Appendix A

Development Services

Service Plan
2014-2015

the **moray** council

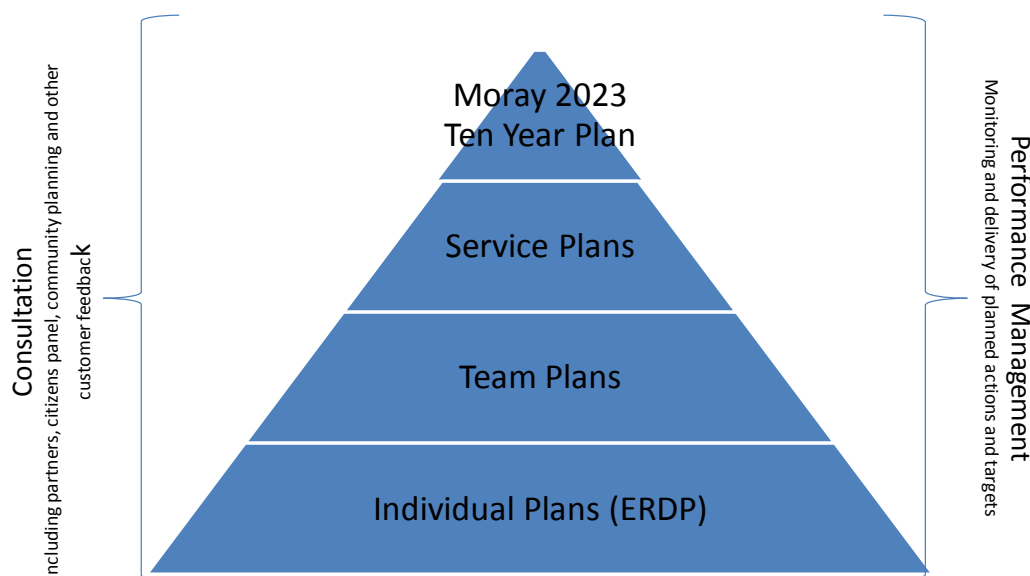**Environmental Services**

Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   The Service Plan for Development Services seeks to set out :-

- how this service plan relates to the Council's objectives and priorities
- the context in which we work
- how the service is organised and resourced
- how we perform and how we will improve our performance
- planned actions to enable the service to contribute to the achievement of Council priorities

1.2   The diagram below describes the relationship of the service plan to the wider strategic and corporate objectives to which the Council is committed. Service planning provides a means to identify the service role in the 'bigger picture' whilst providing a means for staff teams and individuals to see how their team/ individual actions contribute to the Council's corporate objectives.

Consultation
Including partners, citizens panel, community planning and other customer feedback

Moray 2023
Ten Year Plan

Service Plans

Team Plans

Individual Plans (ERDP)

Performance Management
Monitoring and delivery of planned actions and targets

2   Our Vision and Objectives

2.1   The Moray 2023 A Plan for the Future identifies the need to work in partnership to deliver the necessary outcomes to ensure Moray is an area where people choose to live, learn, work and enjoy. The Moray Community Planning Partnership is committed to delivering sustainable economic development to underpin this and enable its citizens to achieve their full potential.

The partnership has established five priority areas:

1.   A growing, diverse and sustainable economy – this is the top priority at the heart of the future success of Moray. It covers business, employment, infrastructure, public services and the third sector developing sustainable communities.

2.   Healthier Citizens – the main areas identified for improvement are: to reduce incidence of obesity, reduce the number of smokers and reduce alcohol dependency.

3.   Ambitious and confident young people - the focus under this heading is to improve the life chances of children by supporting them and their families at the earliest possible stages and as required thereafter to give all children in Moray the best possible opportunities to achieve their potential.

4.   Adults living healthier, sustainable independent lives safeguarded from harm – the main areas identified are:

a) Reshaping the support available for older people to ensure their needs are met to sustain active lives in the community; and

b) Reduce the number of households in fuel poverty.

