



From mountain to sea

Building Standards Verification Service Annual Performance Report 2023-2024

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Performance Report Review Log

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1.0 Introduction

The verification performance report is a strategic planning and management tool that provides information about the local authority building standards service, communicates the vision and strategy, and sets out performance against strategy goals and targets.

Building standards verifiers in Scotland are required to utilise the performance report to manage, monitor, review and develop strategies for their business, and should focus on the performance framework's core perspectives and cross-cutting themes.

1.1 Aberdeenshire – economic, geographical and population statistics

Aberdeenshire is a diverse and vibrant region in the North East of Scotland with a strong sense of identity. It is a predominantly rural area in North East Scotland, traditionally economically dependent upon the primary sectors (Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing) and related processing industries. It covers 6,313 km² (2,437 m²), or 8% of Scotland's overall territory, and includes the Cairngorm mountains, rich agricultural lowlands and varied coastal landscapes.



In 2021 Aberdeenshire’s population was estimated to be 262,690, approximately 5% of Scotland’s total population of 5.53 million. There has been a net increase in Aberdeenshire of 4% from 2011-2021. The fifth highest increase amongst Scotland’s 32 local authorities and considerably more than the national average of 4.9%. Migration accounted for approximately half of the population growth during this period.

Economic benefits from the oil and gas industry over the last 40 years have become increasingly challenged over the last decade. The focus in the industry has moved towards decarbonisation and investment in the Energy Transition which has provided an initial boost to the post COVID19 recovery.

However, a rapidly emerging situation in Ukraine has exacerbated underlying energy supply constraints in North West Europe, with gas supplies in particular being challenged. Efforts to bolster domestic production are now likely to drive additional activity in the industry, with an associated short-term boost to oil and gas, alongside new renewables projects. However, this must be offset with caution regarding macro-economic drivers and the potential for a global downturn.

It is difficult to predict what impact this will have on planning and construction activity, however it is foreseeable that there will be short term economic impacts driven by the pressure to increase domestic oil and gas production. Further changes will be required in domestic, commercial, and other building stock as regulations change and new technologies mature. Decarbonisation is likely to become a key factor in future work and activity.

1.2 Aberdeenshire – organisational structure

Aberdeenshire Council spends over £500m each year on services and has in excess of 11,000 employees. The Council’s spending per head of population is amongst the lowest in Scotland, and 11.2% below the Scottish average.

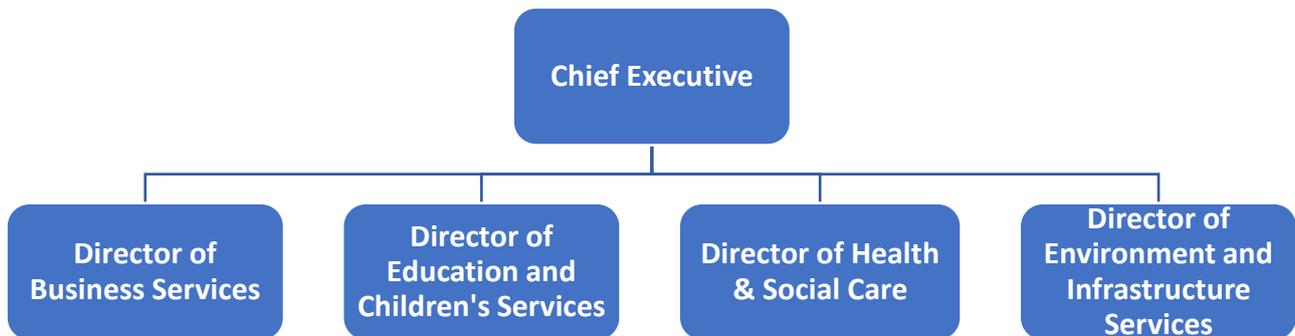


Figure 1 – Illustrates the senior leadership team for Aberdeenshire Council

1.3 Aberdeenshire Council’s Building Standards Service

Aberdeenshire Council’s Building Standards service is located within Environment and Infrastructure Services. Environment and Infrastructure Services deliver a wide range of inter-related functions, within a remit that covers economy, land use, environment and transportation. These Services must be delivered within the context of wider social and economic and environmental objectives. The functions that form part of Environment and Infrastructure Services are as follows:

- Economic Development
- Housing & **Building Standards**
- Planning & Economy
- Property & Facilities Management, and Waste Management
- Roads
- Landscape Services
- Transportation
- Support Services

The Building Standards Service is responsible for the development and implementation of the Building Standards Regulations and associated procedures within Aberdeenshire; carrying out of enforcement procedures within the Building (Scotland) Act; management of the operation of systems in support of Building Warrant compliance applications, notices and orders; provision of advice and guidance on the operation of Building Regulations; advising on and promoting issues in relation to disabled access; management of the Building Standards input to the licensing of buildings or land within Aberdeenshire; and management of the Property Enquiries Unit.

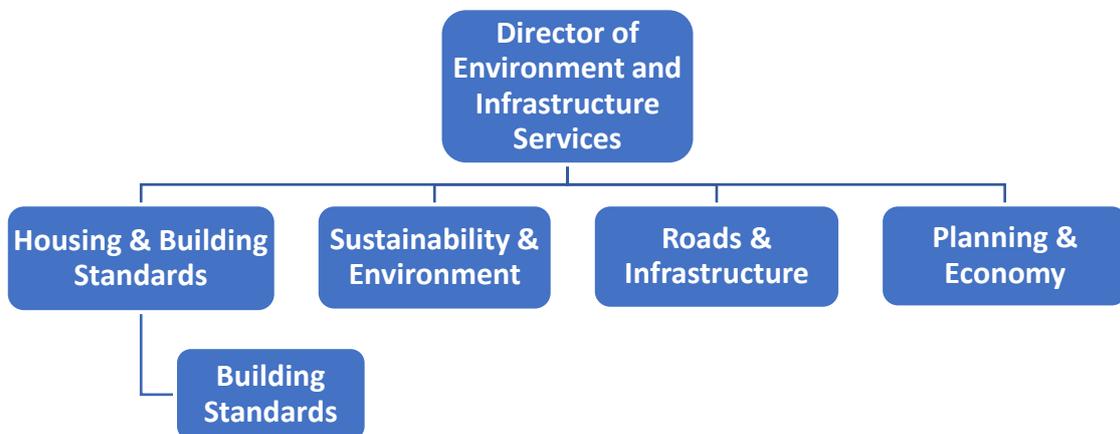


Figure 2 illustrates the organisational chart for key reporting relationships within Environment and Infrastructure Services.



