

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.

HR, STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE 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 outcomes and priorities for the coming year. This is the main annual business planning document for the HR, Strategy and Performance Service. 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 HR, Strategy and Performance teams provide a range of support both internally to the Comhairle and externally to the community. The services within HR, Strategy and Performance 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 council and the delivery of its vision, values, and priorities.
- 1.3. **Accredited Training** is responsible for all Accredited Training Programmes. This includes Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), employee training and apprenticeships – both national contracts such as Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships and Employability Programmes funded by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) alongside more bespoke apprenticeships through the Comhairle.
- 1.4. **Human Resources and Occupational Health** is currently organised around two operational areas:
 - **Human Resources** provides a full professional human resources advisory service to managers and employees. This is inclusive of recruitment and selection, contracts of employment, employee relations, employee remuneration and health and wellbeing.
 - **Occupational Health** is underpinned by a range of policies and procedures that support employee wellbeing and a positive work-life balance. Occupational health plays a vital role in supporting managers to reduce absence levels as well as improving the health and wellbeing of employees with a view to optimise staff performance and productivity
- 1.5. **Organisational Development** works with Services to support performance management and continuous improvement through business planning, business continuity, risk management, self-assessment, equalities monitoring, benchmarking, performance reporting, satisfaction surveys and management information.
- 1.6. **Resilience, Health and Safety, and Training** is currently organised around three operational areas:
 - **Resilience** work within the team ensures the Comhairle is prepared, in the form of contingency plans, to respond to and mitigate the effects of emergencies. This work is supported through close collaboration with partner agencies and extensive training exercises. The Resettlement Programme is a route where the Comhairle works with the Scottish Government and UK Government to support those identified as being in the greatest need by giving them protection and support in the UK.
 - **Health and Safety** promote workplace health and safety law, to ensure that every employee has the right to carry out their daily work in a safe environment. The Health and Safety team works to offer competent advice and guidance on a range of issues to ensure we meet our statutory obligations for the health, safety and welfare of our employees and anyone affected by our business.
 - **Training** aims to ensure that employees receive the Health and Safety, and corporate training required to support and develop them in their employment.
- 1.7. **Strategy and Policy** is responsible for policy development and strategic projects. The team works to assist the Comhairle in shaping future policy and strategies and responses to consultations and calls for evidence. For example, The Islands Growth Deal is a £100 million investment over a 10-year period, jointly funded by Scottish and UK Governments that will seek to drive economic growth across

Shetland, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides. The Comhairle is the Accountable Body for the Deal and responsible for the management and delivery of the funding.

In the Outer Hebrides, the Deal will invest £33.4M towards a suite of capital interventions throughout the Islands, built around the strategic themes of low carbon; supporting growth and future industries; and thriving sustainable communities. Additional pan-island Programmes delivered in co-operation with all three Island regions will also be implemented.

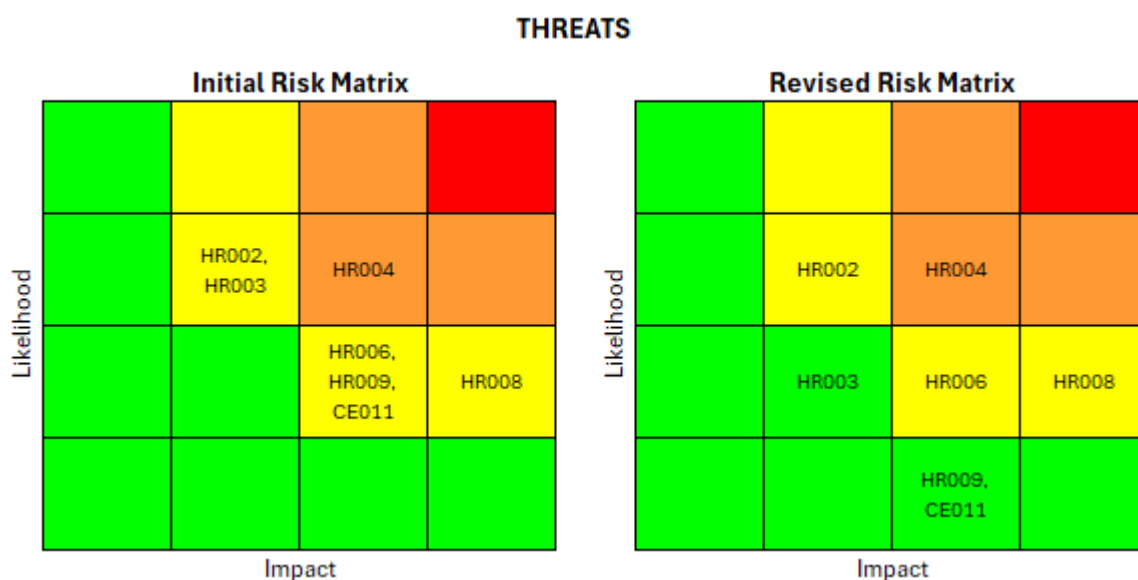
The Projects are focused on the need to retain and attract population, to develop new and high-value economic opportunities and to support key sectors, to add more value locally. Consideration has also been given to the wider social and wellbeing impacts of investment and the infrastructure required in the islands to support our existing and potential workforce and address some of the challenges of living, working and doing business in the Islands.

