

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET7th September 2023Report by Director of Business Operations & PartnershipsBUSINESS OPERATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS DEPARTMENT
END YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the performance of the Business Operations & Partnerships Department in 2022/23. This is presented at Annex 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- a) Scrutinises the performance of the Business Operations and Partnerships Department; and
- b) Notes this report as a summary of the Business Operations and Partnerships End Year Performance for 2022/23 (Annex 1).

BACKGROUND

3. This report contains data on progress against the department's key performance targets, and updates on the main actions we are taking to contribute to the achievement of the Council's strategic outcomes. Annex 1 gives an overview of the performance of each of the main service areas.

4. The Business Operations and Partnerships Department, comprises the following functions:

- HR & Corporate Services
- ICT & Community Safety
- Communities & Transformation
- Revenues, Accounts Payable/Receivable & Business Support

5. A summary for each service is included in Annex 1.

6. Our priorities as a department each reflect our cross-council enabling role:

- **Efficient and effective business operations** – these are common across departments (e.g. ICT, HR/Payroll, payments, customer contact) and the goal is to maximise economies of scale and the use of digital technology to focus on meeting the needs of our customers (both internal and external) in the best way. In terms of staff and budgets, business operations are the most significant part of the department.

- **Council wide digital transformation** – this focuses on 3 digital priority areas: business systems & processes; customer experience and workforce productivity. As a department, we lead these programmes and manage a core group of experts who transfer their skills from project to project as required. We are also responsible for delivering a number of projects in our own services.
- **Effective community, partnership and strategy development** – the focus here is to ensure we take a long-term perspective for East Renfrewshire, which addresses the impact of the pandemic; digital opportunities; the impact of climate change; at a time of financial pressure. Our work on 'Vision for the Future', the Council's 10-15 year strategy, has been complemented by outstanding partnerships with communities and other public sector partners during the pandemic. Community Planning, participatory budgeting, community empowerment as well as robust evaluation of the effectiveness of our work all contribute to ensuring that we are delivering the best possible services for our residents. We advise Council and the Corporate Management Team and ensure the Council achieves its duties under Best Value.

7. In addition to a number of restructures and redesigns for budgetary and efficiency purposes, there have been a number of key changes in our department in 2022/23. These include:

- Restructure of roles following the appointment of the Director of Business Operations and Partnerships in January 2022. This led to recruitment of a new Head of Communities and Transformation with Jamie Reid the successful candidate, taking up post in November 2022.
- Retiral of the Council's long-standing Democratic Services Manager/Deputy Returning Officer, Eamonn Daly, in March 2023. Colin Sweeney has now been successful in recruitment to this position.
- Resignation of the Head of ICT & Community Safety, Murray Husband, led to a further reconfiguration of roles. Community Safety will now fall under the Head of Communities and Transformation and recruitment is underway for a new Head of ICT and Resilience which we hope to have in place by the end of 2023.
- Transfer of Licensing and Legal support from Business Support to the Chief Executive's Office, effective May 2023.

2022/23 PERFORMANCE

8. Annex 1 gives a summary of performance for each of the main services in the Business Operations & Partnerships Department across 2022/23.

9. For our HR & Payroll services it has been a busy year with increased workloads arising from several Chief Officer recruitments, industrial action and supporting departments with the HR implications of savings proposals and restructures. We have continued to work through an improvement plan to address HR/Payroll audit actions and ICT system and reporting issues. We have also had a renewed focus on employee wellbeing with launch of a staff wellbeing survey in April 2023 and action planning on the results is now underway.

10. The Customer First and Money Advice and Rights teams have experienced increased demand in 2022/23 due to customers struggling with cost of living challenges. We have seen an increase in length of calls due to complexity of cases and also a rise in face to face visits to Council offices. Good progress has been made in developing online services. There have

been challenges with recruitment, absence and the implications of budget targets which have been difficult to reconcile with the rising demand.

