



From mountain to sea

# Building Standards Annual Performance Report 2024-2025

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V01.01



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## Annual Performance Review Log

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Editors	Position
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**Aberdeenshire - from mountain to sea**



# 1 Introduction to verifier

## 1.1 Standard Statement

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 strategic 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.

## 1.2 Size of the local authority by population and geographical size

Aberdeenshire is a predominantly rural area in North East Scotland and includes the Cairngorm mountains, rich agricultural lowlands and varied coastal landscapes with an area of 6,339km<sup>2</sup> and population density of 41 people per km<sup>2</sup>.

Aberdeenshire's population has risen from approximately 189,000 residents in 1981, to 263,000 in 2021 – an increase of 39%, exceeding the national average increase of 6%. Since 1981 there's been a noticeable reduction in the percentage of children and young adults in the population, whilst our working age population is in decline. Our ageing population (aged 65 and over) is growing and this has significant implications for healthcare, social services and the economy. All these factors are critical in shaping our places – understanding how communities function and connect with each other. Place must become a central pillar by which the public sector engage with communities.



### 1.3 Map of the area

*Figure 1: A map of Aberdeenshire including 6 area wards and the location of Aberdeen City Council for reference.*



### 1.4 Major employers and main employment sectors

Traditionally, Aberdeenshire has been economically dependent on the primary sectors of agriculture, forestry and fishing. Over the past 50 years development of the oil and gas industry has repositioned the economic focus, which in future will increasingly turn towards energy transition.



## 1.5 The full range of responsibilities the local authority building standards service delivers.

Aberdeenshire Council's Building Standards service is located within Environment and Infrastructure Services (E&IS). 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:

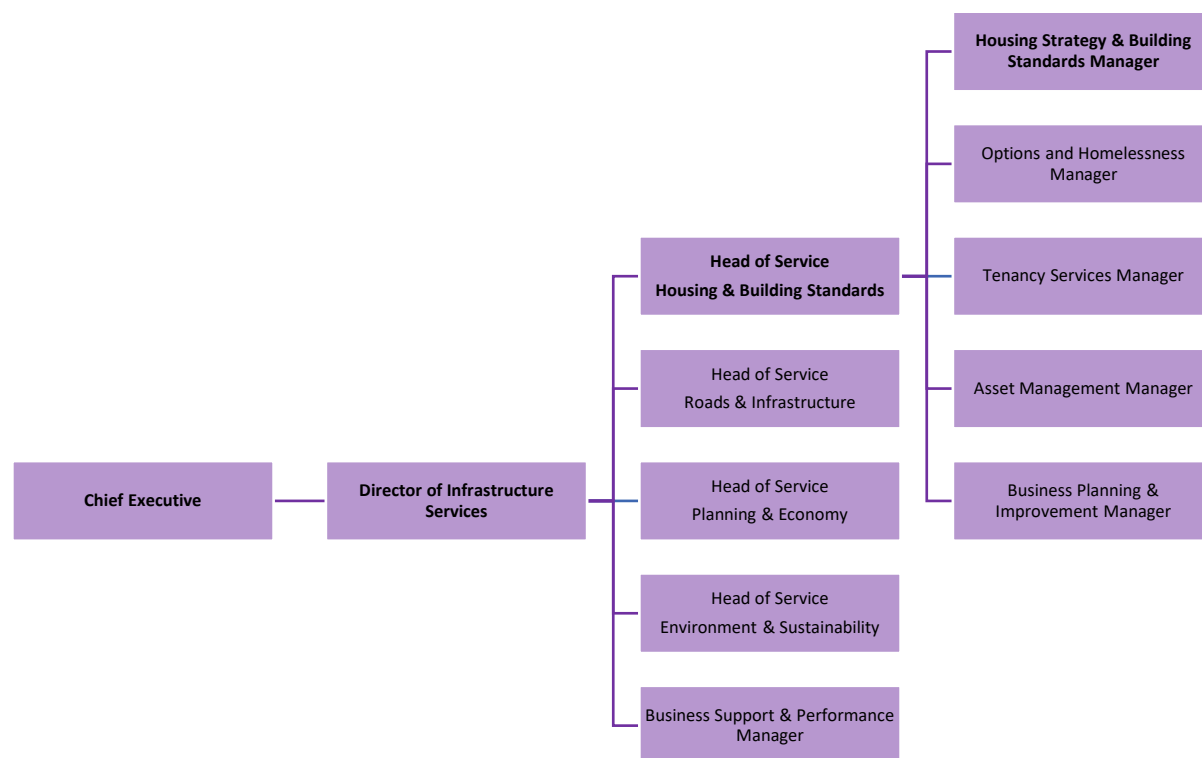
### Environment and Infrastructure Services

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



## 1.7 Organisational chart of the verifier

Figure 2: Organigramme from Chief Executive level to Building Standards and Housing Strategy Manager









## 2 Building Standards Verification Service Information

### 2.1 Location of offices

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.