Norma Skinner
Chief Officer, HR, Strategy and Performance

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 HR and Performance Service has identified significant risks for the coming year which shall be reviewed periodically.
- 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: HR, Strategy and Performance Operational Risks



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

Risks retained (acceptable level of risk)

4 risks are at an acceptable level and will continue to be monitored:

- HR002 High level of staff absence
- HR004 Decrease in Employability Funding
- HR006 Equal Pay Claims
- HR008 Health and Safety Incident

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

3 risks will be reduced:

- HR003 Increased workload and pressure on the HR Team. Staff expertise is lost.
 - Risk Action: Ensure staff training and succession planning is in place.
 - Risk Action: Monitor KPIs to gauge efficiency of service. Look for efficiencies within processes.
- HR009 Unsuccessful implementation of the Case Management System Project
 - Risk Action: Ensure sufficient Project Management is in place.
- CE011 Negative mental health or social wellbeing impact on employees
 - Risk Action: Establish a Stress Audit Programme.

- 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 HR, Strategy and Performance contribute to the strategic outcomes listed in Table 1 to support the delivery of the Comhairle's Strategic Priorities.

Table 1: Service alignment to Strategic Outcomes

LOIP	Strategic Priorities	Strategic Outcomes
1. Local Economy and Employment	1.1 Strengthen the local economy.	<p>1.1.1 Development projects associated with the Islands Deal are delivered.</p> <p>1.1.2 Digitalisation supports the local infrastructure, customer engagement and business development</p> <p>1.1.4 Increased level of skills across our communities and workforce</p>
2. Population and Connectivity	2.1 Support children, families, and young people	The Service does not directly contribute to the strategic outcomes within this priority.
3. Housing and Community	3.1 Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life.	<p>3.1.3 Planning and infrastructure meet the needs of our communities.</p> <p>3.1.4 Our communities are safe, inclusive, and resilient.</p> <p>3.1.5 Reduce inequality and poverty and promote social mobility</p>
4. Governance Framework	4.1 Deliver Community Leadership	<p>4.1.1 Communities are empowered and continue to be at the heart of our decision making.</p> <p>4.1.2 Reduction in our carbon footprint and development of an island route map to net zero.</p> <p>4.1.3 Equality of opportunity is increased.</p> <p>4.1.4 Efficient and sustainable services are provided to the community.</p> <p>4.1.5 Effective governance of the Comhairle is in place</p>

Best Value

- 3.2 In working towards the eleven 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 2 lists the service outcomes established to support the delivery of the SBP and to achieve Best Value.

Table 2: Service Outcomes

Delivering the SBP and achieving Best Value
<p>Service Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our customers experience high-quality services.• The workforce has the skills, flexibility, and capacity to deliver the Comhairle’s priorities.• The Service demonstrates high standards of governance and sound financial stewardship.

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 HR, Strategy and Performance Service are detailed in Tables 3 - 8.
- 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 9 - 18.

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 (CS) KPIs that the Service contributes to, the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) SPIs that the Service have prioritised for improvement, and the LPIs chosen by the Service to strengthen its focus on improvement.
- 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: 1.1.2 Digitalisation supports the local infrastructure, customer engagement and business development.

Table 3: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
1.1.2.CS09 - Accredited Training: Number of businesses supported to upskill their current workforce with the skills to manage technology and data.	2021/22 25	60	80	Accredited Training
1.1.2.CS10 – CE112: Accredited Training: Number of individuals supported to acquire basic digital skills	2021/22 50	60	80	Accredited Training
1.1.2.CS11 - Accredited Training: Number of individuals provided with digital equipment to help improve their employment prospects.	2021/22 10	12	15	Accredited Training
1.1.2.CS04 - Percentage of Adults that are confident to use the internet to access public services online.	2019 65%	72%	80%	Accredited Training

Strategic Outcome: 1.1.4 Increased level of skills across our communities and workforce

