

*Our vision is to have a sustainable population and socially and economically thriving communities with a focus on our quality of life, natural heritage, and Gàidhlig language and culture.*

## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN**

For the Period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

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## INTRODUCTION

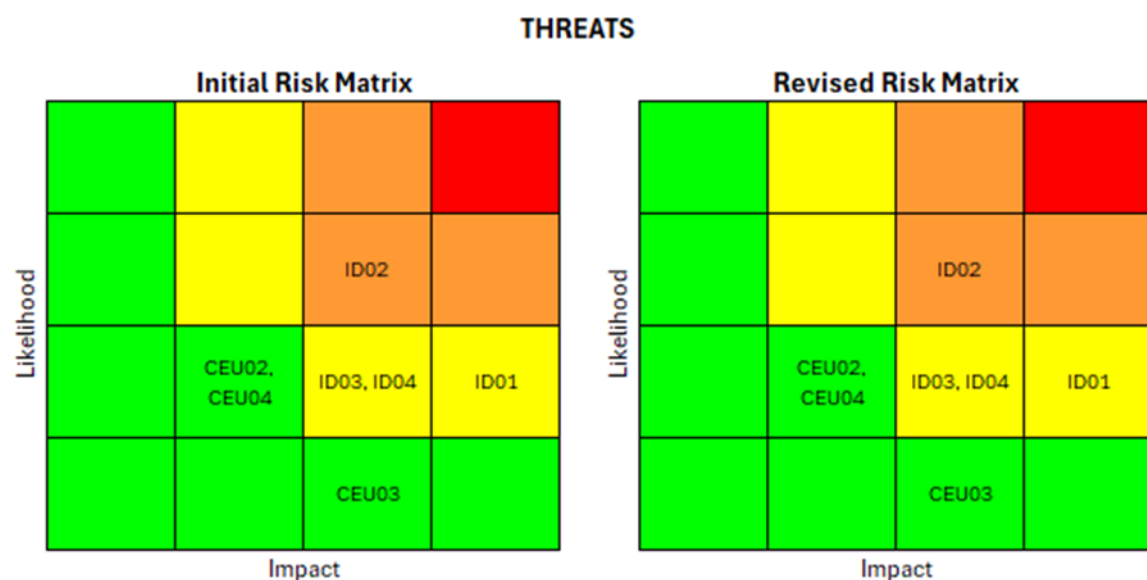
- 1.1. I am pleased to introduce the Service Business Plan (SBP) for 2025/26 which sets out our priorities and desired outcomes for the coming year. The SBP is the main annual business planning document for the Chief Executive's Directorate. It reflects the Comhairle's key priorities as set out in the Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 and provides an overview of the Service's main areas of activity.
- 1.2. The Service provides a range of support both internally to the Comhairle and externally to, and on behalf of, the community. There are two service areas within the Service, the Chief Executive's Office and the Community Engagement Unit. Both services help to ensure that the Comhairle operates successfully in an increasingly complex and challenging environment, and although diverse, each Service is essential to the running of the Comhairle and the delivery of its vision, values and priorities.
- 1.3. The **Chief Executive's Office** provides the necessary support to the Chief Executive, the Convener and Leader and provides the link between the political and organisational elements of the Comhairle. The Chief Executive is Head of the Paid Service of the Comhairle and is the Comhairle's chief policy adviser. He works with all Services to provide sound, objective advice to the Comhairle, its Committees, Working Groups, and the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP); to develop and maintain effective leadership; to provide strategic thinking and forward planning; to develop and support quality assurance; to represent and promote the Comhairle and the CPP; to promote continuous improvement; and to act as Returning Officer for all elections.
- 1.4. The Chief Executive's Office also provides a range of support both internally to the Comhairle and externally to the community and helps to ensure that the Comhairle operates successfully in an increasingly complex and challenging environment. The Service collaborates with other Comhairle Services and external partner agencies in the efficient and effective development and delivery of corporate strategies and policies, internal and external, affecting the Western Isles and beyond, and to support delivery of major infrastructure investment projects developed through the Comhairle's Capital Programme 2023-2028 and by other partners. At a Strategic level, the Service provides professional technical advice and support in relation to the delivery of infrastructure projects as part of the Growth Deal for the Islands and UK Government's Community Renewal Partnership.
- 1.5. The **Community Engagement Unit** works with community groups and provides support and equity across the Western Isles to strengthen the local economy, support resilient communities and quality of life. The key areas of focus for the year ahead include engagement with community area forums and the continued development of Area Forums and other area wide mapping of community engagement services. There are four elements to the Community Engagement service: Communications; Community Learning and Development; Community Planning; and Community Wealth Building.
- 1.6. The Communications Team is responsible for Implementation of the Comhairle's Communications Strategy and media relations for the Comhairle and the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP). The Community Learning and Development section focuses on Youth Work and Capacity Building, which are two of the national priority areas. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires the OHCPP to prepare and publish a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) which sets out local priorities, aims, objectives and projected outcomes, and is also supported by the Strategy, and Governance and Elections, teams to plan and deliver better services which make a difference to people's lives. The Comhairle is represented on the OHCPP Board by Elected Members and the Chief Executive. Community Wealth Building supports the delivery of the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) and other Government Funds, economic development community projects and, in doing so, supports the provision and maintenance of socially and economically thriving communities of the Outer Hebrides.