2.0 Building Standards Verification Service Information

2.1 Public Interest Statement

The purpose of the building standards system is to protect the public interest. The system sets out the essential standards that are required to be met when building work or conversion of a building takes place in order to meet building regulations.

The building standards system checks that proposed building work or conversion of a building meets standards; inspections are carried out to ensure that legislation is adhered to. The control of work on site is not down to the system but is a matter for contracts and arrangements in place between a builder and client.

Verifiers, appointed by Scottish Ministers are responsible for the independent checking of applications for building warrants to construct or demolish buildings, to provide services, fittings or equipment in buildings, or for conversions.

2.2 Location and Accessibility of Service

The Building Standards Service is delivered at present via Aberdeenshire Council's Area Focus Policy to the public from the following administrative areas detailed in table 1. Note that during the Covid-19 pandemic all area offices have remained closed to the public with services operating online or virtually:

Table 1: Building Standards administrative areas

Building Standards administrative areas	
Kincardine & Mearns	Marr
Garioch	Formartine
Banff & Buchan	Buchan

The area focus policy allows decentralisation of decision making, provides more local perspective and delivery of services. It also allows better customer engagement with Aberdeenshire's communities.

The six different areas of Aberdeenshire Council vary greatly in population density, industry and social economic issues. Aberdeenshire Council Building Standards delivers its service to these very different and diverse areas via our 6 area-based offices:

Aboyne: Bellwood Road, Aboyne, AB34 5HQ

Banff: Town House, Low Street, Banff, AB45 1AY

Ellon: 45 Bridge Street, Ellon, AB41 9AA

Inverurie: Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie, AB51 3WA

Peterhead: Buchan House, St Peter Street, Peterhead, AB42 1QF

Stonehaven: Viewmount, Arduthie Road, Stonehaven, AB39 2DQ

With the relaxation of Covid 19 restrictions Council offices are currently working in a hybrid format. Meeting face to face will be by appointment only and the opportunity to meet virtually with staff will continue within working hours from 8:45am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday. Further information on how to [contact us](#) is available online and our customer service standards are also available online in our [customer charter](#). Customer feedback is always welcome via our [online form](#) and the information received is used to improve our services.

2.3 Building Standards Services and Function

The principle objective of Building Standards is to:

- Secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings,
- Further the conservation of fuel and power, and
- Further the achievement of sustainable development.

Building Standards has two distinct roles, verification and enforcement. Verification is principally achieved through the application of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2004, when considering applications for Building Warrants and submissions of Completion Certificates.

The verification role includes:

- The verification of applications for Building Warrant
- The verification of completed works on site – accepting or rejecting completion certificates
- The verification of completion certificates with no building warrant

Enforcement

The Building Standards Service is also responsible for the enforcement duties contained within the Building (Scotland) Act 2003. This enforcement duty ensures that buildings comply with Building Regulations and public safety is maintained in relation to defective and dangerous buildings.

These enforcement duties include the following:

- Unauthorised works
- Defective buildings
- Dangerous buildings
- Building Regulations Compliance
- Continuing requirement enforcement

The Building Standards service provides a 24-hour dangerous buildings and structure call out service. Further information on this service is available [online](#).

Advisory Role

The Building Standards service has an advisory role relating to the following:

- The Licensing (Scotland) Acts 1976 and 2005
- The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
- The Safety at Sports Ground Act 1976

Building Warrant Enquiries (BENQ)

The Building Standards service welcome requests for advice and guidance prior to submitting a Building Warrant and information on how to contact the team for help is available online. The Service also provides an online [Building Warrant enquiry form](#) which allows you to electronically submit an outline of your proposed project also accompanied with a drawing / sketch of the building work. This service is free of charge and you will receive a response within 5 working days. Further information on this service is available [online](#).

Statutory Service

The statutory service role covers:
The provision of a two-part Building Standards Register:

- **Part 1** web based and to be maintained indefinitely
- **Part 2** to be in any format and to be maintained for a minimum of 25 years or until the building is demolished
- Energy Performance of the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2008

Non-Statutory Service

The non-statutory service role covers:

- Provision of a Letter of Comfort scheme
- Provision of copy documents
- Provision of copy plans
- Building Warrant enquiry service and discussions

Customer Service Excellence (CSE)

The Building Standards service has been accredited to the Customer Service Excellence Standard since December 2016. The Standard tests an organisation against 57 components with a particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information and professionalism. Each year Building Standards has to provide evidence against the criteria during an independent audit assessment. As well as considering the evidence the auditor also interviews staff along with a range of key customers and stakeholders.

During our recent assessment, the auditor noted that the team have introduced new ways of working through virtual site inspections and partnership working with services across infrastructure to assist businesses to open during Covid19 restrictions. Continuing to streamline internal procedures because of staff and customer feedback and ensuring our website and online payments are fully operational as we continue to improve how customers can access our services and information digitally. Consulting with our customers through focus groups was also noted as an area where real service improvements could be seen.

2.4 Building Standards Staffing

Aberdeenshire Council Building Standards has an establishment of 27 professional staff. They are supported at each location by administrative assistants provided by the Support Services section. Also supporting the service is an ePlanning Team and a Business Systems Team both of which are a shared resource with Planning.

The Housing and Building Standards Manager is supported by two Team Managers, each taking responsibility for three geographical areas. The Team Managers also play a key role in policy development and training.

The Housing and Building Standards Manager is located in Inverurie, the Team Managers are located in Inverurie and Stonehaven.

