



Fife Council

**Leadership of the development of new
local strategic priorities**

Best Value thematic work in councils 2022-23

September 2023



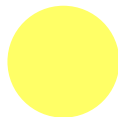
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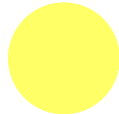

Key messages

Overall Conclusion

We are satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to demonstrate Best Value under each reported area of the 2022/23 thematic review. However, our gradings reflect the point of time of our reporting and how this aligns to the development of several of the Council's key arrangements to demonstrate best value. We will continue to monitor the progress that the Council makes on the development and implementation of their ongoing developments which are further detailed in Appendix 1.

How clear is the new council vision and its priorities?	Auditor judgement	
	Risks exist to the achievement of operational objectives	
	The Council has established a clear vision and ambitions as set out in Plan4Fife; its first combined partnership and council plan. Despite changes in political arrangements following the local government elections in 2022 and the appointment of a new Chief Executive in July 2023, the Council has committed to the vision, priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife. The Council and its partners are currently working towards the delivery of the plan for the next three years and preparations for the next ten year plan. During this period the Council will experience a significant amount of change.	

<p>How effectively have the views of citizens and communities been reflected in the priorities and decisions taken by the council?</p>	<p>Auditor judgement Effective and appropriate arrangements are in place </p> <hr/> <p>The Council’s methods for consulting and involving citizens are appropriate and effective.</p> <p>Community empowerment, wealth and wellbeing are reflected in the strategic priorities underpinning the Plan4Fife. To support these priorities, the Council is continuing to actively seek to design operating models and services that strengthen the community voice and bring decision making into the heart of communities.</p> <p>The Council gives citizens a greater say in budgeting through participatory budgeting and has developed a number of consultation and participation tools including a Local Development Plan, Place Plans and a Fife People’s Panel.</p> <p>The Council has embedded a culture of community engagement where engagement is a continuous process embedded within services instead of being used for specific consultation purposes only.</p>
<p>How effectively do the council priorities reflect the need to reduce inequalities and climate change?</p>	<p>Auditor judgement Effective and appropriate arrangements are in place </p> <hr/> <p>The Council’s priorities have a focus on the need to reduce inequalities.</p> <p>The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Addressing the climate emergency is a key priority within the Partnership’s Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021-24.</p>

<p>How good are the delivery plans and is there alignment of financial, workforce, asset and digital plans with the council’s priorities?</p>	<p>Auditor judgement</p> <p>Risks exist to the achievement of operational objectives </p> <hr/> <p>Work is ongoing to develop change plans which support the wider ambitions outlined in the Plan4Fife.</p> <p>Change plans were re-introduced by the Council during 2022/23 with a shift of focus to a three-year planning horizon to ensure initiatives move away from ‘salami slicing’ and focus on service redesign and transformation in line with the Plan4Fife priorities. Change programme proposals are in development and are expected to be presented to the Cabinet Committee in November 2023.</p> <p>We acknowledge that the change plans have not been fully developed and as a result we will continue to monitor the implementation and delivery of the change plans to fully assess the impact which these are having on contributing towards transformation and redesign of the Council’s services.</p>
<p>Overall, how effective has the leadership been (political and officer) in setting clear priorities and a sustainable approach to delivering them?</p>	<p>Auditor judgement</p> <p>Effective and appropriate arrangements are in place </p> <hr/> <p>The Council has in place an appropriate governance framework in place to support member / officer relationships. Member and officer working relationships are effective.</p> <p>The Council is experiencing a period of change at senior leadership level. Work is ongoing to review the organisational structure to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver the Council’s ambitions.</p>

Definition

We use the following gradings to provide an overall assessment of the arrangements in place as they relate to best value. The text provides a guide to the key criteria we use in the assessment, although not all of the criteria may exist in every case.¹



¹ Our overall judgements have not considered the pace and depth of improvement as part of this review. The Council is currently going through a substantial period of change. We will consider the Council's progress in implementing its change programmes during the course of our appointment and will apply judgement as to the pace and depth of improvement as part of this work.

Scope of the audit

When discussing the Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022, William Moyes, Chair of the Accounts Commission said: “Councils are operating in a complex and increasingly volatile, unprecedented and unpredictable environment. Strong leadership from councils is needed now more than ever, with new and returning councillors being able and willing to make difficult decisions about where and how to spend highly pressurised resources.”