5.   Safer communities – whilst recognising that Moray is a safe place to live, we need to do more to protect those most vulnerable and at risk and be proactive to ensure that communities feel safer in the years ahead.

2.2   For each of the 5 priorities a range of targets have been identified which aim to provide measurements of the outcomes we are seeking to achieve. The community planning partners will monitor performance against these targets and report on progress to the public.

2.3   Our activities to achieve these outcomes are supported within the corporate framework across human resources, financial management, procurement, risk management, health and safety, business continuity and performance management.

2.4   For Development Services, the role the service plays in contributing to these priorities is outlined within APPENDIX 1.

3 Development Services

3.1 Service Context

3.2 The Service has many roles, developing partnerships with business and local and national agencies to promote economic development, attracting external funding, assisting vulnerable groups with financial and welfare benefit issues and ensuring public health and community safety. It seeks to protect and enhance our environment, heritage and culture and enable opportunities for development and growth. We seek to ensure development in Moray is sustainable providing a safe and valued environment both now and in the future.

3.3 The service is committed to continuous improvement and places the customer at the centre of service provision.

Trading Standards	Building Standards	Environmental Health	Planning	
			Development Management	**Planning and Development and Economic Development**
Consumer Protection Money Advice Licensing Standards Welfare Benefits Assistance	Building Warrants Completion Certificates Dangerous Buildings Enforcement	Food Safety Health and Safety Public Health Animal Health and Welfare Pest Control Dog Warden Contaminated Land Abandoned Vehicles Community Safety Private Water Supplies Housing Standards Houses in Multiple Occupation	Planning Permission Listed Building Consent Conservation Area Consent Planning Enforcement Condition Monitoring High Hedges	Development Plan GIS/CAG Economic Development Environment and Biodiversity Carbon Management and Climate Change Masterplans

3.4 Planning and Development and Economic Development

3.4.1 The Planning and Development and Economic Development teams provide the lead role in facilitating sustainable economic development through the production of the Development Plan and Moray Economic Strategy and through proactive engagement with developers to remove barriers to development. The service works in partnership and co-ordinates corporate teams to deliver projects in the Moray Economic Strategy and in the Local Development Plan and also delivers the Council's actions on Climate Change. The service works with partners to implement the Development Plan and the Economic Strategy. The service supports the Moray Economic Partnership, the Communities and Sustainability Partnership and the Leader and Fisheries Local Action Groups. The service maintains the Council's Geographical Information System (mapping) and Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG), distributes and provides analysis of Census data, monitors the availability of housing and employment land and town centre retail vacancy rates.

3.4.2 The service facilitates the provision of improved community infrastructure and regeneration. It provides support and advice to community groups, individuals, businesses and other Council services on external funding and project delivery. It facilitates Business Gateway providing advice and assistance to small and medium enterprises. It manages the conservation area regeneration schemes. It co-ordinates partners to support tourism events. It promotes Moray as a place to invest.

3.4.3 During 2012/13 the service organized a joint master class with the improvement service for council members from Aberdeenshire and Moray. The service has supported the Moray Economic Partnership in delivering projects such as the appointment of a communications team and development of a media portal for promoting economic development in Moray. A tourism event in March was used to launch the new tourism Strategy for Moray produced through the Tourism and Culture Group. Successful funding applications have been made for developments at Buckie Harbour, expansion of the council industrial estate portfolio and work has continued with the CARS schemes for Keith and Elgin.

3.4.4 The Planning & Development team have had a challenging year with the consultation process for the main issues report and the subsequent publishing of the new local development plan for consultation which will lead to a busy summer period for the team.

