Fife Council
Building Standards & Public Safety

Building Standards Verification Annual Performance Report 2023-2024

Verifier:

Fife Council
Protective Services
Building Standards & Public Safety Team

Key Contacts:

Garry Nicoll
Service Manager, Building Standards & Public Safety

Scott Davidson
Team Manager, Building Standards & Public Safety

T: BSS.info@fife.gov.uk
W: www.fife.gov.uk/buildingstandards
E: 03451 55 11 22

Version Control:

1.1	Annual performance report Q1 2023-24
1.2	Q2 review
1.3	Q3 review
1.4	Q4 review

1. Introduction to Fife Council

The verification performance report is a strategic planning and management tool that provides information about the local authority building standards service, communicates the vision and strategy, and sets out performance against strategic goals and targets.

Building standards verifiers in Scotland are required to utilise the performance report to manage, monitor, review and develop strategies for their business, and should focus on the performance framework's core perspectives and cross-cutting themes.

Fife Council

Fife is the third largest local authority in Scotland with an annual budget exceeding £800 million and around 18,000 full time equivalent employees delivering more than 900 individual services to the people of Fife each year.

Covering an area of around 500 square miles, Fife is home to a population of over 370,000 people (around 7% of the population of Scotland) and is one of Scotland's most vibrant areas for business and tourism.

Centrally located and flanked by the Firth of Forth, the Firth of Tay and the North Sea, Fife has the oldest university in Scotland, is the ancestral home of the Scottish Kings and the home of golf with a varied and attractive landscape that includes forests, hills, lochs and 115 miles of coastline with some of Scotland's finest award winning beaches.

Fife has a mixed rural and urban landscape with the three largest towns (in terms of population) being Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline and Glenrothes accounting for around 40% of the population of Fife.

Major employers and main employment sectors

In 2015, the Office for National Statistics shows 25% of Gross Value Added (GVA) in Fife is derived from public administration, education and health. Fife Council and the NHS being most significant in this sector.

Other sectors such as transport, distribution, hotels and catering (16%), financial and insurance activities and business services (10%) and construction (8%) also make crucial contributions to the Fife economy.

Fife's manufacturing sector (20%) still remains a very important contributor to GVA and its size is still large relative to other areas of Scotland, perhaps offering Fife a competitive advantage should this sector experience a rise in activity.

Examples of Fife businesses include:

- University of St Andrews, Fife College and SRUC Elmwood Campus in the Higher & Further Education sector
- Lloyds Banking Group, Sainsbury's Bank, BSkyB, Paywizard and Dunfermline Building Society in the Financial & Business sector
- Babcock Marine LTD, CR Smith, FMC Technologies, Parsons Peebles, Fifab, Smith Anderson, Oceaneering, Optos Ltd, Havelock, Ingenico, Thornton Thomassetti, Fife Joinery Manufacturing Ltd and Raytheon UK in the Manufacturing/engineering sector
- Fairmont Hotel St Andrews, the Old Course Hotel Golf Resort and Spa, Balbirnie House Hotel and Deep Sea World in the Tourism sector.
- Kettle Produce, Quaker Oats, Carr's Flour Mill and Diageo in the Food & Drink sector.

Building Standards & Public Safety Team

The team has four sections providing the following services:

Building Standards:
- Verification: all associated building warrant services and any related enforcement actions under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003
- Pre-Application and customer advice
- Property Services/Inspections

Public Safety
- Dangerous/defective Buildings – Including emergency out of hours
- Licensing Consultation Services: Liquor, HMO, Places of Entertainment and other miscellaneous licensing services
- Safety at Sports Grounds and Raised Structures
- Grants and Scheme of Assistance joint working across the Council and with external partners under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006

Private Housing Standards:
- Private sector housing condition responsibilities such as Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO's)
- Below Tolerable Standard (BTS)
- Disrepair
- Water Supplies (Private Supplies, Blue-Green Algae, Lead Piping)
- Inspection and Regulation of Caravan Sites
- Private Tenants Complaints
- Caravan site licensing

Operational Support

- Case officer support, including general enquiries & issuing approval documents
- Overseeing projects
- Supporting and developing IT within the team, including case management systems and mobile devices
- Web site development
- Debt recovery