Aberdeenshire

- 1 Housing and Buildings Standards Manager
- 2 Team Managers

In addition to this the composition of each team is as follows and figure 3 illustrates the staffing structure in an organogram:

Kincardine & Mearns

- 4 Building Standards Surveyors
- 1 Building Standards Technical Assistant

Marr

- 1 Senior Building Standards Surveyor
- 2 Building Standards Surveyors
- 1 Part-time Buildings Standards Surveyor
- 1 Building Standards Technical Assistant

Garioch

- 3 Building Standards Surveyors
- 1 Part-time Building Standards Surveyor
- 1 Vacant Building Standards Surveyor
- 2 Building Standards Technical Assistants

Formartine

- 1 Senior Building Standards Surveyor
- 1 Building Standards Surveyor
- 1 Building Standards Technical Assistant

Banff & Buchan

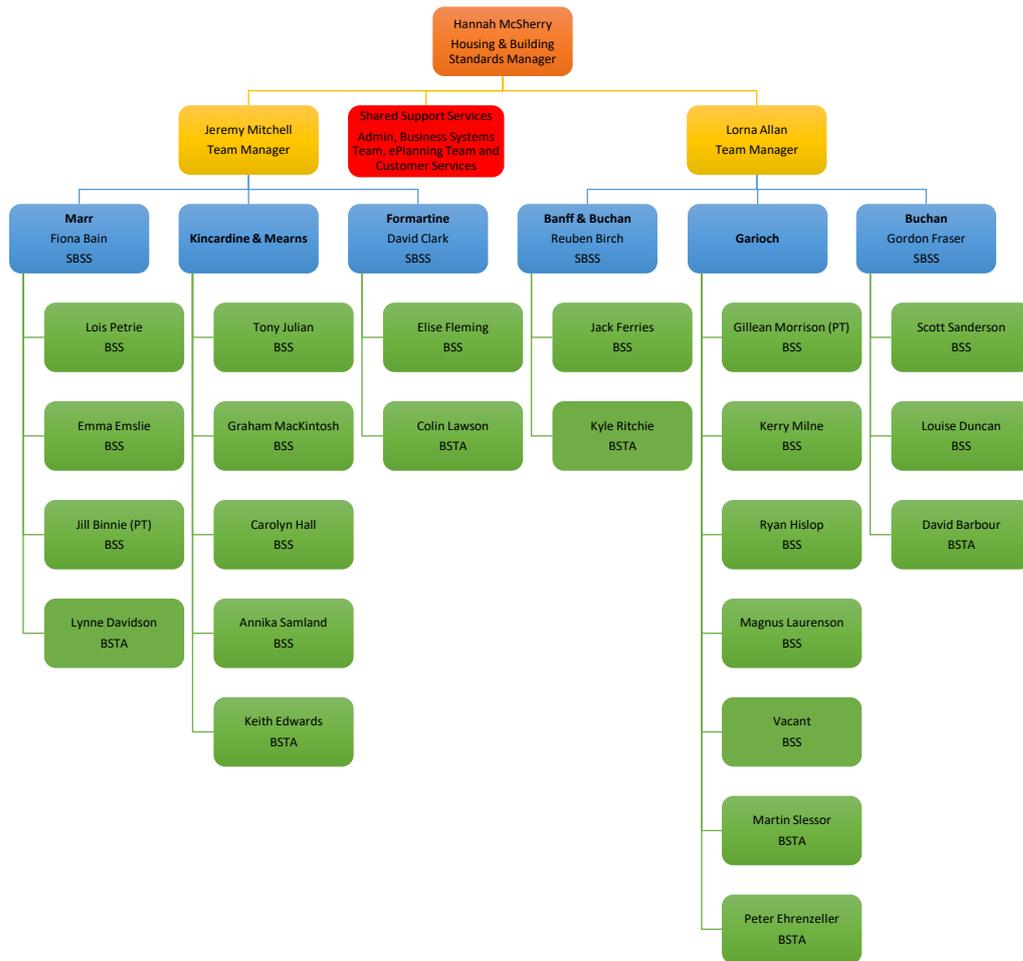
- 1 Senior Building Standards Surveyor
- 1 Building Standards Surveyor
- 1 Building Standards Technical Assistant

Buchan

- 1 Senior Building Standards Surveyor
- 2 Building Standards Surveyors
- 1 Building Standards Technical Assistant

Aberdeenshire Council's Building Standards Service works closely with Aberdeen City Council and Moray Council in the Grampian Consortium Group. The aim of the group is to develop and maintain consistency in the delivery of the Building Standards Service across the three Councils.

Figure 3: Building Standards Organisational Chart



The tables below illustrate the staffing position on 30 Sept 2023 (posts are full time equivalents).

Table 2: Level of Building Standards Manager

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Head of Housing and Building Standards Verification Service				1

Note: Tier 1 = Chief Executive; Tier 2 = Directors; Tier 3 = Heads of Service; Tier 4 = Managers

Table 3: Building Standards and support staff profile

		Building Standards Verification Service	Other
Managers, Team Managers & Seniors	No. posts	6	
	Vacant	0	
Main grade posts (Building Standards Surveyors)	No. posts	15	
	Vacant	2	
Building Standards Technical Assistants	No. posts	7	
	Vacant	1	
Office support / clerical	No. posts		6
	Vacant	0	
Total		28	6

Note: Managers are those staff responsible for the operational management of a team/division. They are not necessarily line managers.

Table 4: Building Standards staff age profile

Staff age profile	Number
Under 30	3
30-39	10
40-49	6
50-59	5
60 and over	3



HIGH SHORE

3.0 Strategic Objectives

3.1 Aberdeenshire Council: Our Vision

Aberdeenshire Council has been providing services and leadership to the people of Aberdeenshire since 1996. The Council has clear aspirations for the future of Aberdeenshire, and these are reflected in the Council's vision.

Figure 4: Aberdeenshire Council Corporate vision statement



3.2 Aberdeenshire – from mountain to sea, the very best of Scotland

Aberdeenshire Council serves more than 260,000 residents, by delivering high quality services, spending money wisely and planning services that will sustain our communities both now, during these challenging times, and in the future.

Whilst the immediate landscape is uncertain Aberdeenshire Council remains well-placed to respond to the challenges.

There are many factors which will influence how we, as an organisation, respond to the current circumstances - and our economy is central to this. Aberdeenshire's economy, like others, has been hard hit by the pandemic, with the implications of Brexit still to be determined, an economy still heavily reliant on the energy sector and a strong focus on tourism and hospitality.