Building Standards administrative areas

Kincardine & Mearns	Marr	Formartine
Garioch	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:



Stonehaven	Aboyne	Ellon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Viewmount, Arduthie Road, Stonehaven, AB39 2DQ</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bellwood Road, Aboyne, AB34 5HQ</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 59 Station Road, Ellon, AB41 9AR</li></ul>
Inverurie	Banff	Peterhead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie, AB51 3WA</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Town House, Low Street, Banff, AB45 1AY</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Buchan House, St Peter Street, Peterhead, AB42 1QF</li></ul>

We are 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.

## 2.2 Verification services and functions delivered

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.





## 2.3 Public interest statement

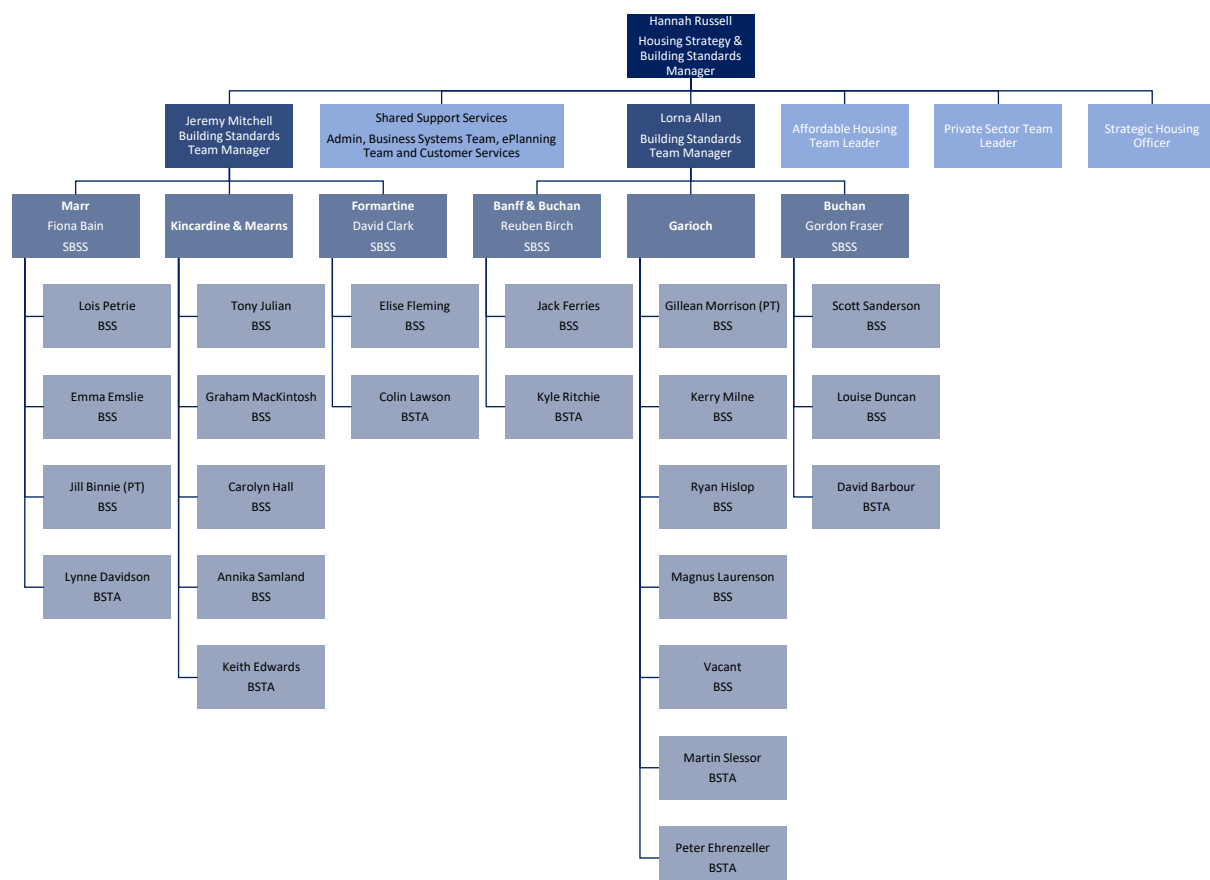
The purpose of the building standards system is to protect the public interest. The system sets out the essential standards that are required to be met when building work or conversion of a building takes place in order to meet building regulations.

The building standards system checks that proposed building work or conversion of a building meets standards; inspections are limited to a minimal necessary to ensure that legislation is not avoided. 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.

