

Annual Performance Report 2020/21



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Welcome

Aberdeenshire's Annual Performance Report is an integral part of our ongoing commitment to provide clear and consistent information to tell you how we have performed.

This report covers the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Our Annual Performance Report 2019/20 formally closed down our Council Plan 2017-22 and our revised Council Plan 2020-22 was agreed on 7 October 2020. This Annual Performance Report therefore lets you know our progress with the previous priorities and provides an update on development of our new priorities and strategic framework up to 31 March as well as looking at our plans for the future.

2020/21 was a year like no other and one that no-one could have anticipated. The response in Aberdeenshire and support of our partners, communities, community groups and volunteers once again demonstrated the resilience and community spirit that Aberdeenshire is renowned for.

In August 2020 we carried out our first Aberdeenshire wide Community Impact Assessment in response to the pandemic. The results have been widely used across the organisation to inform many strategic decisions including our Council Priorities, our Directorate and Area Plans, our Medium-Term Financial Strategy and many more.

Our Best Value Assurance Report was published by Audit Scotland in October 2020. The report was a fair and balanced view of the organisation and since then we have been working hard to implement the recommendations in the report, including reviewing our priorities and refreshing our approach to performance and continuous improvement.

I hope the report provides a clear insight into where we have performed well over the past 12 months as well as where we can improve.

Jim Savege, Chief Executive



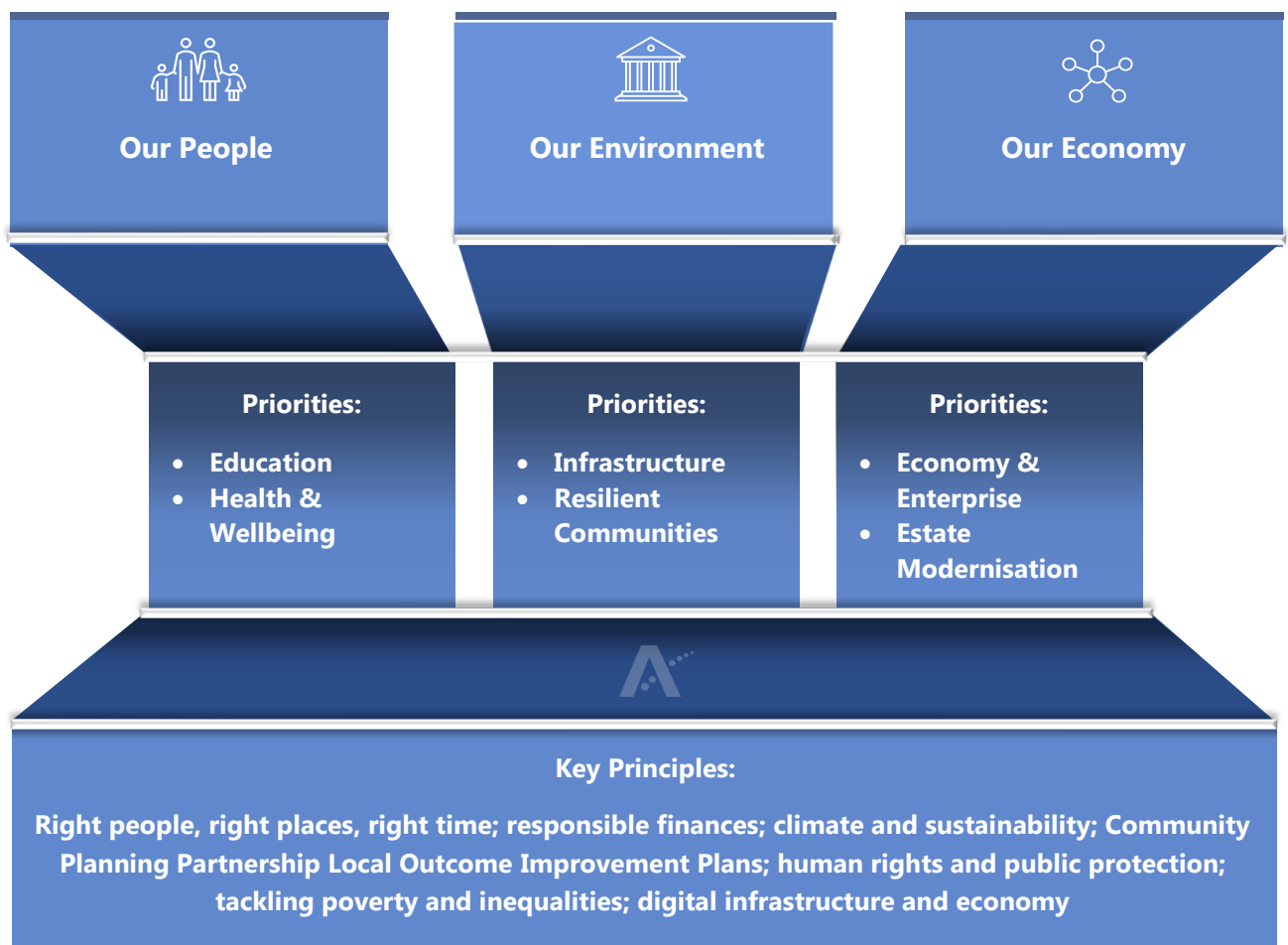
Introduction

The council is committed to being a high performing council and we are working hard to embed a culture of continuous improvement.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic impacted our approach to delivering services and in light of this, we reviewed our plan and refreshed our Priorities in October 2020.

The Council Plan 2020-22 is centred around three pillars:

- Our People
- Our Environment and
- Our Economy



Under these pillars, sit strategic priorities, which are supported by Council Priorities contained within our directorate and area plans. This ensures that all employees understand their part in the delivery of the new priorities and what they can do to help make a difference.

We would welcome your comments on our performance or any feedback about this report. Or if you would simply like further information then please contact us via email: performance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk



A day in the life...

We have a responsibility to provide hundreds of services to the residents and communities of Aberdeenshire. On an average day during 2020/21 we:

- Registered eight births, 10 deaths, six Marriage Notices and one Civil Ceremony
- Received an average of 527 calls to our Contact Centre, 481 of which are resolved at First Point of Contact
- Spent £305,019 on capital projects
- Collected £711,969 of Council Tax
- 36,317 pupils attended 150 primary schools, 17 academies and 4 special schools
- Around 34,400 people followed us on Twitter
- 665 visits to our Humanitarian Assistance Centre website
- Provided assistance to our communities 30 times through our Humanitarian Assistance Centre
- Allocated around £800 worth of grants to local communities
- Logged, investigated, and responded to six complaints
- Recycled 45 tonnes of household waste

Our achievements

Education & Children's Service

- **Apprenticeships**

Over 300 pupils from secondary schools across Aberdeenshire gained their Foundation Apprenticeship. A foundation apprenticeship combines in class learning with a related work placement and is the equivalent to a Higher.