Despite fluctuating oil prices resulting in significant job losses, adversely affecting the local housing market and hospitality industry, the area has consistently experienced above average rates of population growth, business growth and enterprise growth compared to most major regions. The strength of public and private sector partnerships is a major strength for the region.

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to making the region more attractive to visitors and investors, as well as current and prospective residents. This entails, among other things, continuing to improve infrastructure (roads and bridges, digital, transport and housing), and ensuring future skills requirements are met in an age of increasing automation. Aberdeenshire Council was the first in Scotland to develop and approve a Carbon Budget, underpinning its commitment to tackling climate change, and has recently agreed a circular economy commitment.

Aberdeenshire Council's medium-term financial strategy identifies a cumulative out of balance position to 2026/27 of £48million. The Council aims to ensure that its finite resources are used to maximum effect and continues to seek new and alternative ways of working as well as improving the efficiency of existing service delivery. It is evident however the continuing reductions in funding and increasing demand will have an inevitable impact on both the nature and scope of services going forward, and further efficiencies and savings will be required to close the funding gap.

The [Aberdeenshire Council Plan 2020 – 2022](#) sets out 6 strategic priorities set within the parameters of the predicted financial shortfalls due to the pandemic:



3.3 Our Values

The service has developed a set of core values to guide how we work together to deliver a professional and customer focused Building Standards service. As part of the transition of Building Standards to the Housing service, staff helped to develop a wide set of cross-service values which are detailed in the table 5 below.

Table 5: Building Standards and Housing Staff Values

Building Standards	Housing
Communication	
Customers and Communities	Customer Focus
Professionalism	Safety
Integrity	Respect
Commitment	Teamwork
Accountability	
Continuous Improvement	Quality of Service

3.4 Key Strategic Objectives for Building Standards

Following on from Aberdeenshire's corporate priorities, Building Standards have developed a set of key priorities for 2022-23 aimed at assisting to fulfil the following corporate priorities:

1. Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy
2. Have the right mix of housing across all of Aberdeenshire

Building Standards key strategic objectives for the coming year are to:

- Maintain the use of Virtual Site Inspections where appropriate
- Continue with the Competency Assessment System (CAS)
- Maintain the Customer Service Excellence Award Standard
- Deliver our operational framework plan
- Deliver our performance framework plan
- Participate in and provide full commitment to the Grampian Consortium Group
- Engage and work with the National Building Standards Hub and Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS)
- Aberdeenshire Building Standards have been reappointed for verification from 1 May 2023 until 30 April 2029
- Engage and work with all stakeholders
- Ensure the continued health, safety, and welfare of persons in or about buildings of Aberdeenshire
- WorkSTYLE office accommodation review and implementation across the area offices with now only Ellon area office to be re-space planned incorporating the new hybrid working environment
- Continue to work in a hybrid model with a flexible approach to work with an emphasis on collaborative spaces and digital technology

- Review of staffing levels to ensure service and performance is maintained
- Ensure that we work to maintain our service within increasing budget pressures



4.0 Key Performance Outcomes and Targets

The national verification performance framework is based on three core perspectives:

- Professional expertise and technical processes;
- Quality customer experience; and
- Operational and financial efficiency

There are also three cross-cutting themes, comprising:

- Public interest
- Continuous improvement; and
- Partnership working.

Figure 5: Illustrates the performance outcomes and targets



Table 6: Summary of Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs)

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes	
KPO1	Minimise the time taken to issue a first report of issue a Building Warrant or amendment to Building Warrant
KPO2	Increase the quality of compliance assessment during the construction process
Quality Customer Experience	
KPO3	Commit to the Building Standards customer charter
KPO4	Understand and respond to the customer experience
Operational and Financial Efficiency	
KPO5	Maintain financial governance
KPO6	Commit to eBuilding Standards
KPO7	Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report

Table 7: Summary of Key Performance Targets

KPO1 Targets	
1.1	95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
1.2	90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
KPO2 Targets	
2.1	Targets to be developed as part of future review of KPO2.
KPO3 Targets	
3.1	National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly).
3.2	95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days.
KPO4 Targets	
4.1	Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10.
KPO5 Targets	
5.1	Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).
KPO6 Targets	
6.1	Details of eBuilding Standards to be published prominently on the verifier's website.
6.2	75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan checking • Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued • Verification during construction • Completion certificates being accepted
KPO7 Targets	
7.1	Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly)
7.2	Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets

5.0 Performance Data

Aberdeenshire Council needs to demonstrate that it satisfies the requirements set out by the Scottish Government in the verification Operating Framework (published May 2017). This document has been incorporated into our internal operating protocols and procedures handbook which details how we function and deliver our services on a daily basis. Aberdeenshire Council must also meet the requirements detailed in the Performance Framework (published May 2017). This section includes a summary of our performance against the targets set out in the Performance Framework.

5.1 Summary of Performance against Key Performance Targets

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes

KPO1	Minimise the time taken to issue a first report of issue a Building Warrant or amendment to Building Warrant
<p>Requirements of the verifier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain records of applications for building warrant and amendment to building warrant with breakdowns for reporting work categories and value of work categories • Maintain records of the time taken from receipt of a valid application to issue a 'first report' • Maintain records of the time taken from receipt of all satisfactory information to issue a building warrant or amendment to a building warrant • Maintain records of the overall time taken from receipt of a valid application to the time to issue a building warrant, or amendment to a building warrant • Seek to minimise the time taken to issue a building warrant whilst maintaining high standards of verification • Maintain records of applications for building warrants that utilised customer agreements 	

In 2022-23 we:

- Ensured that all requirements to maintain records were achieved and these are illustrated via the quarterly return to the Building Standards Division
- Provided 97% of first reports within 20 working days and issued 96% of Building Warrants and Amendment of Warrants within 10 days.