This report concludes on the effectiveness of the council’s leadership of the development of the council’s strategic priorities, following the recent local government elections.

[The Accounts Commission’s Strategy \(2021-26\)](#) sets out its priorities to focus on inequalities, funding, communities and recovery. The Code of Audit practice sets out the Best Value work required to report on these priorities.

Code of Audit Practice 2021 Best Value reporting requirements

Best Value reporting – extract from the Code

87. The Accounts Commission’s approach to Best Value involves reporting on individual local government bodies and thematically across the local government sector through performance reports:

- As part of their integrated wider-scope annual audit work appointed auditors use a risk-based approach to assess and report whether the audited body has made proper arrangements for securing Best Value and is complying with its community planning duties, including reporting progress against previous Best Value findings and recommendations.
- The Accounts Commission also requires the Controller of Audit to report to the Accounts Commission on each council or Integration Joint Board (IJB) at least once over the five-year audit appointment on the body’s performance on its Best Value duty. This enables the Accounts Commission to make findings for improvement where appropriate. ²
- The Accounts Commission reports nationally on thematic aspects of local government bodies’ approaches to, and performance in, meeting their Best

² The Controller of Audit will report the first tranche of council BV reports to the Commission between October 2023 and August 2024 on Moray, Falkirk, Dundee City, Orkney Islands, South Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire.

Value and community planning duties. Local government appointed auditors report locally on any such Best Value thematic work prescribed by the Accounts Commission.

This report covers the thematic aspect of the Best Value audit requirements. The Commission has directed auditors to report on the effectiveness of the leadership of the development of the council's strategic priorities.



In carrying out the work auditors have considered the following questions:

- How clear is the new council vision and its priorities?
- How effectively have the views of citizens and communities been reflected in the priorities and decisions taken by the council?
- How effectively do the council priorities reflect the need to reduce inequalities and climate change?
- How good are the delivery plans and is there alignment of financial, workforce, asset and digital plans with the council's priorities?
- Overall, how effective has the leadership been (political and officer) in setting clear priorities and a sustainable approach to delivering them?

The coverage of the work is in line with the expectations for council's arrangements for the seven Best Value themes in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, Best Value Statutory Guidance 2020.

Council vision and priorities

A council focused on achieving Best Value in how it operates will be able to demonstrate that elected members and officers have a clear vision and priorities for their area.

The Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022 says that Scotland's councils have had a pivotal role in supporting and working with communities as they respond to the impacts of Covid-19. Following the council elections in May 2021, council's will have reviewed their priorities.

The Council has established a clear vision and ambitions as set out in Plan4Fife; its first combined partnership and council plan.

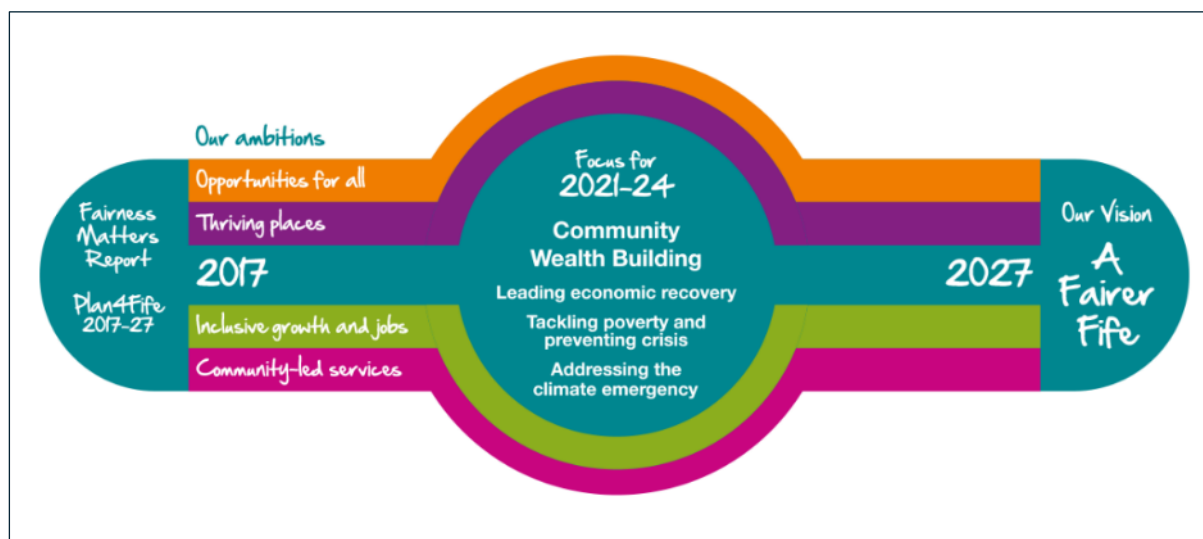
Fife Council and its community planning partners (the Fife Partnership) have a clear strategic ambition. The overall vision is for "A Fairer Fife".