- **Wellbeing Award**

The Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS) is delivered by Optimus Education in partnership with the National Children's Bureau and sets a national standard for promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing. Kintore is the first school in Aberdeenshire to have received this recognition which highlights the team's efforts to ensure emotional wellbeing is a responsibility for all, to actively promote positive mental health among staff and pupils and embed this within learning experiences, and to raise awareness in and have a positive impact upon the wider community.

- **Educational Psychology**

Aberdeenshire Council's Educational Psychology Service immediately established a vital phonenumber for parents in March 2020 in response to the national lockdown. It created a confidential channel for parents/carers to speak to someone about their anxieties and concerns around home schooling, the wellbeing of their children or indeed to talk about how they were or were not coping themselves. We offered immediate support, advice and reassurance, with a call-back service offered to those who felt more confident in emailing in the first instance.

Live Life Aberdeenshire (LLA)

- **Live Life at Home**

During the coronavirus pandemic, LLA staff were be redeployed to support @critical services, Live Life Aberdeenshire, the sports and cultural services of Aberdeenshire Council, rose to the challenge to provide an online offering for its communities to ensure their physical and mental wellbeing during the pandemic lockdown. Within less than two weeks a suite of free services were made available as part of a new Live Life @ Home platform with dedicated resources and information for communities, to bring some relief from restrictions on daily life, offering opportunities for exercise, entertainment, learning and improved wellbeing. Bringing digital library services, exercise sessions, virtual tours, make-and-do activities, local history and more together into one place on the Live Life Aberdeenshire website for the first time, it is designed to be a one-stop virtual shop of creativity and activity.

Health & Social Care

- **Workforce, resilience and adaptability**

The hard work, commitment and resilience of the Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) workforce has been critical to the safe and effective delivery of health and social care services within exceptionally challenging circumstances. Many staff from other Council services were redeployed to the HSCP to support delivery of critical services to ensure continuity of safe care and to support key functions within the whole system response to Covid 19. Some Aberdeenshire Advanced Health Professionals were deployed to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary to help manage patient flow and discharges. At the same time, colleagues from Live Life Aberdeenshire (LLA) service were redeployed to support many critical HSCP services and were particularly key to the HSCP's response in ensuring the safe and effective availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and to continuity of service within our care homes. Many HSCP staff have had to adjust to working from home on a full-time basis as all non-essential buildings-based activities have ceased.

Housing

- **Lettable standard for Council housing**

On 3 September 2020 the Council announced that the new lettable standard for Council Housing was to be adopted. The approach aims to reduce the length of time a property is unavailable for use between tenancies, during which time the property is classed as 'void'. A review of the council's void process was carried out in 2019, with a focus on reducing re-let times. As part of its findings, the

council will work with outgoing tenants to undertake any necessary action before they leave a property, with the council progressing upgrades and improvements when a new tenant has moved in. This revised approach also means that incoming tenants will have more of a say on the upgrades in their new home and will be asked to sign an agreement on the works to be undertaken in their home as part of their acceptance of a tenancy. By reducing the number of days a property is empty, it is anticipated that up to £1million of rent losses can be avoided.

Transportation

- **Kintore railway station**

In October the new station in Kintore was opened. Funded by Transport Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans, the £15 million station was built by Network Rail and has fully accessible, step-free access between platforms via a footbridge with lifts. The station, which will be managed by ScotRail, is also the largest electric vehicle charging location in north east Scotland, with 24 of the 168 spaces at the new transport hub fitted with charging points. Reopening Kintore has been made possible by double-tracking the line between Aberdeen and Inverurie, delivered as part of the Aberdeen-Inverness Improvement Project. The station has 168 car parking spaces, including disabled and electric charging spaces, bike storage, connection into the local bus network and links to the Inverurie-Kintore cycle path. The original Kintore station opened in 1854 and was closed in 1964 as part of the Beeching cuts. Its history has been incorporated into the new facility with features from the previous station, including heritage benches and salvaged signs.

- **Zero emission vehicles**

In October it was announced that the Council has taken delivery of five new electric vehicles and two hydrogen vehicles. These zero-emission vehicles - which were 75% funded by the Scottish Government's 'Switched on Fleets' initiative - will replace older vehicles within the local authority's fleet. The two Nissan ENV200 vans, three Nissan Leaf cars and two Toyota Mirai hydrogen cars have already been providing support to a number of key council services ranging from Waste and Roads to Car Parks and Social Care. By 2032, the Scottish Government intends to phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans in Scotland. Aberdeenshire Council now has 24 zero-emission and hybrid vehicles in its fleet and, as technology advances and more vehicles come to market, the authority is able to introduce vehicles which are fit-for-purpose and suit the distances staff need to travel to provide frontline services across the region.

- **Cycling friendly employer award**

Aberdeenshire Council has guaranteed the Cycling Friendly Employer Award for three buildings – Woodhill House in Aberdeen, Gordon House in Inverurie and Buchan House in Peterhead – and will continue working on improving all their facilities.

- **Edinburgh Biodiversity Declaration**

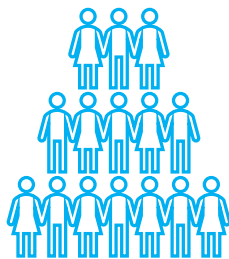
In December 2020 it was also announced that Aberdeenshire Council had become the first Scottish local authority to sign an important declaration

committing its support for local action on conservation of biodiversity. The Edinburgh Biodiversity Declaration was submitted to COP15 – the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of Parties – when it met Kunming, China in May 2021. Its aim is to send a strong message to conference that supporting local action is key to protecting the natural environment on which we all depend. The vision for the 2021 conference is to ensure a world where we are “living in harmony with nature”. Aberdeenshire Council’s Sustainability Committee agreed to sign the Edinburgh Declaration.