Performance management systems

- The current ICT system is set up to record existing Key Performance Indicators for reporting quarterly to Council Committees. These include:
 - Provide a technical response or issue your building warrant within 20 working days. Target 95%
 - Percentage of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 working days following receipt of satisfactory technical information. Target 90%
 - Time taken from notification of a dangerous building report to assessment by a member of staff - 4 hours. Target 100% (internal Council statistic reported every quarter)
- Additional Performance Management tools include:
 - Pending lists (traffic lights system)
 - Completion tasks
 - Amended drawings lists
 - Performance graphs

- Mystery shopping to ensure that the Customer Charter targets are met

Workload management

To ensure performance targets are met we utilise workload management software for the allocation and distribution of work as well as monitoring daily operations.

Consistency of advice

We have various policies and procedures in place to deal with every aspect of the verification process. Online procedural guidance notes are held within Uniform and all other policy documents are accessible online.

In 2023-24 we will:

- Continue to ensure that all the requirements to maintain records are achieved and these are illustrated via the quarterly return to the Building Standards Division
- Maintain performance targets and continue to develop the service

Table 8: Summary of KPO1 quarterly targets

The table below illustrates the KPO1 targets reported every quarter to committee and the Building Standards Division.

Performance Indicator	Target	Q1 (Apr -Jun 2023)	Q2 (Jul -Sept 2023)	Q3 (Oct -Dec 2023)	Q4 (Jan -Mar 2024)
Percentage of building warrants or first day reports issued within 20 working days	95%	98%	98%	95%	97%
Percentage of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days following receipt of satisfactory technical information	90%	95%	95%	92%	95%

Table 9: Annual KPO1 targets

The table below illustrates the KPO1 targets reported annually to committee and the Building Standards Division. It should be noted that during 2020 – 2022 the number of building warrants has varied due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The primary aim of the service was to ensure that all risks were managed accordingly to ensure the safety of the public and staff whilst maintaining to carry out all work associated with the receipt, validation, processing, assessment and decision-making for Building Warrants. The delivery of services when required was moved to virtual with a slow transition back to normal in accordance with Government guidance.

Performance Indicator	Target	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Percentage of building warrants or first day reports issued within 20 working days	95%	95%	94%	98%	96%	97%
Percentage of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days following receipt of satisfactory technical information	90%	94%	94%	97%	96%	96%

KPO2	Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction process
<p>Requirements of the verifier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embed risk assessment methodologies into normal working practices for undertaking reasonable inquiry before accepting a completion certificate• Issue Construction Compliance Notification Plans (CCNP) with a building warrant• Maintain records of CCNPs for ‘accepted’ completion certificates with breakdown into reporting work categories and value of work categories• Maintain records of number of CCNPs that were fully achieved in terms of notification by the relevant person and inspection by the verifier• Maintain records of construction non-compliance locally and report trends and issues with a national impact to drive forward improvements in verification• Escalate national issues through Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (Local Authority Building Standards Scotland) for further discussion.	

In 2022-23 we:

- Continued to provide a Construction Compliance Notification Plan (CCNP) with all building warrants issued. Updated the Building Warrant approval letter with a web link to guidance on the next steps after approval, clearly numbered in order of priority. The letter also contains the Construction Compliance and Notification Plan (CCNP) which sets out the key stages within the build project that have been identified for inspection as well as the certificates of design and construction and any other documentation required for the completion inspection
- Maintained records of CCNPs for ‘accepted’ completion certificates with breakdown into reporting work categories and value of work categories
- Maintained records of number of CCNPs that were fully achieved in terms of notification by the relevant person and inspection by the verifier
- Are aware of the route to escalate national issues through Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS) for further discussion

In 2023-24 we will:

- Work to increase the number of CCNPs complied with, aiming to improve the performance relating to KPO2
- Introduce methods of collating compliance trends and review quarterly at Management Team meetings
- Review the CCNP evidence for accepting completion
- Develop our processes for maintaining records of construction non-compliance locally and report trends and issues with a national impact to drive forward improvements in verification

Quality Customer Experience

KPO3	Commit to the Building Standards Customer Charter
<p>Requirements of the verifier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain their customer charter and incorporate national performance targets and national and local information into the template • Publish their customer charter prominently on the verifier website • Ensure the facility for online applications through the Scottish Government eBuilding standards system is detailed in the customer charter • Ensure the customer charter includes details of customer dispute resolution, complaints and performance procedures (e.g. Local Authority Building Standards Scotland Dispute Resolution Process, local authority complaints procedures, Scottish Government Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers) • Review the National Customer Charter regularly (at least quarterly) maintaining localised information to ensure contact details and appropriate website links are kept up-to-date • Apply national building standards verification policies and interpretations 	
<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Customer Charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly) • 95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days 	

In 2022-23 we:

- Published the Building Standards Customer Charter which incorporates the National Customer Charter prominently within the customer charter and feedback section on our website, incorporating version control and reviews
- Published the Enforcement Charter prominently within the customer charter and feedback section on our website, incorporating version control and annual review
- The customer charter also sets out the service standards that you should expect when you interact with our service and these standards are reviewed annually via mystery shopping. All performance information including our mystery shopping results are detailed in our performance section on our website
- The customer charter is reviewed quarterly to ensure all information is kept up to date along with the customer contact protocol which is the internal process for implementing the charter and service standards
- Customer feedback and how to provide feedback is detailed within the customer feedback section on our website and a link to this is provided in email signatures and other correspondence
- The facility for online applications through the Scottish Government eBuilding standards system is detailed in the customer charter and it includes details of customer dispute resolution and complaints

In 2023-24 we will:

- Continue to review and update the customer charter and service standards to ensure the requirements of our customers are met

- Ensure policies are updated accordingly and information relayed at Building Standards management team meetings following alerts to updated national building standards policies and interpretations
- Respond to any requests from the Building Standards Division

KPO4	Understand and respond to the customer experience
<p>Requirements of the verifier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist the Scottish Government Building Standards Division to supply customer data for research purposes • Promote the Scottish Customer Survey and inform customers that they may be contacted for research purposes • Use findings from the Scottish Customer Survey for the purpose of customer segmentation • Use findings from the Scottish Customer Survey and local engagement to identify and make improvements to the customer experience • Incorporate actions to improve the customer experience into the continuous improvement plan and monitor progress 	
<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10 	

In 2022-23 we:

- The total number of responses to our online satisfaction feedback survey was 83
- In 2022 we achieved an overall average customer satisfaction of 78 out of 83 giving us a percentage of 94% overall satisfaction
- Reviewed and updated our customer consultation strategy which includes a detailed analysis of customer segmentation
- Review Building Standards information on our website quarterly after customer feedback and created online payments
- Agent forums are held annually as well as regular eNews bulletins which are sent to agents with service updates / improvements, staff changes, legislation updates and any other important developments. This form of communication also provides a vehicle for the transfer of information back to the Building Standards team by promoting feedback on the service we provide
- Provided a link to our customer satisfaction survey within all email correspondence as well as at completion which was promoted by Building Standards Technical Assistants. An online link to the questionnaire is also detailed on our website within the [customer charter and feedback](#) section
- The results from the customer satisfaction survey are analysed in detail and the feedback received is used to inform our service improvement plan. A log of all the service improvements as a result of customer feedback is available online within the [customer charter and feedback](#) section

- Ensure accessibility to the service – the Building Standards Service is delivered locally across Aberdeenshire from numerous offices based on the Council’s Area Focus strategy
- Welcome pre-application queries in order to help customers through the Building Warrant process. We do not charge for this service. Our [“Check if you need a Building Warrant?”](#) form and information is online and can be submitted electronically from our website along with a drawing / sketch
- Customer agreements - we have a template in place for customer agreements. They have been used several times more for the site inspection part of verification rather than the warrant vetting process
- Complaints process - building Standards is a complex procedure and individuals may consider that their application has not been dealt with effectively or efficiently. Aberdeenshire Council is committed to continually improving the services which it provides to the people of Aberdeenshire and has adopted a nationally agreed 2 stage complaints procedure for all Council Services. A copy of the leaflet entitled “Have your say” can be obtained from each of the main Service Centres, Area Offices and is available [online](#)
- Provided regular Agent email updates in relation to services
- Continued to provide virtual site inspections and alternative evidence as appropriate
- Developed a 6-month Training Induction Programme for new employees to ensure consistency in training is achieved and maintained

In 2023-24 we will:

- Continue to conduct an annual review of our customer consultation strategy which includes customer segmentation. Continue to develop our social media presence and the use of video content in our website
- Continue to hold our annual Agent forum which was combined with Development management as a result of customer feedback
- Continue to analyse all customer feedback to inform our service improvement plan
- Continue to attain accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence award. Aberdeenshire Council Building Standards Service attained the Customer Service Excellence Award in December 2016 and has maintained recertification every year since then, increasing the number of compliance plusses to 18 in the recent audit in December 2022
- Continue to support the national customer survey and incorporate the revised format of the survey into our website, key documentation, correspondence, and email signatures
- Continue to train staff on the latest technical updates and changes to the Building Regulations and supporting guidance
- Support the development of the National Building Standards hub
- Support the Scottish Building Standards Futures Board and the Futures Board Seven Work Streams

Operational and Financial Efficiency

KPO5	Maintain Financial Governance
<p>Requirements of the verifier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain records of the income received from building warrant and related statutory fees and the expenditure incurred (staff costs, non-staff costs and other verification-related investments) to run Building Standards verification services • Maintain records of the value of work for building warrant and amendment applications and completion certificate submissions where no building warrant granted • Have systems in place to identify time spent on verification activity, and thus enable direct staff costs required to run the verification system to be calculated • Undertake regular reviews of income and cost streams in order to inform and embed efficiency savings where possible • Adhere to the national approach to identifying costs 	
<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%) 	

In 2022-23 we:

- Maintained records of the value of work, income received from building warrant and related statutory fees and the expenditure incurred (staff costs, non-staff costs and other verification related investments) to run Building Standards verification services. Within the Building Standards Service, Corporate Services employ the use of Oracle Finance which includes reporting tools to extract financial information for budget monitoring purposes
- An electronic time recording system is in place to measure time spent on Verification / Non-Verification
- Aberdeenshire Council Corporate Services ensure strong financial governance of the Aberdeenshire Budget. Management system is in place to monitor budget for Verification
- Held quarterly budget meetings with the Building Standards management team and finance in order to review income and cost streams in order to inform and embed efficiency savings where possible
- Provided monthly electronic budget monitoring statements to the Building Standards management team
- Ensured the National Approach to identifying costs is embedded in our service

In 2023-24 we will:

- Continue with the above approach and review to ensure the approach is fit for purpose and being reported and acted upon appropriately
- Continue to monitor finances on a monthly basis

KPO6	Commit to eBuilding Standards
<p>Requirements of the verifier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eBuilding Standards details are published prominently on the website. Maintain records of building warrant related applications and submissions through the eBuilding Standards portal Maintain records of the extent of digital processing of verification activities i.e. the key activities from receipt of a building warrant application or amendment through to acceptance of a completion certificate 	
<p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of eBuilding Standards to be published prominently on the verifier's website 75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> plan checking; building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued verification during construction completion certificates being accepted 	

In 2022-23 we:

- Ensured ebuilding Standards details were published prominently on the website
- Maintained records of building warrant related applications and submissions through the eBuilding Standards portal
- Maintained records of the extent of digital processing of verification activities i.e. the key activities from receipt of a building warrant application or amendment through to acceptance of a completion certificate. Within Aberdeenshire all applications are dealt with digitally
- Received 97% of our applications online during this period and all correspondence within our service is dealt with electronically. Should paper be submitted to the service then it is scanned and saved to the document management system. All building warrants, amendment of warrant, verification during construction, completion certificates are dealt with digitally. Should the applicant request that they have correspondence in paper we will fulfil this request

IT systems

- Building Standards operate an integrated paperless case management system provided by Idox (Uniform and Idox EDRMS product suites). The integrated system manages all aspects of our application process, from initial application through to decision and completion acceptance. It provides integrated: GIS, EDRMS, workflow processing, customer web portal, performance reporting and document generation. The system is supported by a combination of the Council's ICT service, a service based dedicated Business Systems Team and Idox the product Supplier. A range of other ICT tools are available to staff eg., Internet, Intranet, flexi-time and attendance management, emails, Microsoft 365, etc.