Fife Council Organisational Chart
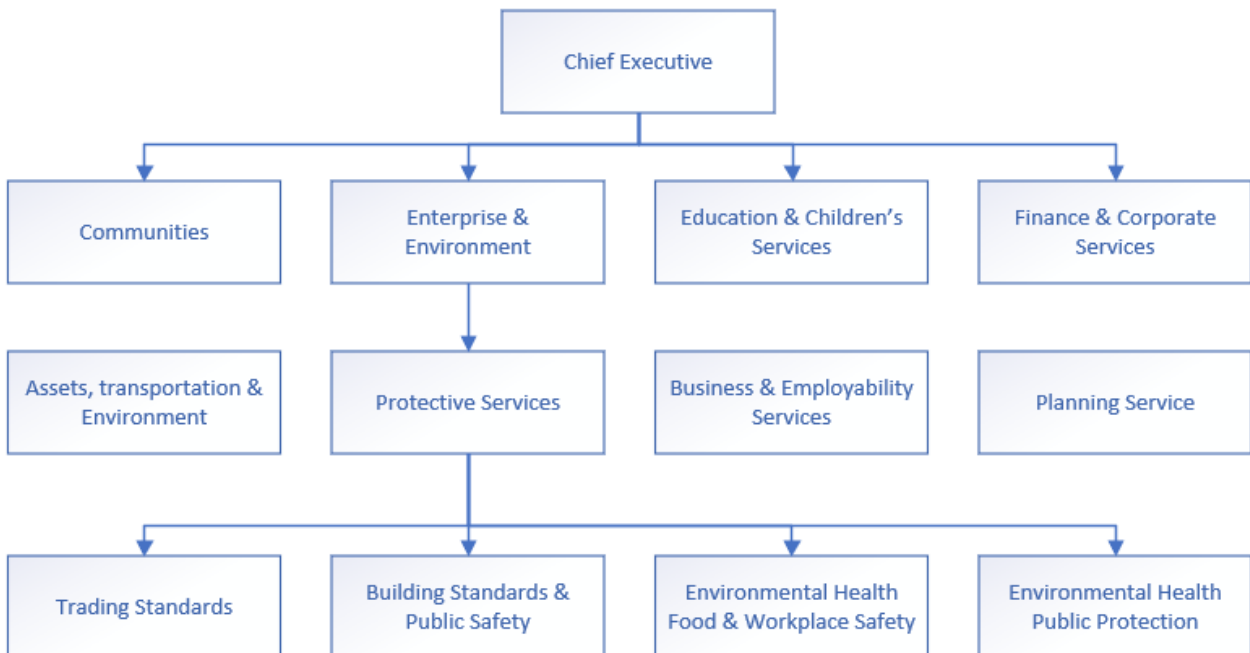
2. Building Standards Verification Service Information

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

The building standards system checks that proposed building work or conversion of a building meets standards; inspections are limited to a minimal necessary to ensure that legislation is not avoided. The control of work on site is not down to the system but is a matter for contracts and arrangements in place between a builder and client.

Verifiers, appointed by Scottish Ministers are responsible for the independent checking of applications for building warrants to construct or demolish buildings, to provide services, fittings or equipment in buildings, or for conversions

Fife Council was appointed by Scottish Ministers as the sole verifier for Fife and is responsible for all building warrant (verification) and associated statutory services in Fife.