"By 2027 we want Fife to be a place where all residents lead good lives, make informed choices, and have a sense of control so that they can reach their full potential, and where all children are safe, happy and healthy. We also want Fife to be a place where it makes best use of its assets and facilities, while sustaining them for future generations"

Our vision for Fife – A Fairer Fife; Plan4Fife, Local Outcome Improvement Plan June 2019

Fife Council set out its vision and ambitions in its ten-year local outcomes improvement plan (LOIP), 'Plan4Fife', which was first published in November 2017. The Plan4Fife 2017 - 2027 was developed through the Fife Partnership and is the first combined partnership and council plan. A LOIP Development Group was established to oversee the development of the Plan4Fife and partners were involved in agreeing outcomes, actions and performance measures.

The Plan was reviewed and a three-year update, 'Plan4Fife Recovery and Renewal', was agreed in August 2021. As well as being the three-year update of the Plan4Fife, the updated Plan is also Fife's recovery and renewal plan following the COVID-19 pandemic.



Recovery and Renewal, Plan4Fife 2021-2024 Update August 2021

As part of an overall community wealth building approach, the Plan sets out three recovery renewal priorities:

1. tackling poverty and preventing crisis;
2. leading economic recovery, and
3. addressing the climate emergency.

The priority themes: Opportunities for All; Thriving Places; Community-Led Services; and Inclusive Growth and Jobs have been translated into thirteen “ambitions”, with addressing the climate emergency added. The recovery and renewal priorities are being taken forward in the context of the ambitions for Fife.

Four Strategic boards oversee the progress against the ambitions: Leading Economic Recovery, Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis, Addressing Climate Emergency and Community Wealth Building. Each of the community planning partners in Fife has committed to these and are responsible for planning, scrutinising, and reporting on performance and delivery to the partnership, the public and other key stakeholders.

The ambitions are tracked through 3-year strategic assessment and annual ambitions, annual performance and scrutiny reports with delivery plans in place to focus on the delivery of defined 3-year priorities.

Despite changes in political arrangements following the local government elections in 2022 and the appointment of a new Chief Executive in July 2023, the Council has committed to the vision, priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife

The Local Government elections held in May 2022 resulted in the re-appointment of 42 councillors and the appointment of 33 new councillors. The elections also led to a change in council leadership from joint administration to a minority administration with Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative councillors voting together to agree a governance structure. Despite changes in political arrangements, the Council has committed to the vision, priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife. Elected members were provided, as part of their induction programme, briefings on Plan4Fife.

The former Chief Executive retired from the Council in July 2023 and the former Executive Director, (Enterprise & Environment) was appointed to the role. The new Chief Executive has also committed to the delivery of Plan4Fife. Work is however underway to explore, as a council, the organisational structure it has in place to deliver the vision, priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife.

The Council and its partners are currently working towards the delivery of the plan for the next three years and preparations for the next ten year plan. During this period the Council will experience a significant amount of change.

The three recovery and renewal priorities remain the Council's focus with attention in 2022-23 primarily on exploring its leadership approach to strategic change and reform to help leaders consider the future of services and the changes required to respond to Fife priorities, national shifts, and social and financial pressures. The Council's ambition is to ensure public services are fit for the future, sustainable and delivered with communities if it is to address inequalities and boost life chances for all.

In the autumn of 2022, a series of Our Fife Leadership Summits were arranged to discuss in detail the vision and priorities, focusing on four strategic change priorities emerging from the plan: no wrong door, working for place, community wealth building and health and wellbeing. Over 100 leaders from across the Council and Fife Partnership were involved at various stages throughout the process. Thematic workshops explored:

- the intent behind our vision for Fife
- our common purpose
- the practical steps we need to take over the next three years to turn that vision into reality

The output from the leadership summits has informed the next phase of change development work for both the Council and the Fife Partnership. Work has been underway to explore how it can harness some of the culture shifts evidenced during the pandemic and apply those to achieve better outcomes for Communities in Fife.