Digital services

- Over 97% of new applications are submitted via the National Portal as part of eBuilding Standards
- A fully integrated back-office system and customer web portal provides real-time customer feedback
- All applications are vetted electronically
- All staff have been issued with new computer tablets. This allows them to undertake paperless field-based site inspections. We are currently working with Idox to develop and enhance site inspection software. We have now moved to Idox hosted system.

In 2023-24 we will:

- Continue to operate and look for any areas of continued improvement
- Continue to ensure details of eBuilding Standards are published prominently on the verifier’s website
- Continue to promote the use of ebuilding standards and will work towards increasing the usage of the eBuilding Standards portal for customers submitting paper-based applications
- Review technology and processes to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose and are being utilised to enhance eBuilding Standards delivery

KPO7	Commit to objectives outlined in the Annual Performance Report
Requirements of the verifier:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly) • Annual performance report to include data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year). The report is to include adherence to the National Customer Charter (KPO3), appropriate actions to respond to customer feedback (KPO4), financial performance (KPO5); and commitment to digital services (KPO6) 	
Targets:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly) • Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g April 2016 - March 2017) 	

In 2022-23 we:

- Published the annual performance report prominently on Aberdeenshire Council Building Standards website
- The annual performance report includes:
 - Adherence to the National Customer Charter (KPO3)
 - Appropriate actions to respond to customer feedback (KPO4)
 - Financial performance (KPO5)
 - Commitment to digital services (KPO6)
- Ensure the report includes performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets

In 2023-24 we will:

- Continue to publish the annual performance report and quarterly returns prominently on Aberdeenshire Council Building Standards website

2023/24 Summary of Performance Figures

KPO	2023/24 Q1	2023/24 Q2	2023/24 Q3	2023/24 Q4
1.1. 95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).	97.57%	98.20%	94.62%	97.52%
1.2. 90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report)	95.26%	95.32%	91.65%	95.05%
3.1. National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly)	Published prominently (with review)			
3.2. 95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'			
4.1. Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4
5.1. Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%)	75.61%	75.71%	78.00%	112.13%
6.1. Details of eBuilding Standards are published prominently on the verifier's website	Published prominently	Published prominently	Published prominently	Published prominently

KPO	2023/24 Q1	2023/24 Q2	2023/24 Q3	2023/24 Q4
6.2. 75% of each key building warrant related processes being done electronically (Plan checking; BWs and amendments (and plans) issue; Verification during construction; CC acceptance)	4 of 4 done			
7.1. Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly)	Published prominently (with review)			
7.2. Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2016 – March 2017)	Includes all performance data			

2022/23 Summary of Performance Figures

KPO	2022/23 Q1	2022/23 Q2	2022/23 Q3	2022/23 Q4
1.1. 95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).	97.24%	95.56%	98.74%	97.55%
1.2. 90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report)	96.68%	96.10%	95.40%	95.16%
3.1. National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly)	Published prominently (with review)			

KPO	2022/23 Q1	2022/23 Q2	2022/23 Q3	2022/23 Q4
3.2. 95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'			
4.1. Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.2
5.1. Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%)	172.61%	113.05%	111.15%	234.54%
6.1. Details of eBuilding Standards are published prominently on the verifier's website	Published prominently	Published prominently	Published prominently	Published prominently
6.2. 75% of each key building warrant related processes being done electronically (Plan checking; BWs and amendments (and plans) issue; Verification during construction; CC acceptance)	4 of 4 done			
7.1. Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly)	Published prominently (with review)			
7.2. Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2016 – March 2017)	Includes all performance data			

6.0 Staff training, development and resourcing

Training and development

Aberdeenshire Council Building Standards service supports staff to gain the necessary qualifications, continuing professional development and professional accreditation through individual personal performance training plans. Building Standards staff are fully participating in the LABSS National Competency Assessment System (CAS) that has been rolled out. This reviews competencies and sets out individual training plans which identifies specific training needs as well as workforce development priorities. Various continuous professional development and staff engagement days are provided throughout the year and a number of staff are currently working towards professional membership of RICS, CIOB or CABE. A training partnership between Aberdeenshire Council Building Standards and CIOB has recently evolved to encourage more staff to attain professional membership.

Internal communication strategies

- Aberdeenshire Building Standards Management Team consists of the Housing and Building Standards Manager, two Team Managers and four Senior Building Standards Surveyors. It meets on a regular basis to discuss and review all aspects of the Building Standards Service across Aberdeenshire. The Management team also have weekly catch up meetings, a summary of the meeting is disseminated to staff as well as access provided in the general Teams folder for the minutes of the meetings.
- Team Managers hold regular team meetings with their area-based staff to disseminate information and encourage 2-way discussion on all corporate and Building Standards topics
- Peer-to-peer training, support and service improvements have been developed virtually through staff working groups. The Building Standards Technical Assistant working group was set up to share best practice on the frontline during a pandemic. This group continues to meet regularly to continue to develop best working practices.
- Team talks and staff training days have moved to being delivered virtually and face-to-face
- Information is also shared via Teams, emails and Arcadia (Council's Intranet Service)
- There has been a continued effort to maximise digital technology and platforms to ensure effective communication and streamline processes. Office space is currently under review with the emphasis on hybrid working and creating collaborative spaces to allow staff to come together for team meetings, training, peer to peer support and partnership working

Benchmarking / shared services

Aberdeenshire Council in conjunction with Moray Council and Aberdeen City Council forms The Grampian Consortium Group. This group meets on a regular basis and its priorities are to establish a consistent approach to interpretation of policies and technical guidance, provide benchmarking, share best practice and facilitate training. Aberdeenshire Council and the Grampian Consortium Group are actively involved with national policy and working groups via Local Authority Building Standards Scotland. The Grampian Consortium have initiated a technical working group to ensure a consistent approach to the Building Standards Service Across Grampian. Joint staff training events are also organised via the consortium as and when required by members.

The Building Standards service in Aberdeenshire has an agreement in place with external consultants for structural engineers and fire engineers. This current partnership agreement will be reviewed during 2022 to ensure the most effective service delivery mechanism is in place.