Budget
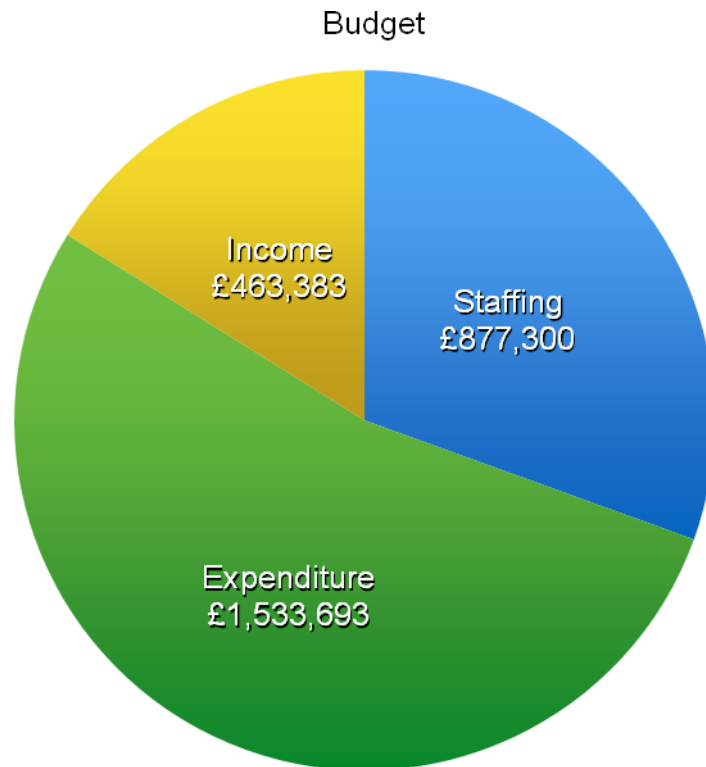
3.5 Development Management

3.5.1 The Development Management service determines all planning applications, undertakes planning enforcement and provides pre application advice. The service is essential to ensure sustainable economic development takes place with due consideration of planning policies. The service must also be seen as an enabling one that does not present a barrier to appropriate development and in doing so, must be responsive and sufficiently resourced to avoid unnecessary delay occurring in the planning process.

3.5.2 The service is an essential element of the commitment within the Economic Strategy to ensure ease of doing business in Moray and the speed of processing planning applications is a target within Moray 2023. The service has undergone some restructuring through designing better services in 2012/13 reducing from one planning officer to create a planning assistant post. Performance has continued to improve and there was a 20% increase in planning fees in April 2013, reduced numbers of Major applications resulted in a lower than budgeted income for 2013/14. There is an expectation by the Scottish Government that further improvements will be required to continue to support economic growth by delivering a high performing planning service.

3.5.3 The service has continued to make significant improvements in 2013/14 with the average time for dealing with local development applications reducing to 12.5 weeks. During this time we have continued to give all customers the opportunity to comment on the service, response rates were low and showed a satisfaction rate of 75%, it is often difficult to separate dissatisfaction with

the planning decision compared to the service. One to one meetings have been held with the main developers and their agents in Moray who account for the majority of applications received. The feedback from these meetings has been very positive with all indicating significant improvements in the timescales and attitudes of staff. The team has continued to remove legacy cases from the system which will benefit the performance indicators over the coming year. Planning application numbers fell by 56 from the previous year giving a total of 1052.

3.5.4 The service is committed to providing a modern, effective and efficient planning service which operates in the interest of the community and environment. Having a responsive planning enforcement team is vital to ensure that development on the ground is delivered as approved and to maintain the integrity of the Development Management process. In 2013/14 the service dealt with over 200 complaints in relation to breaches of planning, 70% of which were dealt with within 10 weeks. A number of enforcement notices have been issued within 2013/14. The enforcement team will continue to strive to improve performance from 70% to 80% during the next year.