The Leadership Summits evidenced both an appetite for change together with consensus around its direction. This was the first stage in the process that will lead partnership services through a three-year programme of public service reform – laying the ground for the next 10-year plan in 2026-27. Work continues to shape the strategic direction for recovery and reform and will be the basis for organisational change in the Council over the medium term.

Change continues to be actioned through the Plan4Fife partnership delivery arrangements. The Council set a balanced budget position for 2023-24 which recognised the need for change activity in future years. Longer term change work is ongoing, building on the Plan4Fife Leadership summits and focused on the themes of community wealth building, place making, no wrong door and health inequality and these summits will form the basis for the Council's future change activity.

All council services are engaged in change planning. Change is likely to focus on place, people, digital and productivity. An approach to advancing change has been agreed and will progress throughout 2023-24. This change planning work will be supported by Our People Matter and the Council's workforce strategy. Priority areas for action across all directorates have been agreed and workforce planning activity will be a focus of 2023-24 to support change.

Citizen and community engagement

Recovery from the pandemic will require councils to work alongside their local communities. There must be a focus on getting the services people need in place as pressures and stresses escalate and impact the day to day lives of individuals and communities.

Councils, with their community planning partners, have a responsibility to ensure that people and communities are able to be fully involved in the decisions that affect their everyday lives.

Early and meaningful engagement and effective collaboration with communities to identify and understand local needs, and in decisions that affect the planning and delivery of services should be a core part of determining a council's vision and priorities.

The Council's methods for consulting and involving citizens are appropriate and effective

Community empowerment, wealth and wellbeing are reflected in the strategic priorities underpinning the Plan4Fife. To support these priorities, the Council is continuing to actively seek to design operating models and services that strengthen the community voice and bring decision making into the heart of communities.

In the autumn of 2022, a series of Fife Leadership Summits were arranged to unpack the Plan4Fife vision and priorities further, focusing on strategic change priorities emerging from the plan including No Wrong Door. The No Wrong Door initiative represents the Council's response to advancing community empowerment at a whole system level by providing a landscape of support to services that is easy to navigate with no barriers to access.

Decentralisation

Fife Council operates a decentralised structure based around seven Area Committees. This type of governance structure allows the Area Committees to focus on specific local area issues and opportunities and have delegated responsibility for some revenue and capital budgets.

Area Committees have responsibility for the development, delivery and monitoring of Local Community Plans (LCPs). LCPs are developed through strategic assessments and consultation with community groups in order to reflect the local needs and opportunities alongside the challenges and ambitions set out in the overarching Plan4Fife. During 2023, work has been ongoing to update LCPs to

reflect the Council's recover and renewal priorities, post pandemic position and Plan4Fife.

The Council has committed to further review areas where the decentralised structure could be expanded. This work is ongoing and includes a review of services including Housing, Green space and Property and Facilities Management to identify ways to improve consistency in how different service areas work with local areas.

Community engagement

The Council has developed a variety of consultation and participation tools that have been used to increase effective community empowerment across services and local areas. These include:

- The Community Engagement Toolkit- an online tool which supports, plans, delivers and evaluates support services and organisations' work to run community engagement.
- The Local Development Plan (LDP) and Local Place Plans- The Local Development Plan takes into account the needs of local communities to set out the long-term future of land use and through consultations with communities identify opportunities for communities to shape where they live. Fife Council has also invited communities to prepare Local Place Plans in order to play active role in defining the future of their local areas. Local Place Plans are used to influence the content of the Local Development Plan.
- Community Led Action Plans- The Coalfields Regeneration Trust have worked with communities and the Community Development Team to develop and implement local plans through their coalfields-community-futures programme.
- Fife People's Panel- in operation since 2006 and consisting of volunteers, with up to four consultations a year.
- Community involvement resources for staff have been extended to include a new advice centre on the Council's intranet.
- Digital tools to support hybrid and online consultation, including Microsoft Forms and social media platforms. The Council also has an online public consultation diary which shows current opportunities to contribute.

