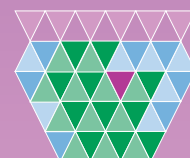


Legal &amp; Democratic Services

# Service Plan

2015-2018



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Service Plan sets out the priorities of the Legal and Democratic Service for the next 3 years and the context which we work within.

Our Service Plan supports the objectives of the Moray Council's 10 year plan, Moray 2023 A Plan for the Future – link [here](#) and the Corporate 4 year plan. [link here when available]

## 2. REVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR

The past year has seen a lot of change for Legal and Democratic Services. This change has been led by our Service Plan as outlined below.

We monitor compliance with our Service Plan actions, along with performance indicators, quarterly through using the 'covalent' spreadsheet and report twice yearly to committee.

The following paragraphs detail both the successful actions from our Service Plan over the past year as well as actions which we have not been able to complete.

### Legal Services

#### *Achievements / things we did well*

- Successfully implemented the transfer of administration of 10 licence processes from Environmental Services to the licensing team.
- Migrated to Sharepoint for keeping our current records.
- Introduced digital dictation for more efficient service delivery
- Established new ways of working through the admin team review
- Completed a customer satisfaction survey with a high level of customer satisfaction
- Managed to meet or exceed performance indicators in a challenging period with a lot of change.

#### *Incomplete actions/things we could improve on*

- Update our webpages – continued in the current service plan.
- Review the way our clients engage with us through the standard instruction form – continued in the current service plan.

### Administration Team

#### *Achievements / things we did well*

- Merged with Members Support team and established new ways of shared working although elected members have raised concerns about the level of administrative support they receive.

#### *Incomplete actions/things we could improve on*

- Improve on joint working arrangements within the team.

## Committee Services

### *Achievements / things we did well*

- Migrated to Sharepoint including electronic committee agendas
- Completed a customer satisfaction survey with a high level of customer satisfaction.

### *Incomplete actions/things we could improve on*

- Improve the use of IT (tablets) by Members and the promotion of paperless meetings.
- Saw a dip in performance figures due to staff turnover, staff absence and a heavy elections schedule. There are actions in this Service Plan and the team plan to address this dip.

## Registrars

### *Achievements / things we did well*

- Consolidated the centralisation of the registration function in Elgin.
- Digitised burial lair records.
- Strong performance in accuracy performance indicators collected for National Registers of Scotland.

### *Incomplete actions/things we could improve on*

- Promotion of what is available from the Service through improved website information

## Elections

### *Achievements / things we did well*

- Successfully administered two major electoral events.

### *Incomplete actions/things we could improve on*

- We are very reliant on one individual for elections administration. We would benefit from sharing this knowledge.
- Electoral commission performance standards have been met.

## Customer Services

### *Achievements/things we did well*

- The Contact Centre took on a number of new service processes including licensing calls
- Implemented the first phase of the Revenues and Benefits merger by merging frontline staff in the access points.

### *Incomplete actions/things we could improve on*

- E-mail management arrangements – continued in the current service plan
- Continue to improve telephony systems – continued in current plan
- Performance in call answering dipped in the first half of the year due to a succession of unforeseen staffing issues. This picked up during the second half of the year but will be kept under close scrutiny.



## Revenues

### *Achievements/things we did well*

- Implemented second homes policy for Council Tax

### *Incomplete actions/things we could improve on*

- Implementation of new Sheriff Officer contract for collection of Council tax and Non-Domestic Rates.
- This year saw a small increase in the cost of collection of Council Tax. This is due to lower collection rates caused partly by external factors such as tighter household budgets and partly by competing internal demands on staff time. This indicator will be kept under close scrutiny.

## Benefits

### *Achievements/things we did well*

- Targeted households potentially entitled to Discretionary Housing Payments
- Implemented budgeting and benefit advice service (SLAB funded project)
- Rolling out of BACS payments for Housing Benefit

### *Incomplete actions/things we could improve on*

- Preventative action to reduce claimant fraud and error.
- This year saw a small increase in the cost of processing each benefits case. This is due to a fluctuation in case load. The benefits service has, over the past few years, reduced costs.

## 3. SERVICE DRIVERS, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

The structure diagram at Appendix 2 shows the different services within Legal and Democratic Services. It details what each service does and the running costs. The following paragraphs detail the influences and demands on each service to give a context for our service plan objectives in Section 4.