Awards

- **Grampian Humanitarian Assistance Centre**

Aberdeenshire Council has been Commended by the MJ Local Government Achievement 2021 Awards for the launch and coordination of the [Grampian Humanitarian Assistance Centre](#) (HAC) which was established in March 2020 to respond to the pandemic. The HAC provided a lifeline for affected communities and individuals in Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray and acted as a focal point for support and information. From 12 October 2020 to 22 April 2021 the Aberdeenshire HAC



847 winter wellbeing support calls to be made to individuals on the shielding list identified as being on low income, ensuring they had access to help and support over the festive period



Support provided by

- 300 community groups
- more than 4,000 volunteers and
- 60 Aberdeenshire Council staff



- Made over 7,900 outbound calls to individuals self-isolating or shielding
- Handled over 2,000 incoming calls
- Fulfilled over 1,200 assistance requests generated through incoming calls, website forms and support for isolation calls.

- **Aberdeenshire Proposed Local Development Plan 2020**

Aberdeenshire’s Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 [online interactive tool](#) is a finalist in the Digital Transformation category of the MJ Awards 2021. Amidst a global pandemic, the Planning Service embarked upon delivering an online consultation for its Proposed Local Development Plan 2020. A microsite was created which included a virtual drop-in room, an interactive story map, three short films,



interactive activities for young people and additional resources to assist communities.

The online presence was available 24-hours, 7-days a week. Users could access and digest the information available at their leisure. A 'Live Chat' function was also made available to allow users to speak directly with a Planning Officer as they would have been able to at a real world event. The online tool removed the need to travel by car to go to a public hall at a particular time and date to provide views and feedback on the proposed LDP. This saved time and resources as well as being more convenient for consultees.

Challenges and impact of Covid

• **Aberdeenshire Community Testing Programme**

Following a targeted community testing pilot programme at several sites in Scotland, the Scottish Government contacted NHS Boards and Local Authorities in late December 2020 seeking proposals to expand the community testing programme. The focus of the programme would be to target communities which could benefit from additional testing capacity based on data and local understanding whilst also enabling different models to be tested that would build knowledge and experience of interventions that could be deployed to communities responding to the variables that exist within each community, as part of a national control programme.

Within Aberdeenshire the community testing proposal focused on Peterhead. This community was identified as potentially benefiting from a testing facility because evidence from Public Health indicated:

- A higher incidence of infection
- Concern about community transmission and stubborn prevalence of virus
- The ability to build on learning from the approach in response to fish processing sector surge
- The community testing approach was proposed to be delivered initially over a 12-week period, and include:
- Walk-in community asymptomatic testing within the vicinity of the town centre. No appointment will be necessary
- Available to everyone who lives, works, studies in Peterhead

Targeted delivery of home testing kits to those who are shielding/clinically high risk, have mobility issues or other issues which would reduce ability to engage with a community testing centre.

Targeted communications to the Peterhead community throughout the programme to encourage regular asymptomatic testing and wider understanding and engagement on Covid -19 testing arrangements

• **Vaccination programme**

Aberdeenshire Council played an important role supporting NHS Grampian and the Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership with this vital programme. Large

sports facilities and community halls were re-purposed as vaccination clinics, council staff were deployed to help, a volunteer workforce stepped up, a contact centre was established, and the Passenger Transport Unit provided help and advice for residents needing help with travel.









- **Education**

The Education Service had to overcome many challenges over the last year, adapting to online teaching when schools were closed and ensuring then when the schools opened again, that they were safe for students. Some of the measures put in place were as follows: One-way systems in school for pupils and staff, signage across the school to support messaging, separate entrances for different year groups, hand-sanitising stations and face-covering checks at all school entrances, staff patrolling corridors throughout breaks and lunchtimes, adjusted school transport times, school timetables simplified where possible to reduce contacts, changed arrangements for PE/HE/Music/Technical and other practical subjects and many more.

Critical to our performance and continuous improvement activity is the work of our Audit Committee. You can learn more about the work they have done from the Audit Committee Annual Report which was considered by Audit Committee on [4 November 2021](#).

Performance trends: council plan 2017-22

Performance indicator status and trend key

	Significantly below target (red)
	Slightly below target (amber)
	On target
	Data only – no target has been set
	Performance improving
	No change or new measure
	Performance declining
	New measure/baseline year of introduction

Performance scorecard: council plan 2017-22

Council Plan 2017-2022	
	Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy
	Have the best possible transport and digital links across our communities
	Provide the best life chances for all our children and young people by raising levels of attainment and achievement
	Work with parents and carers to support children through every stage of their development
	Encourage active lifestyles and promote well-being with a focus on obesity & mental health
	Have the right mix of housing across all of Aberdeenshire
	Support the delivery of the Health & Social Care Strategic Plan
	Work to reduce poverty and inequalities within our communities
	Deliver responsible, long-term financial planning
	Have the right people, in the right place, doing the right thing, at the right time
	Protect our special environment, including tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Council plan 2017-22 Priority	Number of Indicators reported in 2020/21									
	Status						Long Trend			
						No Data				
Priority 01 - Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy	7	1	0	1	0	0	2	6	1	0
Priority 02 - Have the best possible transport and digital links across our communities Two indicators relating to road traffic safety will be validated and updated in September	5	1	2	0	0	2	4	4	0	2

Council plan 2017-22 Priority	Number of Indicators reported in 2020/21									
	Status						Long Trend			
						No Data				
Priority 03 - Provide the best life chances for all our children and young people by raising levels of attainment and achievement  8 Indicators impacted by the cancellation of ACEL 2019/20 data. Additional three indicators impacted by covid and a further two awaiting external info. Five indicators based on 2019/20 "Insight" benchmarking data*	9	2	1	0	0	13	7	4	1	13
Priority 04 - Work with parents and carers to support children through every stage of their development 	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Priority 05 - Encourage active lifestyles and promote wellbeing with a focus on obesity and mental health  Two indicators impacted by covid	0	0	3	0	0	5	0	3	0	5
Priority 06 - Have the right mix of housing across all of Aberdeenshire 	9	1	10	0	1	4	7	10	1	7
Priority 07 - Support the delivery of the Health and Social Care strategic plan 	3	0	3	0	0	4	1	5	0	4
Priority 08 - Work to reduce poverty and	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0











Council plan 2017-22 Priority	Number of Indicators reported in 2020/21									
	Status						Long Trend			
						No Data				
inequalities within our communities										
Priority 09 - Deliver responsible, long-term financial planning	2	2	4	0	0	0	5	3	0	0
Priority 10 - Have the right people, in the right place, doing the right thing, at the right time Surveys not taken during this period for two indicators. Count based on 1 st /2 nd quarter for four indicators	7	1	2	0	0	3	7	2	0	4
Priority 11- Protect our special environment, including tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions	2	0	0	2	0	1	3	1	0	1

