representation and a recent survey of members was carried out to look at areas for development.
Promoting equality and diversity of our workforce in line with our equality and human rights commitments	100%	31-Mar-2024	This work is ongoing with 2023/24 activities complete. HR team continue to work with the Strategic Services team to review training and equality networks. HR are part of the Society of Personnel and Development Scotland's equality group so have taken forward best practice in terms of equality reporting which will be used in the mainstreaming report next year.
Supporting service users in service design and organisational changes	100%	31-Mar-2024	This work is ongoing with 2023/24 activities complete. We continue to use the Scottish Approach to Service Design principles when designing or changing services. This helps us understand customer (including our employees) needs. Our service designer has been working with various services in implementing the Scottish Approach to Service Design in the redesign of customer processes. The service design principles have been used in a number of services including education application for 0 - 3, missed bins and bin

Activity	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
			replacement, births and marriage registration appointments and in some of our licensing processes. These projects have involved customers at every step by asking customers what they want before any designs takes place, going back to them with prototypes, asking for feedback on wording and layouts, showing customers the finished 'product' and continually seeking feedback once the product has gone live. We have aimed to involve a range of users to ensure designs are inclusive and accessible. HR team also continue to support the organisational changes required across the Council, including a number of voluntary redundancy/early release exercises and service redesigns across the Council (e.g. Customer First, Communications and Revenues in the BOP department. Then within the HSCP VR/ER was opened up to all Council-employed staff, excluding front line Care at Home, Telecare and Bonnyton staff. Further engagement also took place on service improvement planning to support better services.
Implementing training to strengthen people management skills for managers to lead a flexible workforce that has the resilience to adapt to the organisation of the future.	40%	31-Mar-2024	Videos are being developed to support employees and managers to undertake HR Systems related systems processes, and people related processes. The appointment of a new OD Partner means there will be more focus on this and they will manage this ongoing project working with managers and other HR colleagues

Department Management Information

Customer – Complaints monitoring (data as at 29 April 2024)

PI Description	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2023/24 Value	2023/24 Target	Status	Notes and benchmark
The average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage one BOP)	4.1	4.8	3.7	5	✅	Target met
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at investigation (stage 2 and esc combined)	18.6	15.5	14.5	20	✅	Target met

Efficiency -

PI Description	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2023/24 Value	2023/24 Target	Status	Notes and benchmark
Payment of invoices: Percentage invoices paid within agreed period (30 days) – BO&P.	95.1%	89.1%	89.5%	90%	✅	Target met. 0.4% increase on last year's payment levels.

People

PI Description	2022/23 Value	2023/24 Value	2023/24 Target	Status	Notes and benchmark
Sickness absence days per employee – Business Operations and partnerships (Full Department)	11.13	9.22	n/a		No departmental absence targets were set for 2023/24. Targets have been set for 2024/45 onwards. BOP 2024/25 target is 8.8 days.