Budget

Income £749,194

Staffing £767,488

Expenditure £130,161
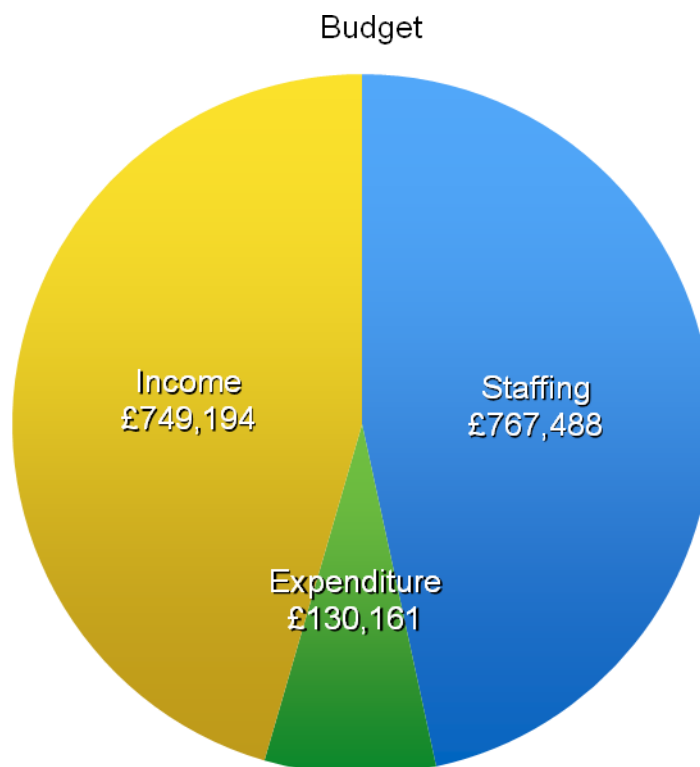
3.6   Building Standards

3.6.1   Building Standards determines applications for building warrants and provide verification of compliance through completion certificates and inspection. It is also responsible for enforcement related to dangerous buildings.

3.6.2   Ensuring an effective and efficient service delivery is essential in order to aid rather than hinder development progress. Additional requirements are now in place for additional inspection and verification visits at various stages of construction which will increase the workload on this service. The service has reduced by 1.3 FTE Building Standards Officer as a result of the efficiencies anticipated through the designing better services programme, and 1 officer is currently on a 2 year sabbatical to enable him to undertake training at degree level.