The Council utilise both statutory (community councils) and voluntary organisations to actively engage with communities and have embedded a culture to community engagement where engagement is a continuous process embedded within services instead of being used for specific consultation purposes. We are satisfied that these arrangements allow services to effectively operate in ways which reflect community views and needs.

Fife Council worked with Fife Voluntary Action to organise a workshop in February 2023 as an introduction to co-production in relation to the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. The event was targeted at members of the community who used children and

families' services in Fife. The focus of the event was to allow those who receive services to be involved in the planning, design and delivery of that services and to acknowledge that the approach to co-production of services should shift away from community feedback and consultations to communities with real-life experience working together with professionals to help create meaningful change.

Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting in Fife has involved communities pitching ideas for how Council funding can be spent in their area, and then voting on how the money should be spent. A number of participatory budgeting events have been held during 2022/23 as detailed in the exhibit below.

Participatory budgeting in 2022/23

Passenger Transport was Fife's first large scale test of mainstream participatory budgeting. In 2019/20 the Council carried out public engagement to 'discover' what was working well with Passenger Transport and to 'dream' about what the ideal transport system would look like in Fife. The process was paused due to disruption around the pandemic, but passenger transport was then a priority area for reform and recovery. A member-led passenger transport review looked at design options for future provision within the existing budget envelope. One of the outcomes of the process was a more equitable demand respond transport service.

As part of the devolvement of employability funding from Scottish Government to local areas, service users were involved in leading collaborative conversations to inform a commissioning framework for local employability services - No One Left Behind.

The Forward West Fife participatory budgeting exercise was run by a community-led steering group who allocated £170,000 to local organisations who could deliver benefits to five villages in West Fife. This was supported by officers and local elected members and allowed communities to generate ideas for how the money can be spent.

During 2022/23, as the only non-EU case study in the DEMOTEC comparative study of PB across Europe, Fife received support from DEMOTEC with deliberative workshops to identify priorities for the Cowdenbeath Area, and generate ideas for the future development of Lochore Meadows Country Park. Recommendations around the Play Park resulted in an additional £100,000 Area Capital being awarded by the Area Committee for the Natural Play Area Project Budget.

Source: Fife Council response to Best Value Thematic Review

Community involvement in budgeting is also demonstrated through the Council's approach to consulting on rent increases as part of the budget setting process. This is an annual exercise where tenants are consulted on the potential rent increase

proposal, asked to vote on their preferred option and provide feedback on their housing service priorities. This is used to inform policy decisions.

Reducing inequalities and tackling climate change

Council priorities are expected to reflect the Best Value expectations that all activity should contribute to tackling poverty, reducing inequality and promoting fairness, respect and dignity for all citizens, alongside a focus on sustainable development, including climate change.

The Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022 report says that the impact of the pandemic and service disruption have been felt most strongly by those already experiencing inequality. Councils have worked hard and adapted to maintain service delivery but those most in need of support are still being affected. Councils must evaluate these impacts so that recovery and renewal supports those most affected and addresses inequalities.

Around two-thirds of councils have formally declared a climate emergency, and COSLA's Blueprint for Local Government states that climate change is a 'greater threat than COVID'. The Scottish Government has recently published guidance on public sector leadership on the global climate emergency to help public bodies in leading climate action. Addressing the climate emergency and setting actions to achieve net zero will need to be a key element of councils' recovery and renewal from the pandemic.

The Council's priorities have a focus on the need to reduce inequalities.

The Fife Partnership's overarching vision is for "a fairer Fife". The Plan4Fife has a strong focus on addressing inequalities through the four key themes of council and partnership work:

Opportunities for All

Ensuring that no-one is left behind. The aim is to ensure that everyone can access opportunities in education, training, jobs and wider society, and have equal access to the support and advice they might need to support a fulfilling and decent life.

Thriving Places

Safe, well designed and maintained places that promote wellbeing, where people are proud to be, and where they have access to the services and facilities they need at different stages of their lives.

Inclusive Growth and Jobs

Inclusive growth and jobs in the local economy should benefit everyone, and shouldn't pass people and places by. Based on assessments of need, the focus is on improving investment, growth and participation by businesses, people and communities, particularly in the Mid-Fife area. We aim to support businesses to grow and to make sure that communities benefit from new investment.

Community Led Services

Putting communities and service users at the heart of how we design services, and building on the strengths and assets we have in our workforce and in our communities, to deliver valued services that meet the real needs of real people.