11. The Communications team have continued to grow our engagement reach through use of social media and new platforms such as 'Nextdoor'. There were also extensive campaigns for the council budget engagement; and including Warm and Welcome Spaces, Cost of Living and the Fostering Campaign. In addition, working with Democratic Services, we were pleased to see a return to face to face civic events including Remembrance Sunday, Holocaust Memorial Day and the official openings of Greenlaw Works and Cowan Park Community Enterprise. Significant work was also undertaken across the department to support the induction of new elected members following the elections in May 2022.

12. We have seen increased stability in the ICT network and launch of a new service desk portal which makes it easier for users to report faults or request a service. The team have supported a number of key projects this year and made good progress in rationalisation of ICT contracts for savings purposes. Like others, this service has experienced challenges with recruitment, turnover and the impact of budget reductions on capacity.

13. In addition to the successful implementation of the first phase of the analogue to digital telecare switchover, worked on with colleagues in ICT and HSCP, the Community Safety team has engaged in some excellent partnership working to improve our CCTV estate and to respond to an increase in anti-social behaviour. There were however delays in implementing savings, but this did not affect the department's overall position.

14. In the Communities and Transformation service, significant resources went into development of COVID reserve proposals, cost of living support, youth disorder response and building up our equalities networks both internally and externally. The digital transformation programme has also made good progress in developing online services and introducing automation – Cabinet considered a detailed report on this programme in June 2023.

15. The Revenues Service has seen a return to pre-pandemic performance results after a challenging couple of years due to increased COVID demand, new services and the changeover of a legacy ICT system. Good progress has been made on online services for Council Tax and Benefits which is improving automation, and there has been a significant rise in requests for Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants. Again, this service has experienced pressures from staff absence, high demand and savings targets which have impacted staff resilience.

16. In 2022/23 the Business Operations & Partnerships Department dealt directly with 273 Freedom of Information requests of which 82.8% were responded to within the statutory timescale.

17. A total of 182 complaints were received by the Department in 2022/23. There were 165 complaints closed at frontline stage and 17 at investigation stage. The Department achieved the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) targets for responding to frontline complaints (5 days) recording an average 2.6 days and for investigation complaints (20 days) recording an average of 16.1 days.

18. Our department's invoice processing rate was 94.7% in 2022/23 compared with 96.1% in 2021/22. It is worth noting that the previous year's results included data on Covid hardship payments, low income pandemic payments and grants. The department continues to lead on improvements to the invoice payments process, providing greater financial control and assurance and automating processes wherever possible.

PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

19. As with many services across the Council, Business Operations and Partnerships continue to balance business as usual, with increased post-pandemic demands, especially those related to the cost of living and reducing budgets. Given the pressures of the last 2-3 years, we are also keen to support employee health, wellbeing and resilience as we continue the transition to new ways of working and navigate the challenges of increased absence levels, skills shortages, particularly in frontline workers, and succession planning.

20. Supporting the successful induction of the new Chief Executive and recruiting and onboarding a new Head of ICT and Resilience are key priorities for the department, particularly given the significant enabling role that our services play to support the work of the broader organisation.

21. Following the report to Council in June, we will be pushing forward with our work on 'Vision for the Future', ensuring that this is shaped effectively by our local communities, partners, elected members and staff. We must also consider the context of the broader public sector landscape, including the Verity House Agreement between Scottish Government and CoSLA which prioritises child poverty, net zero and sustainable public services. There remains ongoing uncertainty around the National Care Service, and the potential implications for the Council and our own services. There will be significant work to identify the scale of the changes and plan accordingly.

22. We will also be concentrating on achieving benefits from our digital transformation programme including further focus on automation whilst carefully managing our ambition with the capacity of staff throughout the organisation and the resources available to drive and embed change. This will include encouraging customers to use our online services including the My East Ren portal and the new Benefits Online service; implementing our new telephony platform (Unified Communications); driving our HR/Payroll improvement plan including resolving ongoing system and reporting issues; continuing the transition from analogue to digital telecare; encouraging staff adoption of the new features available in Microsoft 365; and supporting the rationalisation, renewal and tendering of key contracts and the upgrades and integrations of key corporate ICT systems. There will also be challenges of information governance and security and a key focus will be to help the organisation prepare for the risks and opportunities that these present.