### **Legal Services (including Licensing)**

The Licensing function directly contributes to the 10 Year Plan objective of Healthier Citizens and economic development. The bulk of Legal Services do not make any direct contribution but provide vital support to other services to achieve the outcomes of the 10 Year Plan.

About 55% of the work the Service does is process driven, by statutory requirement. The remainder is driven by service demands, a mixture of transactional work and more general advice.

We are staffed to deal with the existing workload. Variations in workload demands are dealt with through prioritisation, outsourcing and exceptionally through changes in staffing establishment.

We are a relatively small Local Authority Legal Service. We try to offer as broad a Legal Service as we can whilst retaining some specialism. A very small proportion

(around 3%) of Legal Services (generally specialist advice) is outsourced to an external legal firm on a competitive tendered rate.

Service trends and challenges:

- More legislation from Scottish Parliament requiring implementation.
- Increasing involvement in larger corporate and strategic infrastructure projects and external relationships.
- Changing ways of working including flexible working and Sharepoint.

### **Committee Services and Elections**

Do not make any direct contribution to the 10 Year Plan but support other Services, and the corporate core to achieve the outcomes of the Plan.

The service is staffed to service the existing committee structure. Variations in workload demands are dealt with through prioritisation.

Service trends and challenges:

- Increasing the use of digital technology.
- Increasing complexity of elections process.
- Changing ways of working including flexible working and Sharepoint.
- Lack of dedicated admin support for Elections.

### **Registrars Service**

Is driven largely by statutory requirements and does not make any direct contribution to the 10 Year Plan. Costs are mostly recovered through statutory licensing fees.

The service is staffed to meet the existing registration demand.

Service trends and challenges:

- Consolidation following centralisation of the service in Elgin.
- Increasing digitising of records.
- Predicted increase in population.

### **Administration Team (including Members Support)**

Do not make any direct contribution to the 10 Year Plan but support other services, and the corporate core to achieve the outcomes of the plan.

The service is staffed to meet the demands of other Services within Legal and Democratic Services. Member's Support have recently been incorporated into this team. Variations in workload demands are dealt with through prioritisation.

Service trends and challenges:

- Consolidating the new working arrangements of the Team incorporating Members Support.
- Changing ways of working including flexible working and Sharepoint.

### **Customer Services (including Contact Centre, Mailroom and Access Points), Taxation and Benefits**

Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits Services do not make any direct contribution to the 10 Year Plan but support other services, and the corporate core to achieve the outcomes of the plan.

Taxation and Benefits Services are driven largely by statutory requirements. They both work closely with other agencies who influence strategy.

Staffing resources are in flux as Customer Services take on new Services and the merger of Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits goes through under tranche 6 of DBS. The first phase of this merger, customer facing staff in the Access Points has been completed and the remainder is phased over the next 12 months.

Service trends and challenges:

- Centralisation of frontline contact for the Council through the Contact Centre.
- Digitisation of processes.
- Uncertainty of future welfare and benefits reform.
- Improving/maintaining Council tax collection rates at a time when household budgets are tight.

Service Plan objectives: as the restructure represents a huge transformation in the way these Services operate, and is the subject of a detailed project plan under DBS tranche 6, this is referred to in the Service Plan as the main objective for these services.

## **4. SERVICE PLAN OBJECTIVES**

To concentrate our efforts on improving the Corporate outcomes in the 10 year plan.

Most of the services with L&DS don't directly deliver the outcomes in the Council's 10 year plan. For the Council to deliver these outcomes it needs an **effective**, **efficient** and **responsive** central support service. For example:

- More revenue from Council tax collection means more resources will be available for front line services
- The more effectively legal risks are controlled, the more likely it is that services will achieve their goals within budget
- Better corporate governance will help involve the public in decisions which affect them and will increase their confidence in the decision making process
- The more efficiently we handle statutory processes and interaction with the public the more resources will be available for front line services.

The Council's budget has reduced in recent years and further reductions in its annual spend need to be identified. At the same time there has been organisational change and new ways of working through the DBS programme. Both of these initiatives have put pressure on our services resulting in:

- Reduced staff resources/increased workload on existing staff
- Harder to maintain standards/ increased risk
- Less development and improvement work

Against this background we have tried to be realistic about what we can reasonably achieve within our Service Plan.