Table 4: Performance Measures

Measure	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
1.1.4.CS03 - CE128 (SLAED: OC3): Employment Rate - Percentage of people aged 16-64 that are in employment.	2019/20 81.6%	71%	75%	Accredited Training
1.1.4.CS04 - CD034 (LGBF: ECON12a): Percentage of people (Claimants) that were in Receipt of Out of Work Benefits.	2020 3%	7%	10%	Accredited Training
1.1.4.CS10 - CE065 (LGBF: ECON1, SLAED: OC13): Percentage of Unemployed People Assisted into work from Council Funded/Operated Employability Programmes.	2019/20 25.67%	46%	48%	Accredited Training
1.1.4.CS11 - Percentage of 16–19-year-olds entering Comhairle employability programmes achieving positive destination (those entering employment, further / higher education, and apprenticeships).	2018/19 98.41%	95%	96%	Accredited Training
1.1.4.CS12 – CE081: Percentage of apprentices achieving target qualifications.	2019/20 78%	82%	82%	Accredited Training
1.1.4. CE115: Percentage of Comhairle apprentices enrolled on a social care apprenticeship.	2022/23 40%	49%	60%	Accredited Training
1.1.4. CE110: Percentage of Comhairle apprentices completing a social care apprenticeship.	2022/23 40%	54%	60%	Accredited Training
1.1.4.CS13 – CE079: Percentage of customers satisfied with apprenticeship training programmes.	2019/20 80%	82%	90%	Accredited Training

Measure	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
1.1.4.CS14 – CE130: Number of sectors seeking upskilling/qualifications for employees.	2019/20 9	20%	20	Accredited Training
1.1.4.CS15 - CE131: Employability Fund Outcome Achievement Rate.	2019/20 39.5%	62%	65%	Accredited Training
1.1.4.CS17 – CE132: Percentage of the population that is of working age.	2020 59%	59%	60%	Accredited Training

Strategic Priority: 4.1 Deliver Community Leadership.

Strategic Outcome: 4.1.2 Reduction in our carbon footprint and development of an island route map to net zero.

Table 5: Performance Measures

Measure	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
4.1.2. - CE111: Percentage of fleet mileage from Zero Direct Emissions vehicles.	2016/17 0%	29%	52.5%	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS04 - AFR102 (LGBF: CLIM01): CO2 emissions area wide per capita (Tonne).	2019/20 14.9T	Scottish average	Scottish average	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS04 - AFR103 (LGBF: CLIM02): CO2 emissions area wide: emissions within scope of Local Authority per capita (Tonne).	2019/20 4.94T	Scottish average	Scottish average	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS04 - AFR105 (LGBF: CLIM03): CO2 emissions from transport per 1,000 population (Tonne).	2019/20 40.88T	Scottish average	Scottish average	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS04 - AFR106 (LGBF: CLIM04): CO2 emissions from electricity per 1,000 population (Tonne).	2019/20 104.50T	Scottish average	Scottish average	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS06 - Percentage of vehicles registered in the Islands which are Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs).	0%	2%	4%	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS07 - Percentage completion of Island Route Map to Net Zero (Climate Change Strategy).	2021/22 0%	100%	100%	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS08 - £-investment secured for the development of low carbon solutions.	2021/22 £0	*	£100,000	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS09 - Carbon footprint emissions.	2019/20 12751 tCO2e	*	6708 tCO2e	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS10 - Total estimated annual carbon savings from all projects implemented in the report year.	2020 14 tCO2e	**	700 tCO2e	Strategy and Policy
4.1.2.CS11 - Number of electric vehicle charge points.	2021 14	**	30	Strategy and Policy

* Target is previous year's actual result to assess reduction in tCO2e.

** Target is previous year's actual result for benchmarking.

Strategic Outcome: 4.1.3 Equality of opportunity is increased.

Table 6: Performance Measures

Measure	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
4.1.3.CS01 – (LGBF: CORP03b): Percentage of the highest paid 5% of earners among Comhairle employees, that are women (exc. Teachers).	2019/20 46.3%	48%	50%	Human Resources and Occupational Health
4.1.3. - CE053: Percentage of employees in the highest 10% of earners that are female (exc. Teachers).	2014/15 49.4%	51%	55%	Human Resources and Occupational Health
4.1.3.CS02 - CE066 (LGBF: CORP3c): The gender pay gap between average hourly rate of pay for male and female council employees.	2019/20 14.4%	11%	5.5%	Human Resources and Occupational Health

Strategic Outcome: 4.1.4 Efficient and sustainable services are provided to the community.