23. We will be working collaboratively to build the capacity of local communities, using data and insight to target partnership activity. This will include leading the Council's approach to child poverty; equalities; participatory budgeting and community planning, whilst working closely with colleagues in the Environment Department to shape approaches to community wealth building and local action planning. We are also working closely with colleagues in HSCP, Police and other services and partners to tackle pockets of anti-social behaviour in the local area and will be preparing for Community Council elections in the autumn.

24. Leading the organisation's response to Best Value will also be an important area, ensuring we have a robust approach to self-evaluation, with a strong foundation of service business planning. This will also help focus our efforts on workforce planning, which has been selected as the national Best Value theme for the next year's audit.

25. We continue to have significant concerns about impact of further cuts to services and staff that are already under pressure and essential to the running of the Council. We will be undertaking a number of restructures of our services to drive efficiencies and meet budget targets. Through 2022/23, despite the best efforts of our teams, we have seen a lack of resilience in our services leading to slower response times and staff wellbeing issues due to workload, uncertainty and temporary contracts. Our key business operations (e.g. ICT and

HR) will be engaging further with leadership teams across the Council to discuss how these services can manage business expectations with the resources available. As expected, successive years' savings have also had impact on our frontline services which is a real concern alongside the rising demands created by the cost-of-living crisis.

PUBLICATION OF END YEAR PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

26. This report and Annex will be posted on the Council's website.

FINANCE & EFFICIENCY

27. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

CONSULTATION

28. Between October and November 2022 we carried out the largest ever consultation on budget setting with residents. There was extensive use of engagement channels including an online public survey (1787 responses), face-to-face budget panel engagement events with 49 attendees and a further 332 responses through our Citizens Panel platform which is more demographically representative of the local population. There was also a significant social media campaign. A summary of the overall findings found that protecting our education services is a key area of concern for residents. Environmental services including roads, grass cutting, recycling and refuse collections and support to our most vulnerable residents were also priority areas for protection. There was a common acceptance of the likelihood of Council Tax increases.

29. In March, a community networking event for equality groups was held with an ask of what the Council could do to support under-represented groups. Ongoing facilitation and support was identified and we are currently exploring capacity-building support to achieve this. Throughout March and April, discussion groups were facilitated by Engage Scotland with a number of disabled residents which covered several themes including how people with disabilities can be more involved in decision making. We have also set up a community network for deaf residents with support from the British Deaf Association where discussions involve improvement in Council communications and more accessible services.

30. We continue to work closely with community partners including Linking Communities and VAER, to ensure residents can make decisions on how local community groups and activities are funded with £233k distributed to 87 local groups in 2022/2023. We have engaged with Community Councils to explore how participatory budgeting can benefit their local area. More face-to-face engagement has taken place with locality planning areas with Community Capacity staff having a more visible presence with local groups and planning events.

31. Working jointly with the Environment Department, we procured a new corporate online citizens' engagement tool – Commonplace - enhancing how we can engage digitally with more of our residents. Commonplace has already been used to consult with residents on a number of issues including the draft Gaelic Language Plan, Climate Change and the Local Development Plan.

32. Findings from our latest Citizens' Panel survey were reported in June 2023, Views were sought on local service provision, as part of monitoring service satisfaction levels, and gathering local perceptions on impact of cost-of-living crisis, climate change and digital inclusion. A 'you said we did' newsletter was issued to respondents demonstrating how we

are responding to feedback. Full results from the survey along with the newsletter can be accessed [here](#).

33. Staff engagement across the Council included completing a wellbeing survey in April 2023. The survey was based on the five Pillars of Wellbeing: Health, Financial, Working Environment, Purpose and Working Relationships identified by the Stevenson Farmer review. This UK Government commissioned review was to understand how employers can better support the mental health of all people currently in employment including those with mental health problems or poor wellbeing to remain in and thrive through work. One in four staff completed the survey and overall responses were positive – a staff satisfaction score of 72.85 /100 was recorded. Issues identified and resulting areas for action include more training, further range of well-being activities and financial support and advice. These are being incorporated into the Health and Wellbeing action plan.