3.6.3   In 2013/14 Building Standards participated in the new Building Standards Performance Framework to benchmark consistently across local authorities. This initial attempt did not allow easy comparison to be made and the framework has been refined for 2014/15. The service has worked hard to deliver the changes required through DBS and continues to seek ways of improving such as a recent trial for the electronic submission of applications.
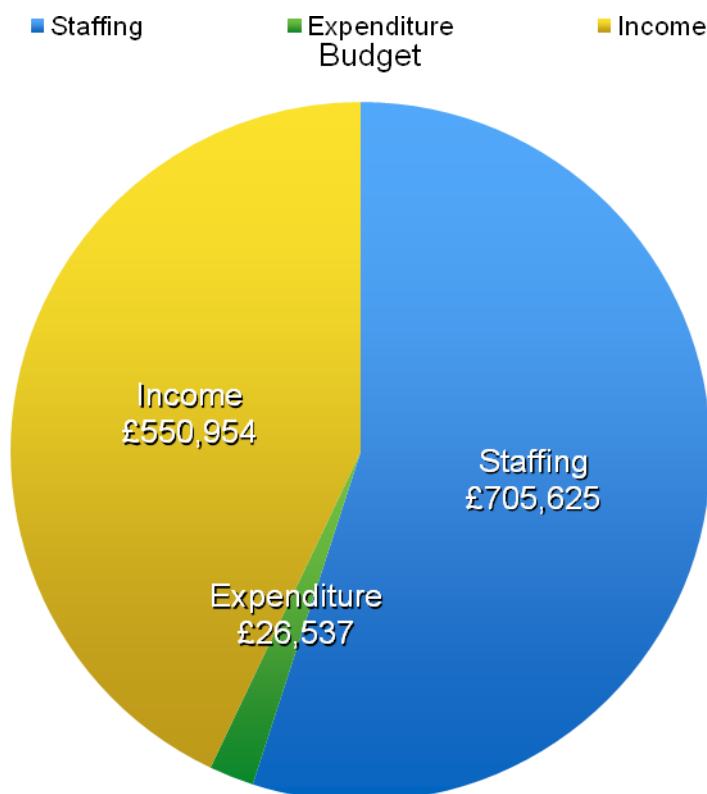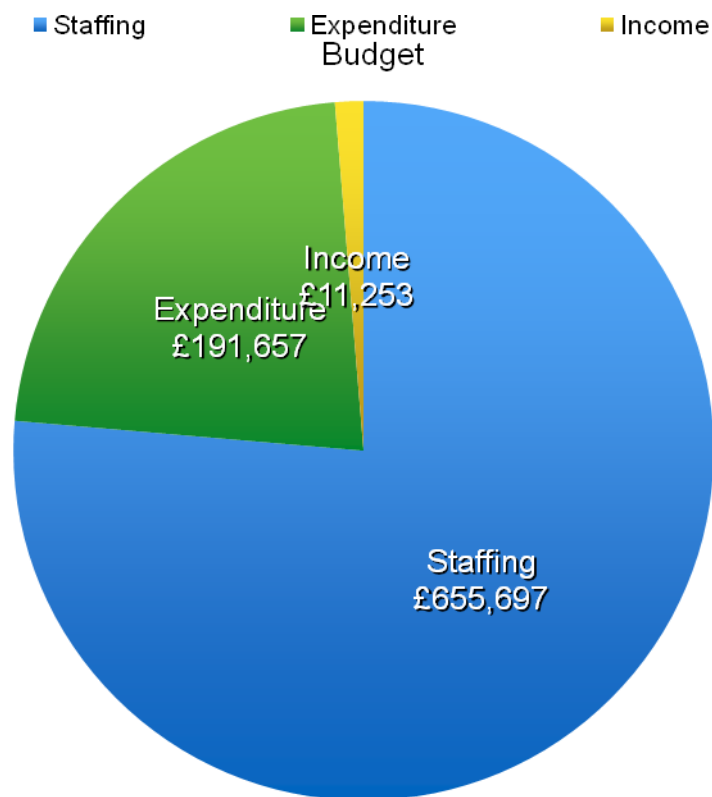
3.7   Environmental Health

3.7.1   Environmental Health delivers the Council's regulatory functions associated with food safety, health and safety, public health, housing standards, caravan sites, animal boarding, riding establishments, contaminated land, pest control, animal welfare, private water supplies, air quality and community safety.

3.7.2   As part of the designing better services programme we have reduced the service by 2 Principal Environmental Health Officers with the intention of diverting resources towards front line service provision, however as part of the Council budget reduction exercise for 2013/14 a further reduction of 1 FTE Environmental Health Officer has been made. The service has embraced this change and had a difficult year with the additional workload associated with DBS and less staff and will need continued monitoring over the coming year.

3.7.3   In 2013/14 the service has provided advice and guidelines for avoiding cross contamination relating to food hygiene and E.Coli to reduce risks to the consumer. This has impacted on the indicator related to premises broadly compliant with food law which has reduced, and having fewer staff has impacted on the inspection regime. In 2014/15 we will be targeting inspections to improve this area of work. The contaminated land strategy has been reviewed and land was successfully remediated at Fochabers. The Anti Social Behaviour Unit continues to coordinate partners to deliver the Community Safety Strategy.