Malcolm Burr  
Chief Executive

## KEY AREAS OF RISK FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

- 2.1 The Comhairle currently recognises three levels of risk: Strategic risk aligned to the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy; Operational risk aligned to SBPs; and Project risk concerned with specific projects.
- 2.2 Operational risks represent threats that may affect the achievement of SBP actions, and the Chief Executive's Directorate has identified significant risks for the coming year which shall be reviewed periodically throughout the year.
- 2.3 The Initial Risk Matrix at Figure 1 represents the current risk profile of the Service, and the Revised Risk Matrix represents the target risk profile once risk actions have been successfully implemented. 2.4 contains a list of identified risks, categorised by risk treatment.

Figure 1: Chief Executive's Directorate Operational Risk Matrices



- 2.4 The Service has identified seven significant threats, and these are listed below categorised by Risk Treatment:

### Risks retained (acceptable level of risk)

6 risks are at an acceptable level and will continue to be monitored.

- CEU02 Unable to meet funding deadlines.
- CEU03 Incorrect advice given to Community groups.
- CEU04 CLD statutory provision outcomes are weakened.
- ID01 Project objectives relating to safety, cost, programme and customer expectations are not met.
- ID03 Long-term absence or loss of staffing resource from Investment Delivery.
- ID04 Poor performance of external consultants; including lack of continuity of key personnel; external workforce issues outwith control of Investment Delivery.

### Risks reduced (action will be taken to reduce the risk to an acceptable level)

1 risks will be reduced:

- ID02 Unable to secure competitive and affordable construction tenders; reduced positive contribution to local economy.
  - *Risk Action:* Ensure project scope is creditable under scrutiny. Demonstrate robust market testing to inform effective liaison with partners/Government by Members and senior officers with respect to securing funding.

**Note that this risk remains Highly rated even once Risk Actions are implemented.**

- 2.5 Elected Members can view the full risk register in the Comhairle's performance management system, Interplan, within the Integrated Risk Management (IRM) module.

## **DELIVERING THE SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN AND ACHIEVING BEST VALUE**

### **Strategic Outcomes**

- 3.1 The Chief Executive's Directorate contributes to strategic outcomes 1.1.3: Investment in our buildings and infrastructure maximises effectiveness of available internal and external funding sources, 3.1.3 Planning and infrastructure meet the needs of our communities, 3.1.4: Our communities are safe, inclusive, and resilient and 4.1.1: Communities are empowered and continue to be at the heart of our decision making.