34. We continue to engage widely with local communities and the voluntary sector and demonstrated this strongly through our winter response planning. We have started this planning process again inviting over 30 organisations and groups to an ideas session for winter planning and we continue to work with a number of organisations through our cost-of-living working group.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

35. This report highlights the Business Operations & Partnership Department's contribution to the delivery of the partnership Community Plan and the Council's Outcome Delivery Plan. Whilst it focuses on the department's contribution, many of the results could not have been achieved without excellent partnership working across Council services and with partners. Relationships with Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire. Police and other third sector responders have noticeably strengthened since the onset of the pandemic and it will be important to build on these strong connections as we move forward with 'Vision for the Future'.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

36. As this report is primarily a progress and performance update, there are no particular implications in terms of staffing, property, legal, IT, equalities or sustainability. Each of these issues has been mainstreamed throughout the departmental reports and specific equality impact assessments have been carried out where appropriate.

CONCLUSION

37. This report provides an overview of the Business Operations & Partnerships Department's performance at end year 2022/23.

38. The performance results outlined in this report demonstrate the huge variety of services, initiatives and support provided by the Department both to internal services and local communities. We continue to be very proud of our teams and grateful for the commitment and efforts they have shown throughout the year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

39. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- a) Scrutinises the performance of the Business Operations and Partnerships Department; and
- b) Notes this report as a summary of the Business Operations and Partnerships End Year Performance for 2022/23 (Annex 1).

Director of Business Operations & Partnerships
August 2023

REPORT AUTHORS

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Strategic End-Year Performance Report and Annual Community Planning and Fairer East Ren Report for 2022/23, Council 28 June 2023.
- Local Child Poverty Action Report: Year 5 (2022/23), Council 28 June 2023
- Vision for the Future, Council 28 June 2023
- Changes to Organisational Structure, Council 28 June 2023
- Update on Digital Transformation Programme, Cabinet 19 June 2023
- COVID Reserve – Review of 2022/23 Allocation and Proposals for 2023/24, Cabinet 11 May 2023

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BUSINESS OPERATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

YEAR END SUMMARY

2022 / 2023

Contents:

- HR & Corporate Services
(includes HR/Payroll, Communications, Democratic Services & Customer First)
- ICT & Community Safety
- Communities & Transformation
- Revenues Services, Accounts Payable/Receivable & Business Support

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Business Operations & Partnerships 2022/23
HR & Corporate Services

HR/Payroll

Summary	<p>HR & Payroll Budget £1.942M 39.0 FTE</p> <p><i>Increased workload from recruitments, industrial action, organisational change and savings plans. Challenging HR/Payroll system issues. Increased focus on employee wellbeing.</i></p>
Outcomes	
Efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented Multi-Factor Authentication for HR/Payroll (iTrent) system, improving security and streamlining logins. • Successful pilot of sickness absence logging by Schools, improving real-time sickness absence reporting. • Further development work is underway to improve sickness absence and workforce reporting and dashboards. • Improvement action plan in place for HR/Payroll to address system issues and audit actions. • Increase in number of CHAP payments for payroll from 250 to 279), but decrease in overpayments (from 246 to 220)
Customer	
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in number of posts advertised (558 from 668), but number of post-offers (865) highlights challenges in recruiting ‘first time’ given buoyant recruitment market. • Managed impact of industrial action across Schools and Neighbourhood Services • Resolution of a national insurance contribution issue linked to implementation of the iTrent system. • Supported organisational change activity to deliver budget savings • Completed bi-annual equality mainstreaming report employment section, with actions included in HR strategy. • Positive reduction in the gender pay gap from 5.71% to 4.65%. • Concern over increasing Local Govt. absence levels. Final year-end data still being collated. • Increase in number of complex absence cases and take-up of Occupational Health referrals. (Final absence data is still being validated) • Increase in sign-ups for employee benefit portal (from 1272 to 1536). • Launch of Health and Wellbeing strategy and action plan and appointment of a temporary Wellbeing Officer • Easter charity event raised more than £1,100 for Doing it for Daniel, the Council’s charity partner. • Significant increase in training courses attended (face to face 1355 up from 911 last year, and online 1686 up from 1430). • Staff Health and Wellbeing Survey developed (excluding HSCP) for launch in April 2023. • c.65% reduction in use of Kudos awards, where staff can celebrate success and recognise good work, and a reduction in nominations for the We Are East Ren staff awards (down from 93 to 77). • Reduction in formal staff mentoring from 10 to 2 relationships with no new applications in 2022/23. • The number of graduate apprenticeships remained static at 4 with no new applications in 2022/23. • Supported several Chief Officer recruitments – Chief Executive, Director of Environment, Head of Service – Children’s Services, Head of Service – Communities & Transformation and preparation for Head of ICT & Resilience.