**So our service plan objectives in Appendix 1 aim to:**

- **Concentrate on the quality and efficiency of our services**
- **Prioritise projects which directly contribute to the 10 year plan**

## **5. HOW WE DEMONSTRATE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The Council's continuous improvement framework will help us identify where we can be more effective, efficient and responsive. The table in Appendix 3 details the various management tools which the Council has in place to help demonstrate continuous improvement and how our services use them.

There is some variation in practise amongst the various teams in the uptake and frequency of review of these management tools. It is hoped that the table will:

- Act as a checklist for the various management tools for future
- Help us identify gaps and standardise practise where appropriate.

Actions from some elements of the table have been pulled out for inclusion in LDS Service Plan where they have major service efficiency or improvement potential. For example developing benchmarking information.



## LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – SERVICE PLAN ACTIONS

### Appendix 1

#### Legal Services

- Indicates action carried forward from previous Service Plan
- Indicates new action

Service Plan Action	Reason for doing this. Links to other plans and policies.	Impacts/Outcomes	Actioned by	Target Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review use of standard instructions/contact form.</li> <li>• Review webpage content, using public satisfaction survey results and reference to other authorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service efficiency</li> <li>Service quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve efficiency and quality of instructions.</li> <li>Improve quality of access to the Service and encourage self help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LSM</li> <li>LSM/DSM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July 2015</li> <li>Sept 2015</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review implementation of Sharepoint to ensure best practice and review paper file records.</li> </ul>	DBS programme.	Ensure that efficient use is made of the system and minimise risk of inadequate records.	LSM	December 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up Legal and Democratic Services Admin team review/merging teams with Members Support</li> </ul>	Service efficiency identified by change management Plan.	Identify weaknesses and make improvements.	HoS	July 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop benchmark information nationally. Carry out a detailed comparison against the 2 top performers.</li> </ul>	Service efficiency: continuous improvement.	Will provide comparative data on how efficient our Service is.	LSM	December 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assist with smooth transition of Health and Social Care functions to integrated joint board.</li> </ul>	Required by statute. Assists 10 year plan health objectives.	Ensure that sound governance arrangements are in place.	LSM/HoS	December 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prioritise resources on corporate projects and strategic</li> </ul>	4 year plan.	Give these projects the best possible chance of success.	LSM/HoS	March 2016 Review

infrastructure projects identified in the 4 year plan eg Western Link Road, harbour developments, Bogton Road development, Barmuckity Business Park, Elgin High School.					success of projects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and react to areas of significant increased activity (land register reform, servicing leases for new industrial builds) and potential decreased activity (Council House sale and Health and Social Care advice).</li> </ul>	Service efficiency: to ensure we have appropriate staffing in place.	Limited resources are used as efficiently as possible.	LSM	Annual, next March 2016	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate business case for SMS texting for Licensing Services.</li> </ul>	Continuous improvement: improve effectiveness of service	Improve Service for users.	LSM	October 2015	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop checklist for ensuring consistency in checking Committee papers.</li> </ul>	Improve quality, consistency and efficiency. (similar objective for Committee Services below)	Less mistakes, improve practice. Identify issues at an early stage and save wasted time later. Better governance.	HoS/LSM	July 2015	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Checklist/induction for new staff and for staff leaving.</li> </ul>	Service efficiency	To decrease errors/inconsistencies and save the extra time spend in sorting them out. We may be able to link with other Services to improve this Council wide.	HoS/LSM/Admin Team Leader	July 2015	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train staff in use of plain English</li> </ul>	Continuous improvement: improve service quality.	Better quality of reporting and communication. Potential to save time and resource and improve customer satisfaction.	LSM	Nov 2015	