### **Best Value**

- 3.2 In working towards the four strategic outcomes, the Service aims to ensure that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public and to make arrangements for the reporting to the public of the outcome of the performance of its functions. Table 1 lists the service outcomes established to support the delivery of the SBP and to achieve Best Value.

Table 1: Service Outcomes

<b>Delivering the SBP and achieving Best Value</b>
<b>Service Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Chief Executive's Directorate demonstrates the highest standards of integrity and transparency.</li><li>• The Service communicates and collaborates effectively with colleagues, stakeholders and the communities in which we live and work.</li><li>• Our customers receive quality technical and commercial advice in the development and delivery of major investment programmes and projects.</li><li>• The Service demonstrates effective management of health, safety and welfare in the design, specification, procurement, construction and commissioning of major assets and infrastructure.</li><li>• The Service demonstrates high standards of community engagement and community empowerment.</li><li>• The workforce has the skills, flexibility, capacity and knowledge to provide infrastructure funding support to our communities.</li></ul>

## **MEASURES AND ACTIONS**

- 4.1 The next Best Value thematic focus is transformation, and the Accounts Commission will be auditing councils' plans for transformation as part of the 2024/25 annual audit. As set out in their [Transformation in councils](#) report (2024), "councils must prioritise and progress the delivery of their plans for transformation." The Commission's [Local government in Scotland: Financial bulletin 2023/24](#) (2025) highlights that "Scotland's councils continue to face severe financial pressures. The need to consult with communities, clearly communicate the impact on local services, whilst working together to shape and deliver urgently needed transformation, is more important than ever."

- 4.2 In December 2024, the Account's Commission published a new Statutory Performance Information Direction. [Direction 2024](#) requires the Comhairle to report information about its performance in a way that enables the council to draw comparisons and make judgements in relation to the Comhairle's performance over time in comparison to other councils. The performance measures for the Chief Executive's Directorate are detailed in Tables 2 - 4.
- 4.3 The Corporate Strategy was reviewed in 2023 to ensure that it continues to state and communicate the ambition, aspirations and commitments of the Comhairle. The overarching aim and ambition of the Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 is to retain and increase the population of the Outer Hebrides. It takes account of national priorities and local needs but does not include actions to achieve its strategic outcomes as these have been developed by the Corporate Management Team and included in the appropriate SBP for monitoring and reporting to ensure that the Comhairle's mission is achieved. The actions for the Service are detailed in Tables 5 - 7.

### How we will measure our performance

- 4.4 The tables below are grouped by Strategic Priority and include the Corporate Strategy 'Measures of Success' Strategic Outcome KPIs that the Service contributes to and the LPIs chosen by the Service to strengthen its focus on improvement. There are no service prioritisation Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) SPIs aligned to the Chief Executive's Directorate.
- 4.5 Each performance measure includes the baseline year and data, the target for 2025/26, and the aspirational target for 2030. The latest corporate performance reports are available on the Comhairle's [Best Value Performance Reporting](#) web page.

#### Strategic Priority 1.1 Strengthen the local economy.

**Strategic Outcome: 1.1.3: Investment in our buildings and infrastructure maximises effectiveness of available internal and external funding source.**

Table 2: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
1.1.3. IDU001: Safety Management – Number of RIDDOR incidents.	2019/20 0	0	0	Chief Executive's Office

#### Strategic Priority 3.1 Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life.

**Strategic Outcome: 3.1.3 Planning and infrastructure meet the needs of our communities.**

Table 3: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Trend KPI	Target 2030	Service
3.1.3.CS01 - CE120: Percentage of respondents who felt lonely some, most, or all of the time during the last week (Trend).	2018 17.2%	N/A	N/A	Community Engagement Unit
3.1.3.CS02 - CE121: Proportion of adults who live within a 5-minute walk of their local green or blue space (Trend).	2019 82.6%	N/A	N/A	Community Engagement Unit
3.1.3.CS03 - CE122: Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that there are places where people can meet up and socialise (Trend).	2019 49.1%	N/A	N/A	Community Engagement Unit