## 2.4 Organisation chart

*Figure 3: Organigramme from Building Standards and Housing Strategy Manager and building standards staff*





The tables below illustrate the staffing position on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (posts are full time equivalents).

*Table 1: 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 2: Building Standards staffing*

		Building Standards Verification Service	Other
Managers	No. posts	1	
	Vacant		
Team Leaders	No. posts	2	
	Vacant		
Lead Surveyors	No. posts	0	
	Vacant		
Senior Surveyor	No. posts	4	
	Vacant		
Surveyor	No. posts	15	
	Vacant	1	
Assistant Surveyors	No. posts	0	
	Vacant		
Graduate Surveyor	No. posts	0	
	Vacant		
Inspector	No. posts	7	
	Vacant		
Technician	No. posts	0	
	Vacant		
Administrator (dedicated)	No. posts	0	
	Vacant		
Administrator (pooled)		6	





<b>Other Specialist (structure, fire etc.)</b>	No. posts	0	
	Vacant		
<b>Other Role</b>	No. posts		
	Vacant		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29 (pooled admin not included)</b>		

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

*Table 3: Building Standards staff age profile*

<b>Staff age profile</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>61 and over</b>	3
<b>56-60</b>	1
<b>50-55</b>	7
<b>40-49</b>	4
<b>30-39</b>	10
<b>25-29</b>	3
<b>16-24</b>	1





THIS BRIDGE  
WAS PRESENTED  
TO THE PUBLIC BY  
WALLANDER GORDON  
SOUTHWOOD  
HILDEBOROUGH KENT  
ERECTED 1905

JAMES ABERNETHY & CO  
ENGINEERS  
ABERDEEN 1905

RECONSTRUCTED BY  
FINDRINGINE AND GEDDIE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE  
SOUTHSIDE COMMISSION  
FOR SCOTLAND  
JANUARY 1988





## 3 Strategic Objectives

### 3.1 The overarching goal/vision of the service;

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.

#### Aberdeenshire Council Corporate vision statement



### Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – the very best of Scotland

#### The best area

Helping to create and sustain the best quality of life for all through:

- happy, healthy, confident people
- safe, friendly and lively communities
- an enterprising and adaptable economy
- our special environment and diverse culture

#### The best council

Aiming to provide excellent services for all by:

- involving, responding and enabling
- finding new and more efficient ways of doing things
- providing elected leadership for our area
- working with our partners in the North East and beyond
- always looking to the future





## **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.

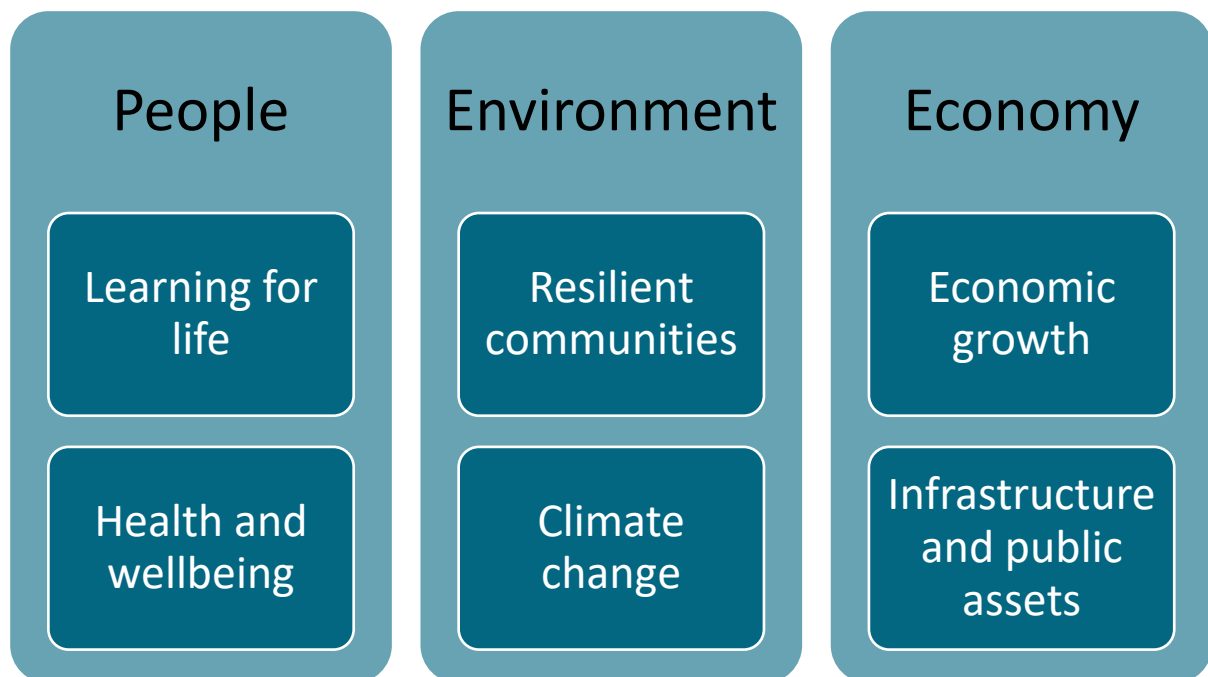
Aberdeenshire Council is committed to making the region more attractive to visitors and investors, as well as current and prospective residents. This entails, among other things, continuing to improve infrastructure (roads and bridges, digital, transport and housing), and ensuring future skills requirements 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 2022 - 2027](#) sets out 6 strategic priorities set within the parameters of the predicted financial shortfalls due to the pandemic:



Figure 4: Aberdeenshire Council Strategic priorities



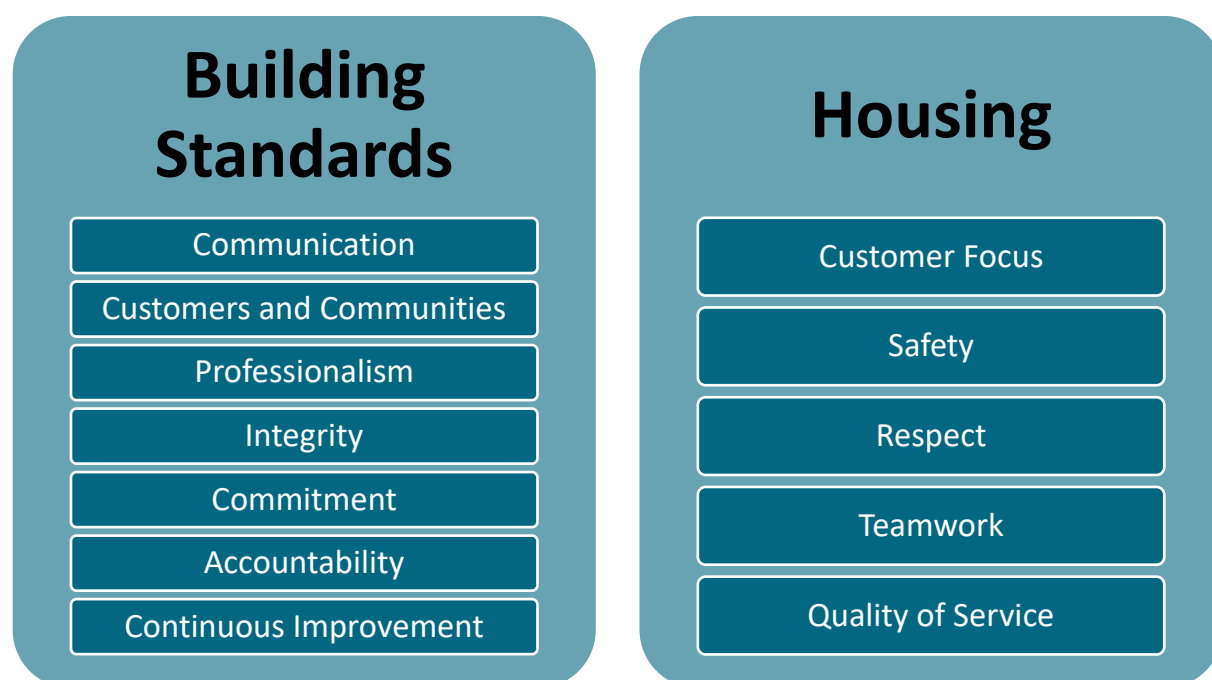




### 3.3 Our Values

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.

*Figure 5: Building Standards and Housing Staff Values*





### **3.4 Departmental issues to be addressed in the coming year;**

In the upcoming year, our department will focus on addressing several critical issues to enhance overall efficiency and performance. Key areas for improvement include:

- Reviewing all aspects of our dangerous building policy, process and administration. This includes improved stakeholder engagement, communications and guidance.
- Developing a workforce planning strategy in line with corporate guidance. This includes identifying the number of employees and the skill sets required to meet our strategic and service objectives. Then developing a plan to ensure we have a skilled workforce available to deliver those objectives.
- Prioritising budget optimisation to maximise our financial performance and support the departments long-term sustainability.
- Providing robust training for Building Standards Technical Assistants to ensure consistency. Investigate technology for site inspections including reviewing the mobile applications and virtual site inspection platforms. Review and monitor inspection areas to optimise coverage of geographical areas.