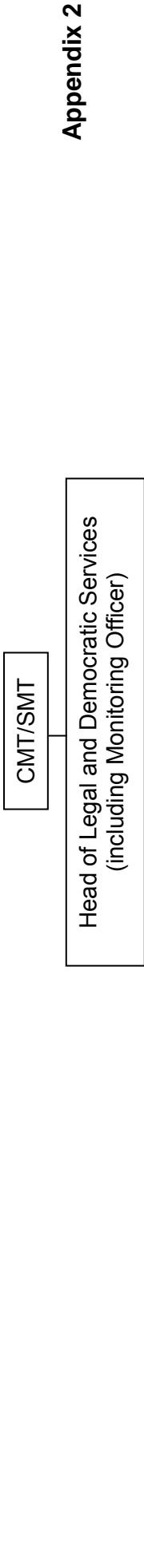
## Committee/Registrars/Elections

Service Plan Action	Why are we doing this? Links to other plans and policies.	Impacts/Outcomes	Actioned by	Target Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review circulation list for service committees agenda and reports with a view to reduced printing costs</li> </ul>	Improve efficiency.	Use less paper and save resources.	DSM	September 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase resilience in the elections function.</li> </ul>	There is existing staffing pressure on this function.	Reduce risk.	DSM	October 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce procedure for checking Committee papers, complimentary to the Legal Services action.</li> </ul>	Service efficiency	Less mistakes, improve practice. Identify issues at an early stage and save wasted time later. better governance.	DSM	July 2015
<u>Registrars</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement digitisation of burial ground records.</li> </ul>	Identified through DBS.	Improved efficiency.	DSM	April 2015
Investigate promotion of the marriage service	Increase revenue	Increased revenue	DSM	Nov 2015

## Customer Services/Revenues/Benefits

Service Plan Action	Why are we doing this? Links to other plans and policies.	Impacts/Outcomes	Actioned by	Target Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work on merger between Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits.</li> </ul>	DBS tranche 6.	Improve customer focus and increase efficiency.	CSM	March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop management information indicators for email enquiries and return call service.</li> </ul>	To improve measurement in respect of volumes handled and turnaround times	Provides a more rounded picture of the work performed within the team and measures service levels	CSM	March 2016

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review telephony strategy including use of automatic voice recognition technology and adjusting Service groupings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare for and implement Universal Credit in Moray</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>To improve customer access to the right person and improve management of calls during peak times</p> <p>Statutory obligation which forms part of the Welfare Reform agenda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to services</li> <li>Enables enquiry specific messaging</li> </ul> <p>Simplifies arrangements for staff training</p> <p>Developing a good working partnership with the Department for work and pensions (DWP) and other partners to deliver a joined up service to those entitled to Universal credit</p>	CSM	October 2015
			CSM	March 2016



Structure	Legal Services Manager Litigation and Licensing	Legal Services Manager Property and Contracts	Democratic Services Manager	Customer Services Manager	Legal and Democratic Services Admin Team																				
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child and adult care</li><li>• Adoption and fostering</li><li>• Education, housing and employment law</li><li>• Debt recovery, FOI, Data protection and equalities</li><li>• Liquor and civic licensing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leasing and property</li><li>• Trusts, common good and CAT</li><li>• Planning, roads, flooding, infrastructure and technical services</li><li>• advice, orders and appeals</li><li>• Community care and improvement grants</li><li>• Contracts and procurement</li></ul>	<p><u>Committee Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Service the following meetings: committees, working parties, community partnership, related bodies.</li><li>• Manage elections</li></ul> <p><u>Registrars</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Register births, deaths and marriages in Moray and offer “tell us once” service.</li><li>• Conduct Civil Marriages and Partnerships</li><li>• Conduct citizenship ceremonies</li><li>• Undertake burial ground administration</li></ul>	<p><u>Customer Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contact centre</li><li>• Access points</li><li>• Mail room</li></ul> <p><u>Revenues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council tax collection for 43,500 dwellings</li><li>• Non domestic rates collection for 4000 properties</li><li>• Water charge collection for Scottish Water</li></ul> <p><u>Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council tax reductions</li><li>• Housing benefit</li><li>• Scottish Welfare fund</li><li>• Discretionary housing payments</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secretarial support for Head of Service</li><li>• Support to elected members</li><li>• Administration of committee papers</li><li>• Clerical support to Legal and Democratic Services</li><li>• Processing licensing applications</li><li>• Administrative support for Customer Services including some elements of Revenues and Benefits</li><li>• Administrative support of civil events</li></ul>																				
Staff Budget 2014/15	£290k	£303k	Committee £168k Registrars £131k	CS £1.15m Revenues £640k Benefits £1.1m	£261k																				
FTF	Grades 1-6 = 1.5 Grades 7-10 = 2.0 Grades 11+ = 3.0 Total = 6.5	Grades 1-6 = 1.5 Grades 7-10 = 1.5 Grades 11+ = 3.2 Total = 6.2	Grades 1-6 = 3.6 Grades 7-10 = 5.0 Grades 11+ = 1.0 Total = 9.6	<table><tr><td>Grades 1-6</td><td>CS</td><td>Rev</td><td>Ben</td></tr><tr><td>1-6</td><td>48.4</td><td>15.2</td><td>18.2</td></tr><tr><td>7-10</td><td>2.0</td><td>3.0</td><td>6.7</td></tr><tr><td>11+</td><td>2.0</td><td>1.0</td><td>1.0</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>52.4</td><td>19.2</td><td>25.9</td></tr></table> Revenues £640k Benefits £1.1m	Grades 1-6	CS	Rev	Ben	1-6	48.4	15.2	18.2	7-10	2.0	3.0	6.7	11+	2.0	1.0	1.0	Total	52.4	19.2	25.9	Grades 1-6 = 6.4 Grades 7-10 = 1.0 Grades 11+ = nil Total = 7.4
Grades 1-6	CS	Rev	Ben																						
1-6	48.4	15.2	18.2																						
7-10	2.0	3.0	6.7																						
11+	2.0	1.0	1.0																						
Total	52.4	19.2	25.9																						



## LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - How we demonstrate continuous improvement

	Legal Services			Committee Services			Registrars			Customer Services			Revenues			Benefits		
	Report to Committee	Date of last review	Date of next review	Report to Committee	Date of last review	Date of next review	Report to Committee	Date of last review	Date of next review	Report to Committee	Date of last review	Date of next review	Report to Committee	Date of last review	Date of next review	Report to Committee	Date of last review	Date of next review
How we engage with our customers																		
Customer satisfaction survey	Yes	Jun-14	Jun-16	Yes	Jul-13	Jul-15	Yes	Jul-14	Jul-16	Yes	Mar-14	Mar-15	No	N/A	TBC	No	N/A	TBC
Regular client/customer meetings	No	quarterly			N/A		No	Feb-14	Feb-15	No	ongoing	ongoing	No	ongoing		No	ongoing	
How we demonstrate good governance																		
Annual budget review meetings	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16
Regular reporting budget to Committee	Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly	
Departmental procurement action plan	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16	No	Feb-15	Feb-16
Team Plan	No	Jan-15	Jan-16	No	Mar-14	Mar-15	No	Mar-14	Mar-14	No	Mar-15	Jan-16	No	Mar-15	Jan-16	No	Mar-15	Jan-16
How we measure performance																		
Corporate (SOLACE) benchmarking	Yes	Dec-14	Dec-15	Yes	Dec-14	Dec-15	No	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	N/A
Service benchmarking	Yes	Dec-14	Dec-15	No	ongoing		yes	NRS annual		Yes	Nov-14	Nov-15	?	ongoing		No	ongoing	
Performance Indicators	Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly		Yes	quarterly	
How we demonstrate service improvement																		
DBS Programme	Yes	T6 ongoing		Yes	T6 ongoing		Yes	T6 ongoing		Yes	T6 Ongoing		yes	T6 ongoing		yes	T6 ongoing	
PSIF review	No	Dec-13	Dec-15	No	Dec-13	Dec-15		Jan-14	Jan-15	?				?			?	
Audit Scotland Inspection		N/A			N/A			N/A			N/A			N/A		yes	biennially	
How we engage with and develop our staff																		
Staff survey (corporate)	Yes	Jun-13	Jun-15	Yes	Jun-13	Jun-15	Yes	Jun-13	Jun-15	Yes	Jun-13	Jun-15	Yes	Jun-13	Jun-15	Yes	Jun-13	Jun-15
ERDP	No	Oct-14	Oct-15	No	Sep-14	Sep-15	No	Jan-14	Jan-15	No	rolling	rolling	No	rolling		No	rolling	
Personal Development Plans/CPD	No	Oct-14	Oct-15	No	N/A		No	N/A		No	N/A		No	N/A		No	N/A	
Workforce planning	No	Jan-15	Jan-16	No	Jan-15	Jan-16	No	Jan-15	Jan-16	No	Jan-15	Jan-16	No	Jan-15	Jan-16	No	Jan-15	Jan-16
Regular team meetings	No	every 2 weeks		No	monthly		No	quarterly		No	?		No	?		No	regular	
How we manage risk																		
Risk registers	No	Mar-14	Mar-15	No	Mar-14	Mar-15	No	Mar-14	Mar-15	No			No	Mar-15	Mar-16	No	Mar-15	Jan-16
Business Continuity Plan	No	Feb-15	Jan-16	No	Feb-15	Jan-16	No	Feb-15	Jan-16	No	?		No	Needs review		No	Needs updating	
Health and Safety Risk Assessment	No	Feb-15	Jan-16		?		No	?		No	?		No	Various		No	Various	