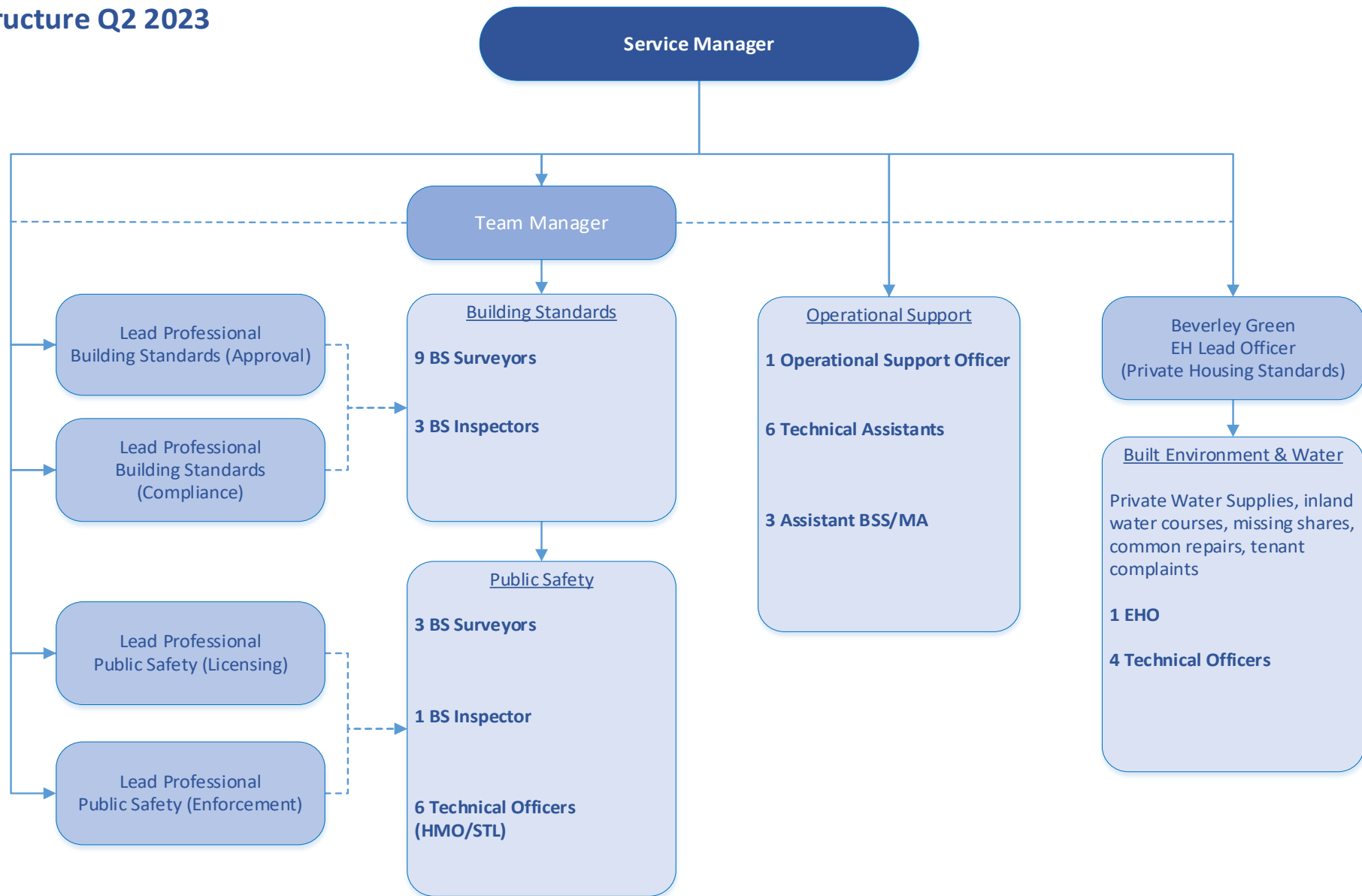### Building Standards & Public Safety within Fife Council

The Building Standards and Public Safety (BS&PS) Team sits within the Enterprise & Environment Directorate as part of Protective Services.

The verification service (from June 2012) has been provided from a single central office at Kingdom House, Kingdom Avenue, Glenrothes supported by mobile and flexible working and flexible customer engagement protocols (Moving to Fife House April 2019).

This approach provides for the efficiencies of a single office base whilst allowing for local service delivery and engagement with customers.

The Building Standards team's main function and services are the assessment and approval of Building Warrants and the verification of the approved work on site including any associated enforcement, working closely with colleagues within our Service and across the Council.

Building Standards & Public Safety Structure Q2 2023

Service Manager

Team Manager

Lead Professional
Building Standards (Approval)

Lead Professional
Building Standards
(Compliance)

Lead Professional
Public Safety (Licensing)

Lead Professional
Public Safety (Enforcement)

Building Standards

9 BS Surveyors

3 BS Inspectors

Public Safety

3 BS Surveyors

1 BS Inspector

**6 Technical Officers
(HMO/STL)**

Operational Support

1 Operational Support Officer

6 Technical Assistants

3 Assistant BSS/MA

Beverley Green
EH Lead Officer
(Private Housing Standards)

Built Environment & Water

Private Water Supplies, inland water courses, missing shares, common repairs, tenant complaints

1 EHO

4 Technical Officers

3. Strategic Objectives

Corporate Objectives

The Plan for Fife, our Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2017-2027 provides a clear focus for all Fife Council plans and contains our Vision for Fife - A Fairer Fife. By 2027 we want Fife to be a place where all residents live 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 we make best use of our assets and facilities, while sustaining them for future generations.

Within this overall vision, we have identified four priority themes to direct our work over the next ten years. These are:

1. Opportunities for All

   Opportunities for All is about ensuring that no-one is left behind. We aim to ensure that every Fifer can access opportunities in education, training, jobs and wider society, and that all Fifers have equal access to the support and advice they might need to support a fulfilling and decent life.