### **3.5 The key strategic objectives for the coming year**

Following on from Aberdeenshire's corporate priorities, Building Standards have developed a set of key priorities for 2024-25 aimed at assisting to fulfil the following corporate priorities:

Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy

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: near me platform, review of VSI guide, WhatsApp for Business

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 with BSD and participate in any audit as required

Engage and work with all stakeholders

Ensure the continued health, safety, and welfare of persons in or about buildings of Aberdeenshire: Update Dangerous Building Protocol

Corporate WorkSTYLE office accommodation review across Aberdeenshire

Continue to work in a hybrid model with a flexible approach to work with an emphasis on collaborative spaces and digital technology

For continuing improvements mention lone working

Procurement

Workforce Planning

Dangerous Building protocol project

Cyber Security Plan



## 4 Key Performance Outcomes and Targets

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

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes

Quality Customer Experience

Operational and Financial Efficiency

There are also three cross-cutting themes, comprising:

Public Interest

Continuous Improvement

Partnership Working



## 4.1 Summary of Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs)

### Professional Expertise and Technical Processes

<b>KPO1</b>	Minimise the time taken to issue a first report of issue a Building Warrant or amendment to Building Warrant
<b>KPO2</b>	Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction processes

### Quality Customer Experience

<b>KPO3</b>	Commit to the Building Standards customer charter
<b>KPO4</b>	Understand and respond to the customer experience

### Operational and Financial Efficiency

<b>KPO5</b>	Maintain financial governance
<b>KPO6</b>	Commit to digital services
<b>KPO7</b>	Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report





## 4.2 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 annually).
3.2	95% of BSD requests for information on a Scottish Government '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 including; plan checking, Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued, verification during construction and Completion Certificates being accepted
KPO7 Targets	
7.1	Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least annually)
7.2	Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024).





## 5 Performance Data

Aberdeenshire Council needs to demonstrate that it satisfies the requirements set out by the Scottish Government in the verification Operating Framework (published April 2024). 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 April 2024). This section includes a summary of our performance against the targets set out in the Performance Framework.

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 4: Annual totals for April 2023 to March 2024*

<b>Building warrants and amendments to building warrant</b>	Applications	2059
	Decisions	2115
<b>Completion certificates</b>	Submissions	2751
	Decisions	2439
<b>Certification</b>	Certificates of design submitted	811
	Certificates of construction submitted	262
<b>Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)</b>	Copy certificates received (domestic)	509
	Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	2
<b>Statement of Sustainability</b>	Copy certificates received (domestic)	568
	Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	3
<b>Enforcement</b>	Notices served under sections 25 to 30	4
	Cases referred to procurator fiscal	0
	Cases where LA has undertaken work	0



## 5.1 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

Requirements of the verifier:

1. Maintain records of applications received for building warrant and amendment to building warrant with breakdowns for reporting work categories and value of work categories.
2. Maintain records of the time taken from receipt of a valid application to issue a 'first report'.
3. Maintain records of the time taken from receipt of all satisfactory information to issue a building warrant or amendment to a building warrant.
4. 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.
5. Seek to minimise the time taken to issue a building warrant whilst maintaining high standards of verification.
6. Maintain records of applications for building warrants that utilised customer agreements

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In 2023 - 2024 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.

**In 2024 - 2025 we will:**

- Continue to ensure that all the requirements to maintain records are achieved and these are illustrated via the annual return to the Building Standards Division
- Maintain performance targets and continue to develop the service
- Continue to train staff on the latest technical updates and changes to the Building Regulations and supporting guidance



Table 9 below illustrates the KPO1 targets reported every quarter to committee and the Building Standards Division.

*Table 5: Summary of KPO1 quarterly targets*

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Q1 (Apr - Jun 2023)</b>	<b>Q2 (Jul - Sept 2023)</b>	<b>Q3 (Oct - Dec 2023)</b>	<b>Q4 (Jan - Mar 2024)</b>
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 10 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.

*Table 6: Annual KPO1 targets*

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023 - 24</b>
Percentage of building warrants or first day reports issued within 20 working days	95%	94%	98%	96%	97%	97%
Percentage of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days following receipt of satisfactory technical information	90%	94%	97%	96%	96%	96%



**KPO2****Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction process**

Requirements of the verifier:

1. Embed risk assessment methodologies into normal working practices for undertaking reasonable inquiry before accepting a completion certificate.
2. Issue Construction Compliance and Notification Plans (CCNP) in accordance with the nationally agreed VDC guidance with all building warrants issued.
3. Maintain records of CCNPs for 'accepted' completion certificates with breakdown into reporting work categories and value of work categories.
4. Maintain records of number of CCNPs that were fully achieved in terms of:
  - a. notification by the relevant person
  - b. inspection by the verifier
5. Maintain records of construction non-compliance locally and report trends and issues with a national impact to drive forward improvements in verification

In 2023 - 2024 we:

- Worked to increase the number of CCNPs complied with, aiming to improve the performance relating to KPO2.
- Introduced methods of collating compliance trends and these were reviewed quarterly at Management Team meetings.
- Reviewed the CCNP evidence for accepting completion.
- Developed our processes for maintaining records of construction non-compliance locally and reported on trends and issues with a national impact to drive forward improvements in verification.