If on occasion, there are reduced resources in-house due to long-term absences or a sudden increase in applications submitted etc. arrangements are in place with our Consortium group and beyond via the Local Authority Building Standards Scotland Service (LABSS) to assist with the verification of warrant applications. Within LABSS, Aberdeenshire Council participates in the Scottish Type Approval Scheme (STAS).

Aberdeenshire Council Building Standards work in partnership with the following national bodies:

- Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS)
- Building Standards Division
- Building Standards Hub

These organisations work nationally to drive continuous improvement in Building Standards service provision and delivery as well as well as implementing legislation changes, managing the national Building Standards online application portal, providing technical guidance and training.

Succession planning

The Building Standards service promotes the following approach to assist with succession planning:

- The service encourages and supports staff to undertake further education and obtain professional qualifications by providing financial assistance and time off work
- Commitment to working together on technical issues
- We have a number of staff who contribute to the various Local Authority Building Standards Scotland national working groups
- Staff arrangements are reviewed on a regular basis against workflow and verification requirements to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that a consistent and equal service is delivered to our customers.



7.0 Service Improvement and Partnership Working

Table 10: In the previous 12 months (April 2022 / March 2023) we have:

Number	Continuous Improvement Action	Status
1	Retained Customer Service Excellent Award	Complete
2	Maintained our Customer Consultation Strategy	Complete
3	Maintained Agent Forums	Complete
4	Conducted annual Review of our Building Standards Protocols and Procedures	Complete
5	Maintained levels of performance	Complete
6	Updated our operational resilience protocols to ensure services can operate through a pandemic (move to table 10)	Complete
7	Establish a training partnership with CIOB, a recognised professional body in order to help staff obtain professional membership	Complete
8	Encouraged more staff to obtain membership of a professional organisation	Ongoing

Table 11: In the next 12 months (April 2023 / March 2024) we will:

Continuous Improvement Action				
Professional Expertise and Technical Processes				
No	Key actions	KPO	Timescale	Status
1	Maintain and improve current levels of performance	KPO1	12 months	
2	Work to increase the number of CCNPs complied with, aiming to improve the performance relating to KPO2	KPO2	6 months	
3	Introduce methods of collating compliance trends and review at quarterly Management Team meetings	KPO2	6 months	
4	Review the National Competency Assessment System (CAS) across Aberdeenshire's Building Standards Service		12 months	
5	Continue to promote Continuing Professional Development opportunities. Development will be supported by the senior BSS posts. Encourage members of staff to work towards professional membership		12 months	
6	Use the Council's Workforce Planning Toolkit to identify and prepare for future workforce needs		12 months	

7	Review the external partnership agreements in place for structural and fire engineers		12 months	
8	Ensure all new employees go through the training induction programme		Ongoing	
Quality Customer Experience				
9	Continue to review and update the customer charter and ensure it meets the needs of our customers	KPO3	12 months	
10	Continue to conduct an annual review of our customer consultation strategy which includes customer segmentation. In particular, the focus will be on continuing to developing our website and social media	KPO4	12 months	
11	Continue to engage further with customers to keep them informed of any changes to the Building Standards service via newsletters, website and social media	KPO4	12 months	
12	Continue to hold our annual virtual Agent forum in partnership with Development Management	KPO4	12 months	
13	Explore closer partnership working arrangements with Development Management to improve outcomes for the customer	KPO4	12 months	
14	Continue to analyse all customer feedback to inform our service improvement plan	KPO4	12 months	
15	Continue to attain accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence award	KPO4	12 months	
16	Review and update our customer charter	KPO4	12 months	
17	Monitor and review finances on a monthly basis	KPO5	12 months	
Operational and Financial Efficiency				
18	Progress eBuilding Standards in relation to mobile working		6 months	
19	Implement changes from National Working Groups		12 months	
20	Implement the new ways of working corporate Workstyle strategy which has a focus on hybrid working and creating collaborative spaces		12 months	
21	Maintain the new ways of working that have been development as a results of Covid 19 such as utilising digital technologies to their full potential to streamline processes and assist accessibility		Unknown	

In the previous 12 months (2022/23) we worked with:

- Aberdeen City Council and Moray Council via Grampian Consortium Group
- Other local authorities via Local Authority Building Standards Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Oakleaf Fire Consultants
- External Engineers
- Agent Forum
- National Building Standards Hub

In the next 12 months (2023/24) we will:

- Engage with other local authorities and groups, e.g. Local Authority Building Standards Scotland
- Engage with external stakeholder organisations and groups
- Provide external support for local training and development
- Commit to work together on technical issues
- Work in partnership with the National Building Standards Hub

8.0 Building Standards – Additional Data

The performance data relates to the building standards verification performance framework and the workload data relates to the numbers of building warrant applications; completion certificates; fees; costs; certificates (certification, energy performance; sustainability); enforcement cases.

Table 12: Additional data
Annual totals for April 2022 to March 2023

Building warrants and amendments to building warrant	Applications	2471
	Decisions	2346
Completion certificates	Submissions	3248
	Decisions	2735
Certification	Certificates of design submitted	1349
	Certificates of construction submitted	606
Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)	Copy certificates received (domestic)	782
	Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	7
Statement of Sustainability	Copy certificates received (domestic)	1075
	Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	18
Enforcement	Notices served under sections 25 to 30	2
	Cases referred to procurator fiscal	0
	Cases where LA has undertaken work	0

9.0 Links

Performance Information

Building Standards performance information is issued quarterly and provides various response times which you may find useful.

[Performance Information](#)

[Customer Charter](#)

[Annual Performance Report](#)

[Customer Charter Service & Satisfaction Standards](#)

[Building Standards Services under the Covid-19 outbreak](#)

Other Links

[Current Applications and Public Register](#)

[Dangerous Buildings and Structures](#)

[Building Standards Portal](#)

[Local Authority Building Standards Scotland](#)

[Scottish Government Building Standards Division](#)

[Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#)

[Aberdeenshire Council Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure: Have your say](#)

[Scottish Type Approval Scheme \(STAS\)](#)

10.0 Feedback

We aim to continually improve our service. Should you wish to provide feedback on any aspect of this report then please [contact us](#).



Aberdeenshire - from mountain to sea

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