2. Thriving Places

   Thriving Places are 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.

3. Inclusive Growth and Jobs

   Growth in the local economy should benefit everyone and shouldn't pass people and places by. We will therefore focus 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 business investment.

4. Community Led Services

   Community Led Services means 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 in order to deliver valued services.

Service Objectives

Key objectives of the Service are to achieve a safe, healthy, clean, and fair-trading environment for residents, businesses, and visitors. We aim to achieve this through activities which monitor compliance with trading standards, environmental health and building standards laws.

The Plan for Fife continues to set our strategic objectives, however, the objectives for Services have largely been on hold during the Covid pandemic and will shortly be replaced. A recent update from the Chief Executive explaining the current reform is included below and Services will be developing their change plans during the current year for implementing from 2023.

Service Change Planning:

The Council has set a budget for 2023/24 which achieved balance without recourse to significant further savings being required this year.

However, 2024/25 still looks extremely challenging given the level of resource that will come to Scotland and the prioritisation of health spend within the Scottish Block Grant. While we will still require to refine the likely impact of this for Fife, this is likely to see a reduction in the resources available against the demands/needs of around 10%, which I recognise is stark.

It is therefore imperative that we start work now to development our response to these future challenges. The Plan for Fife clearly sets out our strategic ambitions and reform focus and provides a strong statement of intent.

The Council's Reform Board have recognised the requirement to shift from short term planning activity associated with response to the pandemic, to considering more significant Service and Directorate redesign which should also explore how we further integrate work across the Council and with Partners, with a stronger focus on People & Place. Collectively we have agreed that there is a need to accelerate system change and to align our efforts to our priority outcomes.

Executive Directors will lead the approach with their management teams and the wider Extended Council Leadership Team. Support for the approach will be co-ordinated by Change & Improvement teams.

Our aim is to have developed a set of initial change proposals which can be considered with our new political Administration following this May's election. It is critical that we develop proposals which can reform the way in which we operate and demonstrate sustainability within the reducing level of resources which we will have to deploy.

Departmental issues to be addressed in the coming year

Our planned changes to the management structure of the team have been finalised, some posts are still filled on a temporary basis and permanent recruitment will be completed on Q3.

The number of case officer posts has been increased to address the shortfall highlighted in the 2022-23 workforce review. This was a condition of our successful re-appointment as a Verifier in 2023 and has been achieved earlier than planned.

To address the current and future recruitment difficulties, a second Modern Apprentice (MA) has been appointed. This builds on our successful internal training and promotion programme that has recently seen a previous trainee promoted to a Building Standards Surveyor post. We have plans in place to recruit a further MA in 2024.

Key strategic objectives for the coming year

- Ongoing competency assessment system to provide training and development for case officers
- Further develop for Modern Apprentices
- Preparing our internal processes and systems for a potential spike in application numbers during 2023-24 Q4 if building warrant fees increase

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes

Our team structure builds on previous changes to provide a best value inspection resource to meet growing compliance workload, manage risk and support performance, expertise and quality developments. The structure includes a new Team Manager role to run processes and projects across the whole team; this makes decision making quicker, reduces duplication. This has allowed us to reduce the number of managers and supervisors and increase the number of case officers. We continue to recruit Modern Apprentice to 'grow our own' professionals and continue promoting within the team whenever possible.

The first team wide competency assessment was completed during 2022-23. A further review will be completed during the current year to continue developing technical competence and prepare the team for future challenges. These will include new requirements for high risk buildings, additional site inspections and anticipated increase in the energy standards.

Some areas of procedural compliance were disrupted during the pandemic and these processes will be re-introduced gradually as these require signficant team resources. These include deemed refusals, expired warrants, occupation without completion certificates or temporary occupation certificates in place   are all areas where we are seeking to support customer process compliance.

Quality Customer Experience

The move to hybrid working supports the Council's environmental targets as well as reducing it's budget. This does, however, mean that we need to rethink how we communicate with customers and new technology is being used. We are introducing new software that allows telephone calls to be directed to whichever location staff are working at, increasing the use of emails and Microsoft Teams to offer video calls. As the technology is rolled out we still have some challenges around systems access so that officers have easy access to the case details required to deal with customer enquiries.

The new national customer survey now gives us real time access to local contributions. We will be developing a process to monitor and review the feedback and the results will also influence the development of policies and processes.