Performance trends: council plan 2020-22

Performance indicator status and trend key

- Significantly below target (red)
- Slightly below target (amber)
- On target
- Data only – no target has been set
- Performance improving
- No change or new measure
- Performance declining
- New measure/baseline year of introduction

Performance scorecard: council plan 2020-22

Council Plan 2020-2022		
	Pillar	Priority
	Education Health & wellbeing Economy & enterprise	To secure continuous improvement in outcomes for all children and young people
	Education Health & wellbeing Resilient communities	To have better, integrated working arrangements in pursuit of improved outcomes for children and young people
	Education Estate modernisation Health & wellbeing Economy and enterprise	Efficient and effective business support, advice and regulation
	Resilient communities	Effective delivery of the Council's priorities through a programme of digital innovation and web-based services
	Health & wellbeing	Our workforce plans are sustainable, affordable and supports employee wellbeing
	Economy & enterprise	Income is maximised through reducing costs alongside commercialisation
	Estate modernisation	We have an estate that is sustainable, efficient and fit for purpose
	Health and Wellbeing Resilient communities	To protect and support public health, community mental and physical health and build community resilience as we adapt to live with Covid-19
	Health & wellbeing Resilient communities	Open spaces that encourage active, healthy lifestyles
	Infrastructure	A road and street-lighting network which keeps people safe, encourages active lifestyles and increases active travel opportunities

Council Plan 2020-2022

	Pillar	Priority
	Health & wellbeing Resilient communities	
✓	Infrastructure Resilient communities	Ensuring that residents and business across Aberdeenshire are prepared to adapt to effects of climate change including the risk of flooding ¹
✓	Infrastructure Health & wellbeing	Waste and recycling service which supports our attractive environment and reduces emissions
✓	Infrastructure Economy & enterprise	Keeping communities connected through the provision of an affordable, reliable and well-connected passenger transport service ²
✓	Infrastructure Health & wellbeing	It's easy and safe to move around local areas using good-quality active travel routes, streets and roads ³
✓	Infrastructure Economy & enterprise	Safeguard the built and natural environment
✓	Resilient communities Economy & enterprise	Placemaking to meet the current and future needs of communities through Participatory Budgeting and Asset Transfer and other ways of supporting communities to help themselves, enabling community wealth building that supports local economic opportunities ⁴
✓	Resilient communities Economy & enterprise	A location of choice that has a diverse economic base of innovative companies with a skilled workforce and return to full employment
✓	Resilient communities Economy and enterprise	The gap between economic, environmental and social outcomes in Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead and the Aberdeenshire average is closed and other towns at risk have avoided becoming regeneration priorities ⁵

¹ Action only in Pentana, no indicators








² Action only in Pentana, no indicators

³ Action only in Pentana, no indicators

⁴ Action only in Pentana, no indicators

⁵ Action only in Pentana, no indicators

Council Plan 2020-2022

	Pillar	Priority
	Economy & enterprise	Supporting Aberdeenshire businesses through pandemic, Brexit and energy transition ⁶
	Health and wellbeing Resilient communities Economy and enterprise	Consumers are assured that businesses are conforming to regulations. Businesses are supported to ensure compliance with legislation, economic diversification and energy transition
	Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Develop existing partnerships and build new ones with our key stakeholders ⁷
	Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Community-based services are delivered in health & social care ⁸
	Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Person-centred care is delivered in a sustainable way ⁹
	Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Appropriate support is provided for those who are facing homelessness
	Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required
	Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Tenancies are sustained/community capacity building Communities feel empowered and enabled


⁶ Action only in Pentana, no indicators







⁷ No information held in Pentana















⁸ No information held in Pentana













⁹ No information held in Pentana

Council Plan 2020-2022













	Pillar	Priority
	Education	People are supported to live healthy active lifestyles focused on Live Life Outdoors, Live Life Well and Live Life @ home
	Health and wellbeing	
	Resilient communities	
	Estate modernisation	

Council plan 2020-22 Priority	Number of Indicators reported in 2020/21										
	Status						Long Trend				
						No Data					No data
Income is maximised through reducing costs alongside commercialisation (measuring commenced 2021/22) 	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
We have an estate that is sustainable and fit for purpose 	3	0	1	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	
A road and streetlighting network which keeps people safe, encourages active lifestyle and increases active travel opportunities  Awaiting figures from transport Scotland for four indicators- two indicators LGBF 2019/20 data	8	1	2	2	0	5	6	7	0	4	1

Council plan 2020-22 Priority	Number of Indicators reported in 2020/21										
	Status						Long Trend				
						No Data					No data
Safeguard the built and natural environment 	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Effective delivery of the Council's priorities through a programme of digital innovation and web-based services (measuring commenced 2021/22) 	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required 	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Tenancies are sustained/communit y capacity building communities feel empowered and enabled 	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Efficient and effective business support advice and regulation  One indicator is calculated on most recent quarter, two indicators are LGBF data form 2019/20	11	1	3	2	0	0	6	10	1	0	0
People are supported to live	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	4	0	2	0