**In 2024 – 2025 we will:**

- We will continue to work with our internal Building Standard Technical Assistant Group to improve consistency and compliance.
- We will continue to work with our internal Communication Working Group to improve consistency and compliance.
- Escalate national issues through Scottish Building Standards Hub for further discussion.



### Protocols for dealing with work

#### 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. Procedural guidance notes are held within Uniform and all other internal policy documents are accessible to all staff via Microsoft Teams.

### Performance management systems

The current ICT system is set up to record existing Key Performance Outcomes 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:

- Active workload lists (RAG system)
- Completion tasks
- Amended drawings lists
- Performance graphs
- Mystery shopping to ensure that the Customer Charter targets are met



### Training and development/CPD

Aberdeenshire Council Building Standards service supports staff to gain the necessary qualifications, continuing professional development and professional accreditation through individual personal performance plans. Several members of staff are currently working towards professional membership of RICS, CIOB or CABE.

Building Standards staff are fully participating in the Competency Assessment System (CAS). This reviews competencies and sets out individual training plans which identifies specific training needs as well as workforce development priorities.

Developed a 6-month Training Induction Programme for new employees to ensure consistency in training is achieved and maintained.

Various continuous professional development and staff engagement days are provided throughout the year.

Currently a member of staff is undertaking the Graduate Apprentice course, Construction and The Built Environment at RGU.

### 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 several staff who contribute to the various Local Authority Building Standards Scotland national working groups.
- Housing & Building Standards Workforce Planning Project group has been created to implement the corporate Workforce planning toolkit.



### 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 and Scottish Buildings Scotland Hub. 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 fire engineer's partnership agreement is under review 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
- Scottish Building Standards Hub

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



## 5.2 Quality Customer Experience

### **KPO3 Commit to the Building Standards Customer Charter**

Requirements of the verifier:

1. Maintain their customer charter and incorporate national performance targets and national and local information into the template.
2. Publish their customer charter prominently on the verifier website.
3. Ensure the facility for online applications through the Scottish Government eBuilding standards system is detailed in the customer charter.
4. 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)
5. Review the National Customer Charter regularly (at least annually) maintaining localised information to ensure contact details and appropriate website links are kept up to date.
6. Apply national building standards verification policies and interpretations.
7. Adhere to the commitments in the national customer charter.

#### **Targets:**

3.1 National Customer Charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (frequency of reviews to be at least annually).

3.2 95% of BSD requests for information on a Scottish Government 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days

In 2023-2024 we:

- Published the Enforcement Charter prominently within the customer charter and feedback section on our website, incorporating version control and annual review.
- Continued to review and update the customer charter and service standards to ensure the requirements of our customers were met.
- Ensured policies were updated accordingly and information relayed at Building Standards management team meetings following alerts to updated national building standards policies and interpretations.
- Responded to any requests from the Building Standards Division.



**In 2024 – 2025 we will:**

- Publish the Enforcement Charter prominently within the Customer Charter and feedback section on our website, incorporating version control and annual review.
- Continue to review and update the Customer Charter and service standards to ensure the requirements of our customers were met.
- Ensure policies are updated accordingly and information is 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

Requirements of the verifier:

1. To monitor and analyse customer feedback data received via the national customer survey platform.
2. Promote the national customer survey platform directly to customers and through customer engagement activities.
3. Use findings from the national customer survey for the purpose of customer segmentation.
4. Use findings from the national customer survey and local engagement to identify and make improvements to the customer experience.
5. Incorporate actions to improve the customer experience into the continuous improvement plan and monitor progress

### Targets:

4.1 Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10

In 2023 - 2024 we:

- The total number of responses to our online satisfaction feedback survey was 74
- We achieved an overall average customer satisfaction rating of 9.1 and 95.9%.
- Continued to hold our annual Agent forum which was combined with Development management as a result of customer feedback.
- Continued to analyse all customer feedback to inform our service improvement plan.
- Continued to attain accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence award.
- Continued to support the national customer survey and incorporate the survey into our website, key documentation, correspondence, and email signatures.
- Supported the Scottish Building Standards hub & Futures Board

### In 2024 – 2025 we will:

- Try to continue to maintain good customer satisfaction
- Continue to hold our annual Agent forum which is 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.
- Continue to support the national customer survey and incorporate the survey into our website, key documentation, correspondence, and email signatures.
- Support the Scottish Building Standards Hub & Futures Board





### **Customer communication strategies**

Review Building Standards information on our website regularly and including after customer feedback.