Budget

Income £195,237

Expenditure £337,367

Staffing £1,243,916
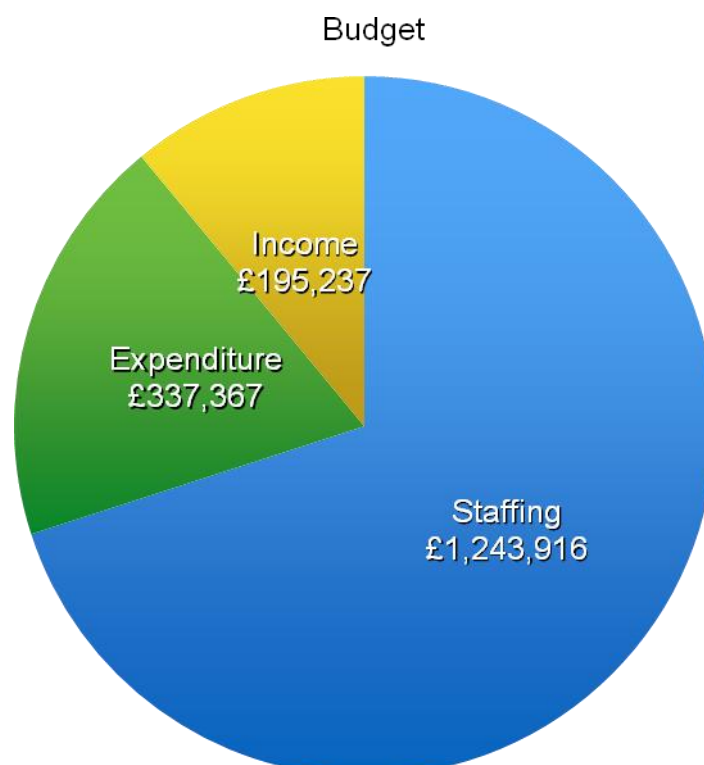
3.8   Trading Standards

3.8.1   The Trading Standards service provides the regulatory function associated with consumer protection and consumer advice, licensing standards and also provide welfare benefits and a money advice service.

3.8.2   As part of the Council's budget reduction process for 2013/14, the service has been reduced by 0.8 FTE licensing standards officer and 1 FTE trading standards post. This has resulted in a change in the manner in which it deals with consumer advice with initial contact being made through the Citizens Advice Consumer service and referrals being dealt with by staff. It has also meant a reduced level of service in relation to licensing standards inspection and planned inspection for consumer legislation. The service has implemented the DBS changes and moved offices to the HQ Annex. In 2014/15 the service will investigate outsourcing advice for financial services and welfare benefits to demonstrate best value.

3.8.3   Trading Standards has focused on adopting an intelligence led approach. The Service has improved its intelligence capability in partnership with all 32 Scottish Councils and Trading Standards Scotland. The Service has 2 Officers trained in the collation, grading, dissemination and analysis of intelligence. This improved capability has helped the Service identify problems that require investigation. By taking on challenging investigations such as online distribution of counterfeit goods and the supply of illicit tobacco, the Service has generated feedback from the public and legitimate business, so improving the flow of intelligence. This work has also enabled much closer working with Police Scotland, who assisted the Service with two search warrants and a proceeds of crime action. Trading Standards has reported four counterfeit goods cases involving nine individuals and companies to the Procurator Fiscal. The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal's Service (COPFS) recognise the links between the trade in illicit goods and serious organised crime and now prioritise action against these illegal practices. Three of the four cases have been marked for proceedings with the remaining case under consideration.

3.8.4   The Financial Inclusion service successfully bid for external funding for a temporary Benefits Claims Advisor to help deal with the anticipated increase in demand for advice due to welfare reforms. The service will help clients with medically related claims, such as the new Personal Independence Payment. Many of these clients are in receipt of financial assistance from the Council. Benefits received offset some of these costs so reducing demand on Council resources.

Budget

Legend: ■ Staffing ■ Expenditure ■ Income

Income
£11,253

Expenditure
£191,657

Staffing
£655,697

4 How we perform

4.1 Performance management concerns everyone in Development Services. Every member of staff contributes in some way to the performance of the service through individual and team performance. How we perform is assessed in a number of ways-

- Key performance/statutory performance indicators
- Planning Performance Framework
- Regulatory regimes
- Self assessment
- Local performance indicators
- Benchmarking
- Customer feedback
- Employee feedback

4.2 Key performance/statutory performance indicators

4.2.1 Planning and Building Standards have national performance frameworks. The service also contributes to SOLACE indicators associated with Trading Standards and Environmental Health, and the Scottish Local Authority Economic Development Indicators. Annually, it publishes performance reports which enable the Council to compare its performance with other Scottish councils.