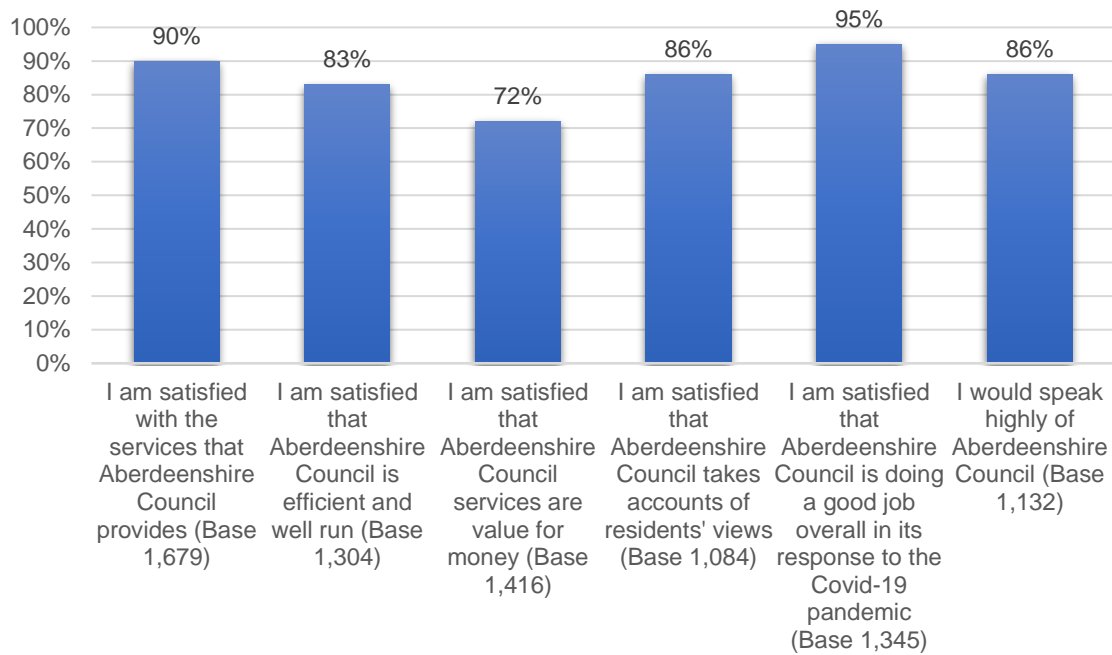
Council plan 2020-22 Priority	Number of Indicators reported in 2020/21										
	Status						Long Trend				
						No Data					No data
healthy active lifestyles focused on live life outdoors, live life well and live life at home  Two indicators impacted by Covid											
To have better working arrangements in pursuit of improved outcomes for children and young people  Two indicators based on 2019/20 LGBF data – “Insight” benchmarking tool	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0
To secure continuous improvement in outcomes for all children and young people  Four indicators based on 2019/20 data – “insight” benchmarking tool. Eight indicators impacted by cancellation of ACEL data collection due to Covid. One additional indicator impacted by Covid	8	2	2	0	0	10	7	4	1	9	1
Appropriate support is provided for those	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0

Council plan 2020-22 Priority	Number of Indicators reported in 2020/21										
	Status						Long Trend				
						No Data					No data
who are facing homelessness 											
Consumers are assured that businesses are conforming to regulations, businesses are supported to ensure compliance with legislation, economic diversification and energy transition 	5	0	1	1	0	0	5	2	0	0	0
Three indicators are 2019/20 LGBF data											
Open spaces that encourage active healthy lifestyles 	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Two indicators are LGBF 2019/20 data											
Our workforce plans are sustainable, affordable and support employee wellbeing 	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
Two indicators commenced reporting in 2021/22											
To protect and support public health, community mental and physical health and build community resilience as we	1	0	2	0	0	2	2	1	0	1	1

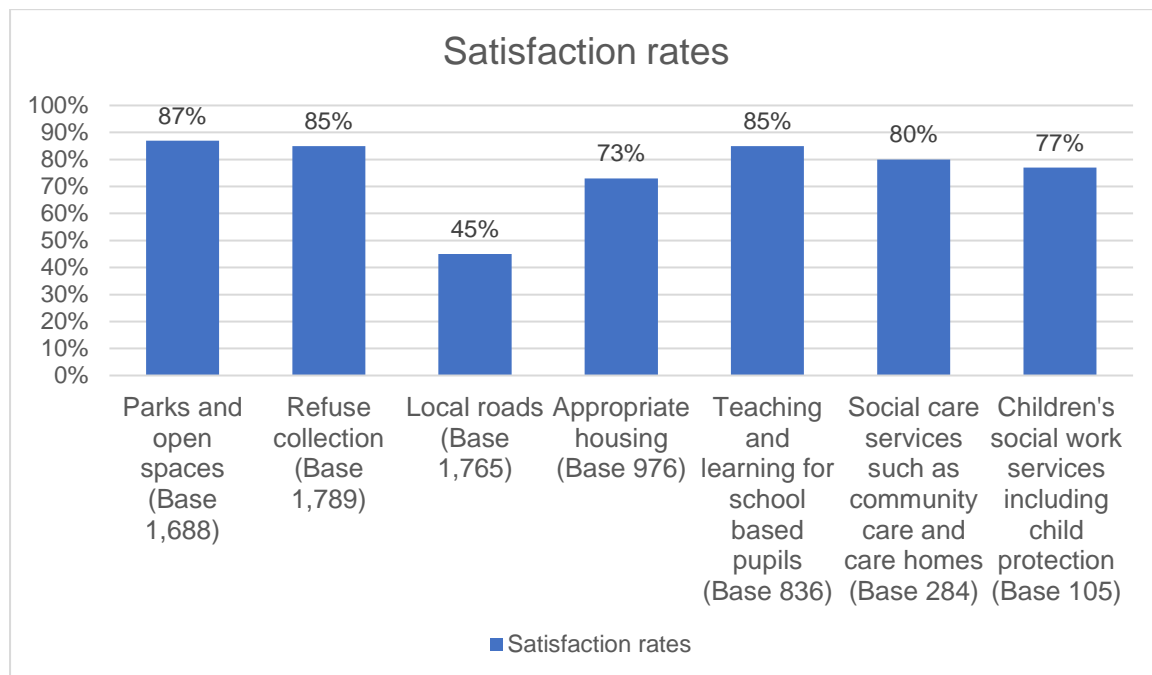
Council plan 2020-22 Priority	Number of Indicators reported in 2020/21										
	Status						Long Trend				
						No Data					No data
adapt to live with Covid19 											
Waste and recycling services which support our attractive environment and reduce emissions 	4	0	3	1	1	0	4	5	0	0	0
A location of choice that has a diverse economic base of innovative companies with a skilled workforce and return to full employment  Six indicators based on LGBF 2019/20 data	7	0	3	1	0	0	6	4	0	0	0

What you told us

Every month an independent research company asks 150 residents (25 in each administrative area) how we are performing as a council. This is what you said in 2020/21.



Residents were asked to give their overall satisfaction with our services. Here's what you told us about our services during 2020/21.



Community impact assessment 2020

Findings from our first Community Impact Assessment was presented to Aberdeenshire Council on [7 October 2020](#). The assessment highlighted how communities were affected by Covid-19, the relative vulnerability of communities, the services and assets that supported communities during the pandemic and communities' needs and priorities for the future. Our data also highlights equalities considerations so that strategic planning and decision-making actively considers the



impact that Covid-19 has had on communities, vulnerabilities are understood, opportunities are identified for recovery and appropriate actions are taken.