Business Operations & Partnerships 2022/23
HR & Corporate Services

Customer First

Summary	<p>Customer First Budget £0.302M 30.8 FTE Money Advice & Rights Team Budget £0.960M 18.2 FTE Registrars Budget £0.162M 3.8 FTE</p> <p><i>Increased demand from customers struggling with cost of living. Good progress developing online services, but increase in face to face contacts and call times due to complex circumstances. Difficulties with recruitment, absence and managing savings against demand.</i></p>
Outcomes	
Efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced new online processes as part of Digital Customer Experience programme, including online birth registration appointments launched November 2022 (90% uptake) and development of online marriage appointments. • Money Advice & Rights Team (MART) joined a number of working groups, incl. Cost of Living and Suicide Prevention. • Configured new telephony platform, Unified Communications, which will launch later in 2023 with a focus on improved customer experience, improved data and streamlined processes for staff. • Embedded MART redesign to manage customer demand and provide an efficient service. • Led Health for Heroes Project which gives free gym and leisure passes to veterans who suffer with mental health issues.
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant increase in sign-ups to My East Ren customer portal – 15k customers now signed up compared to 374 this time last year. • Legislation passed to include remote registrations of births and deaths as an option across Scotland. Number of registrations slightly down on last year at 2914 compared to 3215, but with improved accuracy rate of 99.85%. • Increase in face to face contact (12% vs 7% last year, 25,591 visits) as more customers in crisis or vulnerable with complex enquiries. • Online continued to be popular (30% vs 34% last year, 31,907 contacts – decrease due to garden waste permits being later this year). • Decrease in phone contact (93,621, down 12,601). 79% of calls answered on first call (below 85% target), up from 73% last year, with average phone queuing time of 6 minutes. Calls impacted by complexity of topics, system issues, staff absence and high volumes driven by council tax and cost of living. • 40.9% increase in uptake of under 22 years National Entitlement Cards to 61.9%. • Supported new Administration through Education Placing Request Appeals, incl. training new members and clerking. • 37% increase in MART caseload (up from 2659 cases to 3643) and 47% increase in enquiries (5265 from 3604) but decrease in client financial gain (from £4.961m to £4.907m) due to increase in cases where clients are ineligible for financial supports. 94% of MART enquiries were contacted within 5 days. Increased training, outreach and networking to support the Cost of Living Crisis. MART Education Pilot now embedded in 4 Schools. MART Discretionary Fund provided £60k of payments to 154 residents. • Army covenant brought into law and training provided to HSCP, Education and Housing.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff absence and vacant posts have impacted teams throughout year. • Retention of staff has been a challenge and we have had difficulty recruiting into temporary posts. • 60+ training & poverty awareness sessions delivered to a wide range of partners and residents, inc. NHS midwives, health visitors & GPs.