Implementation of Customer Briefings on our website to inform customers of service and legislative updates.

Continue to conduct an annual review of our customer consultation strategy which includes customer segmentation.

### **Customer Charter**

Publish the Building Standards Customer Charter on our website, incorporating version control and reviews.

The customer charter also sets out the service standards that you should expect when you interact with our service. All performance information including our mystery shopping results are detailed in our performance section on our website.

The customer charter is reviewed annually 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 (national/local)/analysing and changes to systems**

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 correspondence.

Agent forums are held annually as well as regular customer briefing 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 the National Building Standards customer satisfaction survey within all email correspondence as well as at completion which is 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



### **Accessibility of service**

Review and update our customer consultation strategy which includes a detailed analysis of customer segmentation.

Ensure accessibility to the service – the Building Standards Service is delivered locally across Aberdeenshire with six area teams.

### **Pre-application advice**

We 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 to assist. We do not charge for this service.

### **Customer agreements**

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 checking process.

### **Customer dissatisfaction (procedural or technical)**

Complaints – the Building Standards process is complicated 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. Information on “Have your say” is available on our website.

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 procedure.

### **Recognised external customer service accreditations**

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 2023.



## 5.3 Operational and Financial Efficiency

### KPO5

### Maintain Financial Governance

Requirements of the verifier:

1. 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
2. Maintain records of the value of work for building warrant and amendment applications and completion certificate submissions where no building warrant granted
3. 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. This includes the use of any emerging national time recording scheme agreed between LABSS and Scottish Government.
4. Undertake regular reviews of income and cost streams in order to inform and embed efficiency savings where possible.

### Targets:

5.1 Building Standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%)

In 2023 - 2024 we:

- Continued to monitor finances on a monthly basis.
- Ensured the National Approach to identifying costs is embedded in our service.

### In 2024 – 2025 we will:

- We will continue to monitor finances on a monthly basis.
- We will ensure the National Approach to identifying costs is embedded in our service.
- We will carry out a review of our various codes and budget lines.



## KPO6

## Commit to digital services

Requirements of the verifier:

1. eBuilding Standards details are published prominently on the website.
2. Maintain records of building warrant related applications and submissions through the eBuilding Standards portal
3. 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

### 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:

- plan checking.
- building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued
- verification during construction
- completion certificates being accepted

In 2023 - 2024 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.
- Continued 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.
- Continued to provide virtual site inspections and alternative evidence as appropriate





**In 2024 – 2025 we will:**

- Ensure eBuilding Standards details are published prominently on the website.
- Maintain records of building warrant related applications and submissions through the eBuilding Standards portal.
- Retain 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.
- Review technology and processes to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose and are being utilised to enhance eBuilding Standards delivery.
- Continue to provide virtual site inspections and alternative evidence as appropriate.



## **KPO7      Commit to objectives outlined in the Annual Performance Report**

Requirements of the verifier:

1. Maintain the annual verification performance report using the relevant template and set out performance in relation to the following:
  - a. Core perspectives:
    - i. Professional expertise and technical processes
    - ii. Quality customer experience
    - iii. Operational and financial efficiency
  - b. Cross cutting themes:
    - i. Public interest
    - ii. Continuous improvement
    - iii. Partnership working
2. Publish and promote the performance report prominently on the verifier website.
3. Review the performance report regularly (at least annually) and update any service or corporate changes.
4. Provide annual update to performance report on progress against the performance framework.

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### **Targets:**

7.1 Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least annually)

7.2 Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024).

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In 2023 - 2024 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).
- Ensured the report includes performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets.



**In 2024 – 2025 we will:**

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



### **Time recording system**

An electronic time recording system is in place to measure time spent on Verification / Non- Verification.

### **Financial monitoring/governance**

Aberdeenshire Council Corporate Services ensure strong financial governance of the Aberdeenshire Budget. A corporate management system is in place to monitor budget for Verification.

Regular budget meetings are held between The Building Standards Management Team and The Finance Team to review income and cost streams to inform and embed efficiency savings where possible.

Power Bi budget reports are available to managers, updated daily.

### **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 application submission 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 e.g. Internet, Intranet, 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 assessed electronically.

All staff are issued with appropriate equipment to carry out both paperless and virtual inspections.

We have now moved to Idox hosted system.