The main highlights from the Community Impact Assessment were -

- People were concerned about their jobs, education and safety in their community
- One in four residents were consuming more alcohol
- Some people felt anxious, lonely or isolated
- Community groups reacted well, but there was concern about sustainability and future capacity
- People were confident that they could ask neighbours for help
- People wanted to support local businesses
- People were positive about volunteering in their local area
- Almost all people told us they kept in touch with friends and family about the same as before or more often
- People were positive about their local area, the community they live in and value open space and paths
- The reduction in grass-cutting was welcomed by some because of the improved biodiversity, but not all people agreed
- Data on vulnerabilities can identify locations where additional support may be necessary
- There was a positive uptake in the use of technology, but more needs to be done for the digitally excluded
- The limitations of this process and report were recognised, given the restrictions in place at the time, however the impact on certain groups, particularly the vulnerable, will need further action
- It was welcomed that the Council responded quickly with funding

The results of our CIA have informed our Directorate and Area Plans, our Medium-Term Financial Strategy, our Equality Outcomes and many more strategic decisions.

Our complaints handling 2020/21

The Aberdeenshire Council Complaints procedure is as follows:

- Front Line stage (Stage one) complaints could mean immediate action to resolve the problem or complaints which are resolved in no more than five working days.
- Investigation stage (Stage two) deals with two types of complaints: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.
- After the Council has fully investigated the complaint, and if the customer is still not satisfied with the decision or the way the Council dealt with the complaint, then it can be referred onto the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO).

The Revised Model Complaints Handling Procedure

The SPSO published a revised Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) for Local Authorities on 31 January 2020 and this has now been implemented by Aberdeenshire Council.

Complaints performance indicators

The MCHP requires organisations to report on and publish complaints performance information in line with complaints performance indicators published by the SPSO.

In **2020/21**

Total complaints	1678
Complaints resolved at stage one and within timescale	1047
Complaints that went to stage 2 and were resolved within timescale	271
Percentage of complaints partially or fully upheld	41%
Investigations initiated by Scottish Public-Sector Ombudsman	40

Number of complaints received by Directorate			
Directorate	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Business Services	274	166	Declining
Education and Children's Services	284	204	Declining
Health & Social Care Partnership	57	42	Declining
Infrastructure Services	1,204	1,225	Increasing
Live Life Aberdeenshire	72	41	Declining
Total	1,891	1,678	Declining

We actively use feedback to implement positive changes to the service we provide to our customers.

The following decision report summary taken from the SPSO website demonstrates good practice and is a prime example of the council's Feedback Team working with a service to respond and address a customer complaint appropriately. While the SPSO acknowledged that the customer disagreed with the council's position they also recognised that the Council's investigation and response were reasonable and decided not to take the complaint forward to investigation.

Miss A was concerned about the speed of vehicles passing through Tarland and felt that the council were not taking her concerns seriously. The Roads Service explained that they had carried out a speed survey and that the results were shared with the Road Safety Unit and Police Scotland who had no concerns regarding the safety of the road. The Council explained how the survey was carried out and explained that the none of the criteria required for traffic calming were met. In her complaint Miss A queried why some smaller villages and settlements had traffic calming measures but Tarland did not. It was explained to Miss A in the response that this was likely because these measures were introduced when the council followed a different policy.

What others told us

As a council we undertake a self-evaluation each year to understand how we are doing and where we need to improve. Our 2020/21 evaluation 'How Good is Our Council?' indicates that overall, we have important strengths with areas for improvement. Our most recent summary self-assessment and evaluation is available [on our website](#).

To ensure the council is delivering Best Value and meeting both statutory requirements and the needs of the residents and communities of Aberdeenshire, it is essential that external, independent organisations scrutinise and inspect what we are doing and recommend actions we need to take to make improvements. Our own self-assessment and evaluation will help inform scrutiny undertaken by external scrutiny bodies.

Annual Audit – 2020/21 information will be updated when available during October 2022

Each year the council is audited by Audit Scotland or an external auditor appointed by Audit Scotland. The external audit focuses on whether the council is managing its finances to the highest standards and achieving the best possible value for public money. The audit is reported to Aberdeenshire Council and any action required by the council is monitored by the Audit Committee.

Findings of the most recent audit (2019/20) are summarised below and the detailed report can be accessed [here](#).

Audit Area:	Main Judgements:
Financial Management	<p>Financial management is effective, enabling the council to take appropriate action to manage resources at the corporate level. Budget monitoring reports should however contain more service analysis to support wider scrutiny by elected members. This applies to all committees but should commence with Education and Children's Services.</p> <p>The council manages a medium term financial plan, a 15-year, £880m capital plan and a reserves policy, including earmarked balances, which allows a more strategic approach to financial planning and decision making.</p>
Financial Sustainability	<p>The council's pre-Covid general fund revenue budget for 2020/21 is £606m and includes a savings requirement of £9m. Largely through planned use, usable reserves have reduced by 30% over the last five years.</p> <p>The council regularly reviews its Medium term Financial Strategy including the use of earmarked balances. The next review, to be reported in November 2020, will reflect an updated position on the impact of Covid-19. An initial financial assessment identified a potential Covid impact of £30m in 2020/21.</p>
Wider Governance Arrangements	
Governance and Transparency	<p>There are appropriate governance arrangements in place and the council is open and transparent in the way it conducts its business.</p> <p>Covid-19 did not have a significant impact on governance arrangements and business has continued to operate largely as normal.</p> <p>The development of the Adaptive Services Board and the member led Recovery Reference Group provide a sound framework to support the council's Recovery Strategy.</p>
Best Value	<p>The Best Value review found that the pace of change has been slow in some key aspects of best value since the last report in 2013.</p> <p>Over 50% of statutory performance indicators reported in the year showed improvement or remained comparable with the previous year.</p>

In October 2020, Audit Scotland published the [Aberdeenshire Council Best Value Assurance Report](#). The report notes that much of the work for this audit was undertaken before the Covid-19 emergency. As such the report does not consider the additional and sizeable pressure that this has placed on the council.