Table 7: Performance Measures

Measure	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
4.1.4.CS05 – Comhairle: Number of Corporate complaints received (Trend KPI)	2019/20 75	N/A	N/A	HR, Strategy and Performance
4.1.4.CS06 – Comhairle: Percentage of Corporate complaints closed at Stage One within 5 working days.	2019/20 74%	76%	80	HR, Strategy and Performance
4.1.4.CS07 – Comhairle: Percentage of Non-escalated corporate complaints closed at Stage Two within 20 working days.	2019/20 42%	60%	80	HR, Strategy and Performance
4.1.4.CS08 – Comhairle: Percentage of escalated corporate complaints closed within 20 working days.	2019/20 25%	77%	80	HR, Strategy and Performance

Strategic Outcome: 4.1.5 Effective governance of the Comhairle is in place.

Table 8: Performance Measures

Measure	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
4.1.5. CE054 (LGBF: CORP06a): Sickness Absence Days per FTE Employee (Teachers).	2019/20 8.7 Days	6 Days	Scottish Average	Human Resources and Occupational Health
4.1.5. CE055 (LGBF: CORP06b): Sickness Absence Days per FTE Employee (exc. Teachers).	2019/20 13.7 Days	10 Days	Scottish Average	Human Resources and Occupational Health

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: 1.1.1 Development projects associated with the Islands Deal are delivered.

Table 9: SBP Actions

Action	Service
1.1.1.1 Work with partners on the delivery of the Islands Deal projects.	Strategy and Policy

Strategic Outcome: 1.1.2 Digitalisation supports the local infrastructure, customer engagement and business development.

Table 10: SBP Actions

Action	Service
1.1.2.4 Implement and monitor the Comhairle's Digitalisation Strategy 2022-2027.	Strategy and Policy

Strategic Outcome: 1.1.4 Increased level of skills across our communities and workforce

Table 11: SBP Actions

Action	Service
1.1.4.3 Support delivery of the Comhairle and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Charter through review and implementation of the Employability Strategy.	Accredited Training

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 12: SBP Actions

Action	Service
3.1.3.6 Work with partners to support strategic planning with our communities.	Strategy and Policy
3.1.3.8 Work with partners to review the Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy (OHLTS) 2020-2030.	Strategy and Policy

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

Table 13: SBP Actions

Action	Service
3.1.4.18 Implement and monitor the Resilience Strategy 2023-2028, and update associated policies.	Resilience, Health & Safety, and Training

Strategic Outcome: 3.1.5 Reduce inequality and poverty and promote social mobility.

Table 14: SBP Actions

Action	Service
3.1.5.5 Support the work of the Community Planning Partnership's Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan.	Strategy and Policy
3.1.5.6 Support young people and parents into work through Employability Programmes.	Accredited Training
3.1.5.7 Develop and implement a Learning and Development Strategy.	Accredited Training

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 15: SBP Actions

Action	Service
4.1.1.9 Contribute to the development of a new Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).	Strategy and Policy

Strategic Outcome: 4.1.2 Reduction in our carbon footprint and development of an island route map to net zero.

Table 16: SBP Actions

Action	Service
4.1.2.7 Implement and monitor the Comhairle's Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027.	Strategy and Policy

Strategic Outcome: 4.1.3 Equality of opportunity is increased.

Table 17: SBP Actions

Action	Service
4.1.3.4 implement and monitor the Corporate Workforce Plan.	Organisational Development

Strategic Outcome: 4.1.5 Effective governance of the Comhairle is in place.

Table 18: SBP Actions

Action	Service
4.1.5.64 Implement the Organisational Development Strategy 2024-2030.	Organisational Development

RESOURCING THE PLAN

- 5.1 The funding and staffing resources identified to implement our SBP is summarised in Tables 19 and 20 as per the Comhairle's budget approved by Comhairle in February 2025 and the annual budget setting salary estimates exercise.

Revenue Budget 2025/26

- 5.2 The HR, Strategy and Performance Service has a Net Revenue Budget of £2,646k, which is allocated across the service within the sections detailed in Table 19.

Table 19: Net Revenue Budget by Service Profile 2025/26

Detail	£'000	%
Accredited Training	727	27
Human Resources and Occupational Health	710	27
Organisational Development	424	16
Resilience, Health & Safety, and Training	717	27
Strategy and Policy	68	3
Total	2,646	100

Capital Budget 2025/26

- 5.3 There is no Capital Budget for the HR, Strategy and Performance Service.

Service Employees

- 5.4 The HR, Strategy and Performance Service have 67.2 FTE employees working across the service within the sections listed in Table 20. We support these employees to deliver their duties through a range of policies including personal appraisal and a robust training framework.

Table 20: FTE Employees

Service Profile	Number of FTE employees	%
Accredited Training	28.3	42
Human Resources and Occupational Health	11.5	17
Organisational Development	7.5	11
Resilience, Health & Safety, and Training	13.9	21
Strategy and Policy	6.0	9
Total	67.2	100