Operational and Financial Efficiency

A process for scheduling site appointments for case officer, with a single point of contact for customers, was developed to deal with some challenges during the pandemic. This has now been adopted permanently and will be further developed with a longer term aim of a self-service option for customers.

The adoption of remote verification inspections, including by video, continue to be trialled and developed. Video enabled devices are also being used to support case officers during on site compliance checks to expand the type and risk of projects they can inspect.

A previous project to adopt a mobile back office solution from Idox did not reach completion due to problems with both the software and mobile devices. New hardware purchased for case officers to carry out verification inspections has improved how we respond to requests for inspections. We will continue to scope a potential mobile software solution for case officers.

4. Outcomes and Targets

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

- Professional Expertise and Technical Processes;
- Quality Customer Experience; and
- Operational and Financial Efficiency.

here are also three cross-cutting themes, comprising:

- Public Interest;
- Continuous Improvement; and
- Partnership Working.

Summary of Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs)

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes	
KPO1	Minimise time taken to issue a first report or issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant.
KPO2	Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction processes
Quality Customer Experience	
KPO3	Commit to the building standards customer charter
KPO4	Understand and respond to the customer experience
Operational and Financial Efficiency	
KPO5	Maintain financial governance
KPO6	Commit to eBuilding Standards
KPO7	Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report

Summary of Key Performance Targets

KPO1 Targets	
1.B	95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
1.C	90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
KOP2 Targets	
	Targets to be developed as part of future review of KPO2.
KPO3 Targets	
3.1	National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly).
3.2	95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days.
KPO4 Targets	
4.1	Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10.
KPO5 Targets	
5.1	Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).
KPO6 Targets	
6.1	Details of eBuilding Standards to be published prominently on the verifier's website.
6.2	75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically • Plan checking • Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued • Verification during construction • Completion certificates being accepted
KPO7 Targets	
7.1	Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly).
7.2	Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2022 – March 2023).

5. Performance Data

This section of the report provides a summary of our performance against all KPOs and performance targets over the previous year.

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes

KPO1.B: Our performance for 2022/23 was 97% of first reports were issued within 20 working days .

KPO1.C: Our performance for 2022/23 was 80% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of satisfactory amended information.

KPO2: This is subject to review and future targets will be developed.

Examples of how we support the successful delivery of these KPO's

- Allocate work based on complexity across the team recognizing case officers experience and competency
- The allocation of applications are automated and balanced using Idox Enterprise graphs to deliver valid applications to the case officer for technical assessments within 24 hours
- Have a stepped team structure in place that readily supports career progression and succession planning
- Idox Enterprise pushes and passes the applications real time across the various team members within traffic light indicated stages to support the KPO target timescales
- Case Officers are supported by Lead Professional Surveyors where necessary with applications allocated for development
- Applications are monitored and sampled for quality by Lead Professional Surveyors and this informs team training and CPD activity
- We benchmark with our Building Standards Consortia members and Solace building standards grouping
- We regularly monitor workload and performance and make changes in our structure, specialist services procurement, procedures and protocols to respond to changes demands

Quality Customer Experience

KPO3.1: Our National Customer Charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control and is reviewed quarterly.

KPO3.2: We are committed to meeting 95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days – but have had no cases within the last year.

KPO4: Our overall customer satisfaction rating for the 2021 National Customer Survey was 7.2 out of 10. This was reduction on the previous year's score of 7.6 and reflected the national trend of a small drop. In additional to contact issues experienced during long periods of home working, it is felt that the competing demands on case officer time has led to some increased customer dissatisfaction. These include procedural compliance requirements of the legislation has reduced our flexibility in terms of timescales and deadlines and this.

To support us in the delivery of a Quality Customer Experience

- We publish our customer charter prominently on our website
- We develop improvement plan actions on the basis of customer feedback and the National Customer Survey
- We seek to balance the efficiencies that mobile and flexible working brings, the significant proportion of inspection time that team members spend on site verifying the construction phase of building warrant applications with customer/case officer contractability by:
    - Duty Officer service being available during office hours
    - Duty Lead Professional Surveyor being available for more complex issues or customer concerns
    - Managed email accounts to ensure timely response to customers
- Home visits and local office appointments can be arranged where persons wish to meet face to face but have transportation or mobility issues
- Message taking and telephone call-back appointment arrangements are in place
- Assistant surveyors support the workflow of case officers' applications, including customer contact
- Whilst we seek to resolve any issues on the spot, we have corporate complaints procedures in place and promote the LABSS Dispute Resolution Process and Scottish
- Government Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers where appropriate
- Pre-application discussions and 'Priority Projects' option for high value developments

Operational and Financial Efficiency

KPO5.1: Our percentage verification fee income / service costs over 2022/23 was 167%.