Business Operations & Partnerships 2022/23
ICT & Community Safety

ICT

Summary	<p>Budget £5.56M 51.9 FTE</p> <p><i>Greater stability in the ICT infrastructure and launch of new service desk portal. Progression of a number of key projects including Analogue to Digital Telecare and contract rationalisation. Challenges with recruitment, turnover and savings have impacted capacity.</i></p>
Outcomes	
Efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commenced programme of software rationalisation to simplify and reduce costs, with £250,000 of contract savings delivered by March 2023 for budget process • NHS Microsoft 365 federation now in place, giving NHS and council colleagues the opportunity to share calendars and Teams messaging. • Continued to support a number of critical projects including Analogue to Digital (A2D) Telecare programme, wider A2D project, the implementation of Unified Communications platform for Customer First, HSCP Carefirst replacement, ICON (payments system) upgrade, new Housing system and Digital Cemeteries project. • Immutable back-ups currently in implementation phase, as per SEPA recommendation - well progressed for our data backup platform, represents significant investment in data protection. • Rationalisation of digital defences product suite has delivered both efficiency and cost savings.
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT network available >98% of time • Website available >99% of time • One major incident experienced (Microsoft 365), down from 3 in previous period • New service desk platform launched in March 2023, following customer-led design, giving improved experience when reporting faults or seeking assistance • Public wi-fi implementation underway, due for completion in 2023, with reduced scope due to budget pressures • Full fibre roll-out commenced on council sites, inc. priority schools. Residents in completed areas now have access to super-fast broadband • Support to Digital Customer Experience programme has seen new internet sites launch including Private Sector Housing Short Term Lets and Birth Registration appointments.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff turnover and recruitment challenges continue, but key Database Administrator recruitment now completed. • ICT restructure req'd to meet savings – expected to have a noticeable impact on the scope/responsiveness of the service. • Planning & preparation commenced for recruitment of new Head of ICT & Resilience, interviews in September 2023.

**Business Operations & Partnerships 2022/23
ICT & Community Safety**

Community Safety

Summary	<p>Budget £1.209M 28.2 FTE</p> <p><i>Excellent partnership working on anti-social behaviour and to improve the CCTV estate. Successful implementation of Analogue to Digital Telecare after challenging period of project team staffing issues. Delays implementing savings.</i></p>
Outcomes	<p>Strategic Outcomes - Outcome 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Wardens responded to a total of 3,342 calls for service, 390 relating to noise and 175 for anti-social behaviour. Of the 175, 17 of the calls (9.7%) were from customers who had previously reported issues with their neighbours (down from 10.4% last year). • The cross-service/partner Safe East Ren Group continues to develop the strategic approach to this outcome. • There has been close working with Police to improve camera estate and enhance staff training. • Ongoing impact of anti-social behaviour in Barrhead – being taken forward by multi-agency/service group.
Efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful implementation of Analogue to Digital Telecare (A2D) digital-ready Alarm Receiving Centre platform, one of the first in Scotland to be truly cloud-based, with no significant interruptions to the 24/7 life & limb service. Has significantly reduced calls through use of a mobile app which delivers calls and routing information direct to responders, freeing call handlers from manually calling round responders. • The service was unable to deliver a £100,000 security automation saving due to limitations in the electrical capacity at Thornliebank Depot. The saving was added to the Department's target for 2023/24 savings.
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support c.3000 Telecare clients with the total number of calls this year at 201,032, down from 242,485 in 2021/22. • Prevented false call-outs to Scottish Fire & Rescue Services, with only 158 call-outs required from 1,843 fire/smoke alarm activations, resulting in cost avoidance to SFRS of c.£291,505.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two Wardens that were dedicated to delivering and providing COVID isolation and support calls since autumn 2020 returned to the service and resumed normal duties. • Significant resourcing challenges in the Analogue to Digital Telecare project, with staff departures, were overcome and planning is now underway the next phases of the project which will replace the Warden Call System in sheltered housing complexes and the deploy 2500 digital alarm units. • There was a delay in implementation of the 2022/23 savings due to a redesign of the Warden Service which went live in June 2023.