BVAR Findings	
Audit Area	Main judgements
Strategic Direction	The council's high-level priorities are vague and not sufficiently focused. There are positive working relationships between officers and members and political decision-making is consensual. Area working is fundamental to the way the council operates and it is embedded within its culture. Scrutiny has improved but further challenge is required by elected members to drive improvement
Performance	With performance slightly better than the Scottish average, there has been some improvement against national indicators over the last five years. The council's performance is, however, poor in important areas such as educational attainment for more disadvantaged pupils and the management of void housing. The council has been slow to develop a performance framework to report progress on council priorities. Reports are comprehensive but progress is difficult to assess. The council should use benchmarking targets and family grouping data to support improvement activity. Most services consistently receive high scores on the council's monthly satisfaction reputation tracker
Resources	The council has had a relatively stable financial position but the rising cumulative funding gap, exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic, will require stronger leadership from elected members. The council has been slow to develop a strategic workforce plan. Despite a range of initiatives, teacher recruitment and retention remain a challenge. The council approved a carbon budget to support its climate change commitments
Partnership Working	Partnership working is a strength at the council. There is, however, a complicated landscape of plans with inconsistent timescales for delivery which makes it difficult to demonstrate whether outcomes for local communities are improving. There is effective partnership working to support the regional economy including the delivery of the City Region Deal. In addition, there are constructive

BVAR Findings	
Audit Area	Main judgements
	working arrangements with the health and social care partnership. The council has a solid track record in public consultation but could do more to actively involve communities in decision making.
Continuous Improvement	Since the last review, the council has made limited progress in some key aspects of Best Value. Decisive action is needed to establish a more consistent culture of continuous improvement. The council's approach to self-evaluation has been inconsistent. The council has delivered a major programme of estate rationalisation.

An action plan was approved by Full Council on [19 November 2020](#) and our updates are reported to Full Council every six months, most recently on [29 April 2021](#).

Shared risk assessment – Audit Scotland

Audit Scotland's latest national publication on scrutiny improvement was published last November and it set out the impact of Covid on the work of each scrutiny body. Strategic inspection programmes and Audit Scotland's national study programme were largely paused last year. As a result, a National Scrutiny Plan was not published in 2020 or 2021.

The Strategic Scrutiny Group is currently considering how scrutiny partners can best respond in a coordinated way to the challenges and changes brought about by the pandemic. In this regard, Audit Scotland has recently launched [a revised work programme](#).

The local area network did continue to meet each year where the main focus has been on Aberdeenshire's Best Value assurance report (BVAR). Last year, as part of the BVAR activity and this year, to consider the council's corporate improvement plan and to contribute to our approach to reporting on the council's progress against the BVAR recommendations. Local area networks are no longer required to publish a local scrutiny plan on an annual basis but may continue to do so at their discretion. With the focus on BVAR which was already covered in our Annual Audit Plan, and inspection activity suspended by scrutiny partners, Audit Scotland opted not to publish as there was nothing further to add to the existing audit plan.

Managing our finances

Key Facts

- **£1,301 Band D Council Tax (4.84% increase from 2019/20)**
- **Scottish average = £1,308 (4.55% increase from 2019/20)**

Aberdeenshire Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) represents a structured approach to financial planning across Services and sets out a complete view of the Revenue Budget, Capital Plan and Reserves allowing the Council to consider and plan the full financial impact of decisions taken now on next year's budget and an indication of the impact on future years.

Aberdeenshire Council met to agree the Revenue Budget for 2020/21 on 18 March 2020, just as the country was going into lockdown. The operating conditions which followed as a result of the pandemic were unparalleled to anything seen before. The Council successfully transitioned to a new MTFS position in order to prepare for the recovery phase of operations alongside a new set of Council Priorities.

The objectives of the revised MTFS continue to be:

- 1) Ensure the Council's short-, medium- and long-term financial health is sound and sustainable
- 2) Provide financial parameters within which service and financial planning coexist
- 3) Produce financial performance data to enable the alignment of services, outcomes and priorities.

Revenue Funding 2020/21

The funding which makes up the 2020/21 budget came from different sources. This includes money from Aggregate External Finance, Fees and Charges and Council Tax.

Net Revenue Expenditure 2020/21

Committee	Expenditure	Cost per head of population
Education & Children's Services	£360,833,000	£1,384
Communities	£164,114,000	£629
Infrastructure Services	£100,776,000	£386
Business Services	£60,675,000	£233

Capital Budget

The Council has a large capital plan with planned expenditure running through to 2036. The plan consists of several major initiatives to enhance or replace assets in accordance with the Council's Priorities. The most recent plan was approved at Council in March 2021. The funding for the plan comes from a variety of sources, but most is prudential borrowing.

The main areas of investment were on the following ongoing capital projects:

- Capital grants and improvements to Early Years Facilities to support the delivery of 1140hrs

- Energy from Waste Facility
- Stonehaven Flooding Scheme
- Roads resurfacing and reconstruction

The table below shows the capital expenditure by Policy Committee. While capital expenditure was lower than budgeted, the Capital Plan delivers large scale projects which can and will take longer to deliver than sometimes expected. The capital programme was suspended for around three months during the Covid-19 lockdown with a phased restart thereafter. The Capital Plan, therefore, should be viewed as a series of connected years rather than just individual financial years and as such much of the £80.766 million will be carried forward into future financial years to deliver the agreed projects. Progress against the Capital Plan is monitored by the Capital Planning Group (group of officers from across all services), with slippage identified at the earliest opportunity and projects accelerated where possible to ensure best use of available resources, with budgets revised to reflect the changes. Project slippage and budget revisions, together with the explanations for the changes are reported to Policy Committees quarterly.

Key areas of spend by Policy Committee:	
Education & Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Learning Childcare (1140 Hours Projects) • Early Learning Childcare (Children & Young Peoples Bill) • Early Learning Childcare (Digital Devices & Connectivity) • ECS Enhancements • Improved Disabled Access (Education) • Inverurie Community Campus
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Housing; • Live Life Aberdeenshire • Learning Disabilities - Adaptation Centres • Disabled and Elderly Housing Adaptations
Infrastructure Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy from Waste • Stonehaven Flooding Scheme • Roads Resurfacing/Reconstruction • Bridges and Structures • Burial Grounds • Cycling and Walking • Harbours, Coast and Flooding • Vehicles
Business Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Industrial Portfolio and Factory Units • Information and Communication Technologies • Council Depots • Legal & Governance System Software • Office Space Strategy

Key areas of spend by Policy Committee:

- Carbon Reduction – Council Wide Objectives
- Building Lifecycle Maintenance

Managing our risks

The Council recognises risk management and business continuity as an integral part of its Corporate Governance arrangements. We recognise that there are risks involved in everything we do, and that the Council has a duty to manage these risks in a structured manner at both a strategic and operational level. In doing so, the Council will better achieve its objectives and enhance the quality of the services it provides. We are therefore committed to working together as one Council in adopting best practice for the identification, evaluation and cost-effective control of risk to ensure that they are eliminated or mitigated to an acceptable level. Elected members and the Strategic Leadership Team are committed to the necessary allocation of resources to enable effective management of risk throughout Aberdeenshire Council. Business continuity and emergency planning are key elements in ensuring that the Council continues to provide critical services in times of adversity.