A range of community organisations, including Fife Centre for Equalities, were involved in strategic assessments and consultations that informed the Plan4Fife and subsequent local community plans.

From summer 2020 the Council and its partners began a collaborative process to identify recovery and reform priorities. Sub committees of the former Policy & Co-ordination Committee and member officer working groups were established to develop immediate recovery, policy choices and longer term recovery. Areas of focus were identified as: poverty and crisis prevention, leading economic recovery, climate change and green recovery, education recovery, sustaining services through new ways of working, transport, sport and leisure recovery. In June 2020, the Council identified a number of priorities for reform and recovery as a routemap through and out of the crisis. This led to focused work on a number of issues: including leading economic recovery, attainment, employability, homelessness and passenger transport.

The Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021-24 sets out the equality gaps, opportunities and improvements the Fife Partnership aim to achieve. The Tackling Poverty & Preventing Crisis (TPPC) Board is responsible for leading and coordinating the delivery of activity to tackle poverty and prevent crisis. The Board is multi-agency with representation from key Fife Council Services, NHS Fife Public Health, Fife Voluntary Action, CARF and Fife Gingerbread.

The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Addressing the climate emergency is a key priority within the Partnership's Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021-24.

Fife Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Climate Fife strategy sets out the local issues and how these will be addressed. One of the three key priorities within the Recovery and Renewal Plan is "Addressing the Climate Emergency". A new ambition was added as part of the Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021-24 declaring a council and partnership commitment to work towards lower carbon emissions in Fife, in line with national targets.

The targets and actions are set out in Climate Fife. Fife Council provides an annual Public Body Duties Report which is required in compliance with climate change duties established under S44 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and in accordance with subsequent orders.

Alignment of delivery plans

Making the best use of public resources is at the heart of delivering Best Value. With clear plans and strategies in place, and with sound governance and strong leadership, a council will be well placed to ensure that all of its resources are deployed to achieve its strategic priorities, meet the needs of its communities and deliver continuous improvement.

Work is ongoing to develop change plans which support the wider ambitions outlined in the Plan4Fife

The development and implementation of Fife Council's annual service change plans was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. These were re-introduced during 2022/23 with a shift of focus to a three-year planning horizon. Fife Council has acknowledged that the change in approach is to ensure change programme initiatives move away from 'salami slicing' and focus on service redesign and transformation in line with the Plan4Fife priorities, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and workforce plans. The Council is working closely with the Digital Portfolio Board to reflect the expectation that the approach to change will be achieved through digitalisation.

The Council is committed to embedding a culture of openness and transparency to the communication of change. This is demonstrated through clear communication channels including continuous engagement with Trade Unions in relation to the direction of travel for people changes, Fife Leadership Summits and Chief Executive blogs to communicate areas of key change.

The Council's revised approach to change planning is being developed through the following phases:

- Phase 1- Work focused on understanding the current position, wider policy propositions and identifying and prioritising areas to focus change effort. This included digitally enabled productivity, data and insight driven change, potential organisational change linked to the No Wrong Door and place-based delivery/decentralisation ambitions set out in the strategic change priorities in the Plan4Fife. This stage ran from April to June 2023.
- Phase 2- Work is focused on policy and outcome alignment, changes to operating arrangements and digital and data opportunities. This includes work on the business cases behind strategic change and includes significant leadership investment in terms of development, support and challenge. This stage is running from June to September 2023.
- Phase 3 - Work will be focused on outlining and consider proposals for organisational and structural change required to respond to the challenges and

opportunities identified in phase 1 and the outline propositions coming through phase 2. The output from this phase is expected to be considered by the Cabinet Committee in November.

We are satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place to oversee the development of the Council's three year change plans. However, we acknowledge that the change plans have not been fully developed and as a result we will continue to monitor the implementation and delivery of the change plans to fully assess the impact which these are having on contributing towards transformation and redesign of the Council's services.

Leadership

Effective leadership from councillors, chief executives and senior officers, is key to councils achieving their objectives and providing clear strategic direction. The complex local government environment means collaborative leadership, working with partners, communities and citizens to improve outcomes is more important than ever.

Leaders need to be skilled in effective strategic thinking, decision-making and collaborative working and able to learn lessons from new ways of working. Councillors and officers must be clear on their roles in setting the vision and planning for its delivery.