### Internal communication strategies

Aberdeenshire Building Standards Management Team consists of the Housing and Building Standards Manager, two Building Standards Team Managers and four Senior Building Standards Surveyors. Meetings are held 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, staff have access to the general Teams folder for the minutes of the meetings.

Building Standards 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 group meet regularly to develop best working practices.

Team talks are delivered virtually.

Staff training days are delivered face-to-face.

Information is also shared via Teams, emails and Viva 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.





Table 7: 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 annually)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)
3.2. 95% of BSD requests for information on a Scottish Government 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'
4.1. Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10	9.7	9.1	8.6	9.1
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



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	4 of 4 done	4 of 4 done	4 of 4 done
7.1. Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least annually)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)	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.1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)	Includes all performance data	Includes all performance data	Includes all performance data	Includes all performance data



Table 8: 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 annually)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)
3.2. 95% of BSD requests for information on a Scottish Government 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'
4.1. Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10	8.4	8.7	8.3	8.6
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	4 of 4 done	4 of 4 done	4 of 4 done
7.1. Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least annually)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)	Published prominently (with review)	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.1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)	Includes all performance data	Includes all performance data	Includes all performance data	Includes all performance data







## 6 Service Improvements and Partnership Working

Table 9: In the previous 12 months (April 2023 / March 2024) we have:

Number	Continuous Improvement Action	Status
1	Maintain and improve current levels of performance	complete
2	Work to increase the number of CCNPs complied with, aiming to improve the performance relating to KPO2	ongoing
3	Review the National Competency Assessment System (CAS) across Aberdeenshire's Building Standards Service	complete
4	Continue to promote Continuing Professional Development opportunities. Encourage members of staff to work towards professional membership	ongoing
5	Use the Council's Workforce Planning Toolkit to identify and prepare for future workforce needs	ongoing
6	Review the external partnership agreements in place for structural	complete
7	Review the external partnership agreements in place for fire engineers	ongoing
8	Ensure all new employees go through the training induction programme	ongoing
9	Continue to review and update the customer charter and ensure it meets the needs of our customers	complete
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 develop our website	ongoing
11	Continue to engage further with customers to keep them informed of any changes to the Building Standards service via website and customer briefing	ongoing
12	Continue to hold our annual virtual Agent forum in partnership with Development Management	complete



<b>13</b>	Explore closer partnership working arrangements with other service to improve outcomes for the customer	ongoing
<b>14</b>	Continue to analyse all customer feedback to inform our service improvement plan	complete
<b>15</b>	Continue to attain accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence award	complete
<b>16</b>	Monitor and review finances on a quarterly basis	complete
<b>17</b>	Progress eBuilding Standards in relation to mobile working	ongoing
<b>18</b>	Implement changes from National Working Groups	complete
<b>19</b>	Implement the new ways of working corporate Workstyle strategy which has a focus on hybrid working and creating collaborative spaces	complete
<b>20</b>	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	complete



Table 10: In the next 12 months (April 2024 / March 2025) we will:

Number	Continuous Improvement Action	Status
1	Work to increase the number of CCNPs complied with, aiming to improve the performance	ongoing
2	Continue to promote Continuing Professional Development opportunities. Encourage members of staff to work towards professional membership	ongoing
3	Use the Council's Workforce Planning Toolkit to identify and prepare for future workforce needs	ongoing
4	Review the external partnership agreements in place for fire engineers	ongoing
5	Ensure all new employees go through the training induction programme	ongoing
6	Continue to conduct an annual review of our customer consultation strategy which includes customer segmentation. In particular, the focus will be on continuing to develop our website and customer briefing keeping all customers up to date	ongoing
7	Explore closer partnership working arrangements with other service to improve outcomes for the customer	ongoing
8	Continue to develop virtual site inspections and mobile working	ongoing
9	Develop and implement robust lone working procedure in collaboration with housing	ongoing
10	Review of Dangerous Building protocols and procedures involving all relevant stakeholders	ongoing
11	Continue to develop and implement the cyber security plan	ongoing
12	Maintain and improve current levels of performance	ongoing
13	Continue to hold our annual virtual Agent forum in partnership with other services	ongoing
14	Continue to analyse all customer feedback to inform our service improvement plan	ongoing



In the previous 12 months (2023/24) 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
- External Fire Engineering Consultants
- External Structural Engineers
- Agent Forum
- Scottish Building Standards Hub

**In the next 12 months (2024/25) 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 Scottish Building Standards Hub
- Elmhurst training on SAP and SBEM, iMist fire suppression training & SNIPEF









## 7 Additional information

### 7.1 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



### 7.2 Additional reading

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



Scottish Type Approval Scheme (STAS)





## 7.3 Feedback

We aim to continually improve our service. Should you wish to provide feedback on any aspect of this report then please get in touch.

Contact us



Have your say