4.2.2 Performance and workload trends on key indicators for the Development Services are summarised in APPENDIX 2. The Planning Performance Framework feedback received from Scottish Government highlighted areas of good practice including reduced timescales in decision making, good engagement with members and the community with the main issues report and good progress in clearing legacy cases. Areas noted for improvement were the requirement to update the enforcement charter, the delay in producing the new local development plan and the need for developer contributions to be set out in the emerging plan. The requirements of the performance framework are being refined with greater emphasis being placed on case studies and clear evidence of improvement which will need to be provided in 2014/15.

4.3 Self Assessment

4.3.1 Self assessment is used as part of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) approach adopted by the Council. PSIF self evaluations were carried out during the last year. Planned actions are incorporated in APPENDIX 1.

4.4 Regulatory Regimes

4.4.1 The Council's Environmental Health Service is subject to scrutiny by the Food Standards Agency by regular audits.

4.5 Local Performance Indicators

4.5.1 The Council has developed a performance management framework to ensure that appropriate scrutiny of performance is carried out. Development Services has developed outcome indicators within this framework. These are reported within the quarterly reports prepared for relevant Council Committees and are specifically commented upon in the performance reports prepared for these Committees on a quarterly basis.

4.6 Benchmarking

4.6.1 Development Services have a range of benchmarking activities, some relate to national performance frameworks or SOLACE national indicators whereas others are designed to look at other local authority's methodologies and cost to seek to improve service delivery and share knowledge, as budget pressures increase this activity becomes more important to enable us to learn from best practice and recognise different approaches that can improve performance at reduced cost. Benchmarking across services such as Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Economic Development is not very mature and we will continue to work through the relevant professional organisation to develop these. However, through the Heads of Planning Service, similar authorities have been grouped together with a view to benchmarking and shared good practice in 2014.

4.7 Customer Engagement and Responsiveness

4.7.1 Development Services use a range of methods to gather customer opinion including online surveys, response forms, the complaints system and industry liaison meetings. The results are reported as part of our performance reports and feed into improvement actions for the service. Development Management has accomplished significant improvements over the last two years in both performance and relationships with the customers resulting in very positive feedback from developers.

4.7.2 Examples of Improvements in the service in 2013/14 include:-

Development Management

One to One meetings with major developers and agents to ensure we continue to meet their needs and seek to improve the Service.

Closer management of workloads with regular review meetings.

Building Standards

Changes to work allocation to aid consistency between officers.

4.8 Workforce Planning

4.8.1 Workforce planning is undertaken on an annual basis using the corporate template and takes account of the 3 corporate workforce priorities: workforce transformation and change, employee engagement and developing leadership capacity. Key workforce information is also reviewed as part of the process which includes data on employee demographics (e.g. numbers, age and gender profiles, turnover and absence), as well as consideration of a range of other information related to recruitment, planning, external and national developments, efficiency reviews and any other factors that may reshape the workforce in some way. The service plan reflects the key issues and actions arising from workforce planning activity and identifies gaps, actions required and proposed outcomes with timescales and officer responsibility.

The workforce planning process for Development Services has highlighted a number of issues as set out below:

1 Consolidation of temporary management roles in Development Management and Economic Development - this poses a risk for the service because the increased focus on performance in these areas of work require the capacity provided by the current temporary arrangements to meet the targets in the ten year plan. In relation to addressing the temporary management roles, a report will be prepared as part of the structural review to address the issue.

2 Outsourcing of Financial Advice and Welfare Benefits advice service has arisen as part of the budget review process and will be investigated.

3 Issues raised as part of the workforce survey were also raised through the PSIF process and will be addressed through the actions incorporated in the service plan.

4.9 Risk Register

4.9.1 The risk register for Development Services has been reviewed and is attached in APPENDIX 3; the associated actions have been incorporated into the actions in APPENDIX1.