The Risk Management, Business Continuity and Emergency Planning Strategies and Framework are currently subject to review. The Director of Business Services will be reporting the outcome of the Risk Management Review to Audit Committee in July 2021 and will be seeking approval to consult with Area and Policy Committees on a Revised Risk Management Strategy and Framework. Policy Committees will also be informed of the outcome of the Risk Management Review by means of a Bulletin Report. The aim is to submit a report to Audit Committee in September 2021 seeking approval for the Revised Risk Management Strategy and Framework.

How we measure up – our performance 2020/21

We have identified a range of Key Performance Indicators within our Directorate and Area Plans to help evidence delivery of our new outcomes and priorities and importantly the impact that our services are having on our residents and communities. You can read about our early progress

Each year Audit Scotland prescribes a set of Statutory Performance Indicators - SPI 1 and 2 that all councils in Scotland must report.

Statutory Performance Indicator 1 (SPI 1) relates to corporate management – areas such as responsiveness to communities, procurement, managing assets and economic development). It also focuses on service performance – areas such as roads and lighting, housing, children's services, community care and planning services.

SPI 1 is a set of locally defined indicators that demonstrate the council recognises, and is meeting, its responsibilities under the 2003 Best value legislation including ensuring a balance between cost and quality.

Statutory Performance Indicator 2 (SPI 2) comprises of indicators defined in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework. The Local Government Benchmarking Framework encompasses all councils in Scotland and that allows the council's performance to be compared to other councils in Scotland. The latest data available is for the financial year 2019/20 and you can see it [here](#). These indicators will be updated for 2020/21 early in 2022.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

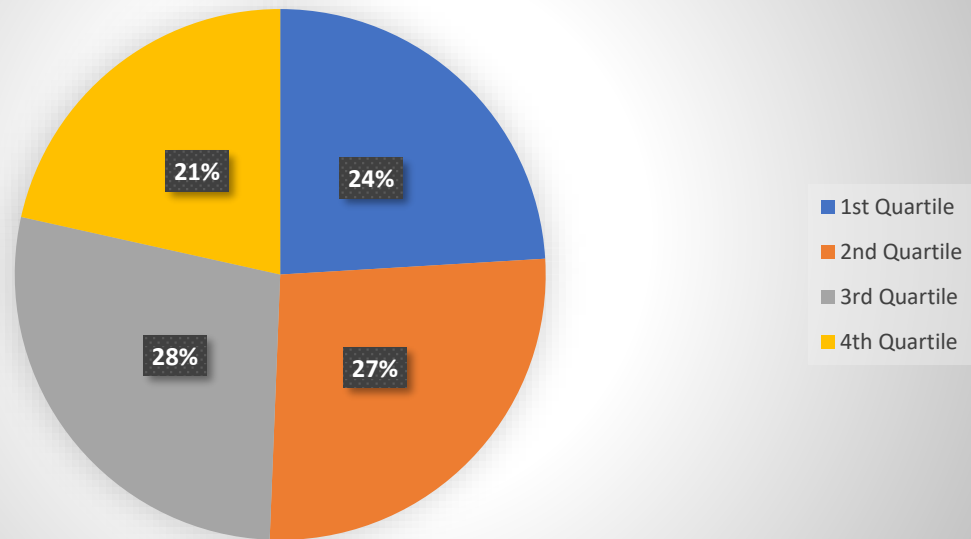
How are we performing in comparison to other councils?

There is a suite of specific indicators reported on each year by all councils within Scotland. This information is collated and publicly available on the [Improvement Service website](#). In order to better understand how we are performing in comparison to other councils, and learn from better performing councils, each indicator is aligned to the appropriate quartile based on its rank against other councils. The best performing indicators sit within the first two quartiles, whereas indicators that show we are not performing as well as other councils sit within the third and fourth quartiles. The below table shows how many of Aberdeenshire Council's indicators sit within each quartile and the relevant Service.

Service	Number of indicators per quartile – 2019/20				Not published (No 2019/20 data)	Total indicators
	Quartile 1	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4		
Children's Services	3	7	5	8	8	31
Corporate Services	4	2	3	1	0	10
Culture & Leisure	2	3	3	0	0	8
Economic Development	1	3	3	3	0	10
Environmental Health	4	7	4	2	0	17
Finance	2	1	0	2	0	5
Housing	1	1	2	2	2	8
Climate	0	0	0	0	2	2
All	19	21	22	17	12	91

This graph shows the percentage of Aberdeenshire Council's LGBF indicators published in 2019/20 that sit within each quartile.

Quartile Performance



While some indicators are steadily improving on previous years, performance for that indicator may not be improving as quickly as other councils and therefore our rank and quartile position may not reflect the improvement we are delivering at a local level. The below table and graph show how many indicators improved/declined in performance from 2018-19; improved/declined in rank and how many improved/quartile by quartile.

PERFORMANCE COMPARISON- 2018/19-2019/20							
AREA		Indicators that are improving		Indicators that are declining		TOTAL PUBLISHED INDICATORS	
	2018/19	Rank	Quartile	2018/19	Rank	Quartile	Rank
Children Services	13	12	6	8	8	3	23
Corporate Services	7	3	1	2	4	2	10
Culture & Leisure	4	5	2	4	2	0	8
Economic Development	3	3	0	7	6	5	10
Environmental Health	10	9	3	7	5	1	17
Finance	0	1	1	3	4	1	5

Housing	3	3	1	3	3	1	6
Climate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
All	40	36	17	34	32	13	79

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT FROM 2018/20-2019/20							
Service area	Indicators that have improved			Indicators			Total published indicators
	Aberdeenshire	Quartile	Rank	Aberdeenshire	Quartile	Rank	
Children Services	13	12	6	8	8	3	23
Corporate Services	7	3	1	2	4	2	10
Culture & Leisure	4	5	2	4	2	0	8
Economic Development	3	3	0	7	6	5	10
Environmental Health	10	9	3	7	5	1	17
Finance	0	1	1	3	4	1	5
Housing	3	3	1	3	3	1	6
Climate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
All	40	36	17	34	32	13	79