KPO6.1: Details of e-Building Standards is published prominently on our website.

KPO6.2: Target is 75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically. During 2022/23 we receive around 98% electronically and all these applications are all processed electronically from receipt to completion including
- Plan checking
- Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued to customer
- Verification during construction
- Completion certificates being accepted

KPO7.1: Our Annual Performance Report is published prominently on our website with version control and is reviewed at least quarterly .

KPO7.2: Our Annual Performance Report includes performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets covering the financial year.

To Support operational and financial Efficiency

- We have a best value team structure that groups team members around the approval and compliance processes for increased efficiencies
- The Operational Support team delivers efficiency in the administration and flow of work and the Public Safety team deals with statutory and wider corporate services allowing verification case officers to concentrate on verification work
- Mobile & flexible working protocols seek to maximize capacity and allow for efficient application processing and inspection
- Time recording reflects the team verification/statutory structure and avoids unnecessary data entry
- We have invested significantly in Uniform, Enterprise and mobile devices to support eBuilding Standards with further development planned
- To support team communications, we have regular diary meetings and a Technical Policy Group
- Scheduling of appointments has been introduced
- Routine performance and workload management meetings

6. Service Improvements

Improvement achieved and further actions planned for the coming year.

2022/23 Summary:

Number	Continuous improvement action	Status
1	Introduce managed generic email for all verification process emails, email process acknowledgements (start of works etc) managed via Enterprise, explore Digital Customer Services opportunities working with FC Corporate team	Complete
2	Modern Apprentice in place re KPO 1.C and Enterprise updated for KPO 1.C Funding secured – recruitment Q1 2022/23	Complete
3	Implement new team management structure and increase number of front-line case officers	Complete
4	Further develop team wide scheduling of site inspections	Ongoing
5	Competency Assessment System to review the training needs of all technical staff	Ongoing
6	Work nationally with LABSS & BSD to develop best value training and development pathways to support officer development at all levels	Ongoing

Planned for 2023/24:

Number	Continuous improvement action	Timescale
1	Improve KPO 1.C Target and customer response performance, this has dropped during the pandemic and reflects some operational difficulties for case officers as well as reduced Assistant Surveyor capacity	Ongoing
2	Review of processes and refresh guides for case officers	Q4
3	Develop eCompliance solution – scope new Idox mobile case management apps	On-hold
4	Model anticipated building warrant applications profile for next 3-5 years and review number of staff required to meet statutory obligations	Q4
5	Review Competency Assessment System carried out 2022-23 and continue staff training for key areas	Ongoing
6	Review of internal performance reporting and training for relevant staff to move reporting to Microsoft Power BI • Started early Q4 – delayed due to staffing resource issues	Q3
7	Implement new validation process for Completion Certificate submissions • Process agreed, consulting with consortium partners	Q3

7. Building Standards – Additional Data

Verifiers provide returns to Scottish Government on their verification performance and workload. The performance data relates to the building standards verification performance framework and the workload data relates to the numbers of building warrant applications; completion certificates; fees; costs; certificates (certification, energy performance; sustainability); enforcement cases.

The following table provides details of the above data relating to the year 2022/2023:

Building warrants and amendments to building warrant	Number of Applications	2780
	Number of Decisions	2658
Completion certificates	Submissions	3849
	Accepted/Rejected	3705
Certification	Certificates of design submitted	974
	Certificates of construction submitted	105
Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)	Copy certificates received (domestic)	869
	Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	12
Statements of Sustainability	Copy certificates received (domestic)	869
	Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	12
Enforcement	Notices served under sections 25 to 30	5
	Cases referred to procurator fiscal	0
	Cases where LA has undertaken work	2

2023/24 up to 31st December:

Building warrants and amendments to building warrant	Number of Applications	1643
	Number of Decisions	1693
Completion certificates	Submissions	3041
	Accepted/Rejected	2937
Certification	Certificates of design submitted	585
	Certificates of construction submitted	89
Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)	Copy certificates received (domestic)	692
	Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	12
Statements of Sustainability	Copy certificates received (domestic)	692
	Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	12
Enforcement	Notices served under sections 25 to 30	9
	Cases referred to procurator fiscal	0
	Cases where LA has undertaken work	5