Leaders should demonstrate behaviours and working relationships that foster a culture of cooperation, and a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation. Good conduct and behaviours when working together are crucial. Working relationships between members and between members and officers should be constructive and productive. Councillors should show a commitment to agreed council priorities and work together to achieve them.

The Council has an appropriate governance framework in place to support member / officer relationships. Member and officer working relationships are effective.

Following the Local Government elections held in May 2022, the Council adopted a new system of governance based on a Cabinet structure. The Cabinet Committee is responsible for strategic policy decisions and membership of the Cabinet consists of the Leader of the Council (Chair), six strategic spokespersons and ordinary members up to a total of 21 members.

Cross party working groups are established as required to explore issues, strategic direction or areas of policy development. For example, a cross party group developed the council position on community wealth building.

The Chief Executive meets regularly with the Leader of the Council and the leaders of other political parties. The Chief Executive, Executive Directors and service managers also meet regularly with cabinet spokespeople about their portfolios.

Various structures promote collaborative working between local councillors and officers. These include the formal area committee work programme, ward meetings (including mega ward meetings in City of Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy Areas), elected member workshops, development of Local Community Plans and directing spend of decentralised budgets on priorities such as community recovery fund, anti-poverty, roads and transportation.

Political leaders meet regularly as the Cross Party Leadership Group to discuss items of interest, including governance arrangements.

Following the Local Government elections in 2022, the Council delivered a comprehensive induction process for all members, which was well received. A councillor information hub has been created on the intranet to provide a central bank of resources, including induction material for councillors to consult. Some of the training sessions, were recorded so members can revisit those training sessions in their own time.

Members regularly receive in-house training, and they also are kept up to date with briefings.

All elected members were recently surveyed about their training needs. Almost 80% felt that they were satisfied with the training sessions delivered to date. A programme for training is due to be considered by group leaders and rolled out in 2023/24. It will support elected members to undertake their policy setting, scrutiny, and regulatory roles more effectively.

The Code of Conduct for Councillors forms the basis of the principles and values for elected members. The Member/Officer protocol was revised to reflect the recently updated Code of Conduct and administration changes. The Council has recognised an opportunity to revisit its protocol to ensure it continues to remain up to date and widely accessed.

Effective working relationships exist between senior officers and councillors with positions of responsibility. Outside of formal committee meetings, councillors are regularly briefed on major projects, developments or issues that arise. Services run workshops to raise awareness of important pieces of work or to engage local members at the early stages of a project, for example on decentralisation work.

The Council is experiencing a period of change at senior leadership level. Work is ongoing to review the organisational structure to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver the Council's ambitions.

The Council's senior leadership team (CLT) is a mature team comprising officers with many years' experience, who are skilled leaders and professionals.

The Council has however experienced a level of turnover, predominantly in the Council Executive Team. It has recently recruited an Executive Director of Place, following the appointment of the former Executive Director to the post of Chief Executive. One other Executive Director has retired and a Head of Service has moved to a new role in another Council. Temporary arrangements have been agreed for both roles pending a decision on the organisation's future structure.

Earlier this year workforce planning discussions were held with all members of the senior team and this work has confirmed their future plans and allowed the Council

Executive Team to consider where succession and development plans need to be put in place. No significant risks have been identified by the Council in terms of capacity or skills but there are many challenges, pressures and competing priorities which stretch resources.

Digital leadership is a skill area, the Council has identified as being key to progressing its ambitions. The Council has created a Digital Portfolio Board to provide strategic digital leadership and governance across the council. Digital Leaders for all Services and development options for digital leadership skills are being explored. As well as digital leadership skills, cultural change is also required to develop more sustainable and joined up approaches to digital public service delivery, breaking down traditional "limited horizon" planning and silo-based approaches, to develop much more impactful opportunities and proposals for digitally-enabled transformation.

Appendix 1

Key developments across the Council in 2023/24

Key development	Timeline
Review of the Council's organisational structure to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver the key priorities and ambitions as set out in the Plan4Fife	April 2024
Plan4Fife refresh 2024	August 2024
Development of 3 year change plans which support the wider ambitions outlined in the Plan4Fife.	April 2024
Review of areas where the Council's decentralised structure could be expanded	December 2023
Development of a revised approach to elected members on-going professional development and training. This includes consideration of the identification and expansion of mandatory areas of training.	December 2023



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