**Strategic Priority**      **4.1 Deliver Community Leadership**

**Strategic Outcome:**   **4.1.1 Communities are empowered and continue to be at the heart of our decision making.**

Table 4: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Trend KPI	Target 2030	Service
4.1.1.CS01 - CE123: 'Have Your Say' Consultations completed (Trend KPI)	2019 9	N/A	N/A	Community Engagement Unit
4.1.1.CS02 - CE124: 'Have Your Say' Community Participation Requests received (Trend KPI)	2017/18 1	N/A	N/A	Community Engagement Unit
4.1.1. CE001b: Number of Local Media press releases (Trend KPI).	2019/20 241	N/A	N/A	Community Engagement Unit

#### What actions we will take

- 4.6 The SBP strengthens the links with the Corporate Strategy and the LOIP. The actions take into consideration the key areas of risk identified at section two whilst focusing on progressing the strategic outcomes.

**Strategic Priority:**      **1.1 – Strengthen the local economy.**

**Strategic Outcome:**   **1.1.3: Investment in our buildings and infrastructure maximises effectiveness of available internal and external funding source.**

Table 5: SBP Actions

Action	Service
1.1.3.1 Support delivery of RCGF (Regeneration Capital Grant Fund) economic development projects.	Community Engagement Unit
1.1.3.14 Support delivery of Island's Programme Funding, Island's Growth Deal – Destination Development and eligible Comhairle funding bids on behalf of community bodies.	Community Engagement Unit
1.1.3.15 Development and delivery of major infrastructure projects, meeting targets associated with safety management, programme, cost and quality.	Chief Executive's Office

**Strategic Priority:**      **3.1 Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life.**

**Strategic Outcome:**   **3.1.4 Our communities are safe, inclusive, and resilient.**

Table 6: SBP Actions

Action	Service
3.1.4.1 Ensure delivery, quality assurance and development of Youth and Community Work services to support the outcomes of the Community Learning and Development Plan	Community Engagement Unit
3.1.4.19 Implement and Deliver the Community Learning Development (CLD) Plan 2024 – 2027	Community Engagement Unit

**Strategic Priority:**      **4.1 Deliver Community Leadership**

**Strategic Outcome:**   **4.1.1 Communities are empowered and continue to be at the heart of our decision making.**

Table 7: SBP Actions

Action	Service
4.1.1.2 Support the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to deliver the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and Locality Plans.	Community Engagement Unit
4.1.1.4 Review and deliver the Comhairle's Communication Strategy	Community Engagement Unit
4.1.1.7 Support delivery of the Comhairle's Community Engagement Strategy including Youth Voice and Community Voice opportunities.	Community Engagement Unit

## RESOURCING THE PLAN

- 5.1 The funding and staffing resources identified to implement our SBP is summarised in Tables 8 and 9 as per the budget approved by Comhairle in February 2025 and the annual budget setting salary estimates exercise.

### Revenue Budget 2025/26

- 5.2 The Chief Executive's Directorate has a Net Revenue Budget of £1,237k, which is allocated across the service within the sections detailed in Table 8.

Table 8: Net Revenue Budget by Service Profile 2025/26

Detail	£'000	%
Chief Executive's Office	329	27
Community Engagement Unit	908	73
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>100</b>

### Capital Budget 2025/26

- 5.3 There is no Capital Budget for the Service.

### Service Employees

- 5.4 The Service has 16.7 FTE employees working across the service within the sections listed in Table 9. We support these employees to deliver their duties through a range of policies including personal appraisal and a robust training framework.

Table 9: FTE Employees

Service Profile	Number of FTE employees	%
Chief Executive's Office	3.5	21
Community Engagement Unit	13.2	79
<b>Total</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>100</b>