**Business Operations & Partnerships 2022/23
Communities & Transformation**

<p>Summary</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Communities</td> <td>Budget £1.375M</td> <td>16.8 FTE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strategy Support & Insight</td> <td>Budget £0.580M</td> <td>8.4 FTE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transformation</td> <td>Budget £0.433M</td> <td>14.0 FTE</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>COVID reserve proposals, Cost of living support, Youth Disorder/Detached Work, Auchenback Resource Centre & Equalities issues have taken up significant resources in of Senior, Community Learning & Development (CLD) and Strategic Services staff. Good progress in developing online service and introducing automation.</i></p>	Communities	Budget £1.375M	16.8 FTE	Strategy Support & Insight	Budget £0.580M	8.4 FTE	Transformation	Budget £0.433M	14.0 FTE
Communities	Budget £1.375M	16.8 FTE								
Strategy Support & Insight	Budget £0.580M	8.4 FTE								
Transformation	Budget £0.433M	14.0 FTE								
<p>Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed £1.7m Covid Reserve & Cost of Living support package for communities. • Participatory Budgeting: Grant Making working well with £233k distributed to 87 local groups and projects. Delivered 0.34% (£733,728) against the national 1% mainstream PB target (£2.4M). • Published the Council's 2-year Equalities Outcomes Report demonstrating varied work underway to support communities. Significant work undertaken to re-engage and re-connect local equalities groups and communities. (18 community orgs. attended event in March). • Significant work undertaken to build post-pandemic relationships with new Community Planning Partners, particularly to support Vision for the Future and to revitalise the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). • Community Groups' capacity, resilience and relationships all showing negative impacts post pandemic. • Increased detached youth work (involving approx. 3,500 interactions with young people) and diversionary response work with a group of 200+ young people has slowed the return to wider CLD programmes. While diversionary response work has reduced the number of antisocial behaviour incidents in Barrhead it has meant that mainstream CLD programmes have only returned to 75-85% of their peak pre-pandemic performance, with 1178 individual young people (1594 registrations) achieving a range of 1400+ accredited awards/certificates through CLD programmes (68% of peak pre-pandemic performance). This is expected to improve to close to peak pre-pandemic levels in the 23/24 academic year (Aug 23 – July 24) 									
<p>Efficiencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New online processes for Birth Registration Appointments & CLD Self-Registrations expected to save approx. 500 hours of staff time per year across the two teams. • 31 of top 100 Suppliers now on e-Invoicing with remaining using e-templates and automated processes • Replaced performance management system (Pentana) with in-house applications incl. Microsoft365 Power Apps & Business Objects • Implementing Multi-Factor Authentication - making systems and data more secure and streamlined 									
<p>Customers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer booking for birth registrations has shifted from 83% phone bookings to 93% online – increasing customer satisfaction with the service (Now rated 4.5/5 by customers) • We have improved customer service/journeys through new online processes for: Money Advice Referral Forms; Out of hours homelessness, additional payment functionality, such as bulky uplift additional payments; abandoned vehicles; short term lets; & business waste. • Biggest budget consultation exercise to-date with rapid analysis and reporting of results to elected members. 									

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased customer involvement in the design and usability of online customer services. • However, challenges with key suppliers have negatively affected timelines for our customer projects. • Services across ERC struggling with capacity to engage with change projects while dealing with recovery, recruitment and budget pressures.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to see improving engagement with data protection through training and engagement. • Establishment of Staff equality network, with at least 51 staff signed up and c.30 attending a face-to-face meeting. • Significant challenges filling key roles – e.g. community planning to support strategy development and CPP

Business Operations & Partnerships 2022/23
Revenues Services, Accounts Payable/Receivable & Business Support 2022/23

Summary	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Council Tax & NDR</td> <td>Budget £4.688M</td> <td>13.5 FTE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Revenues, Benefits & Housing Benefit</td> <td>Budget £1.104M</td> <td>17.2 FTE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accounts Payable & Receivable</td> <td>Budget £0.592M</td> <td>9.5 FTE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Business Support</td> <td>Budget £0.274M</td> <td>5.9 FTE</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>Return to pre-pandemic levels of performance after challenging couple of years due to COVID, increased demand and implementation of new ICT system. Good progress on online services for Council Tax and Benefits. Significant increases in demand for Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants. Challenges of staff absence, high demand and savings targets impacting staff resilience.</i></p>	Council Tax & NDR	Budget £4.688M	13.5 FTE	Revenues, Benefits & Housing Benefit	Budget £1.104M	17.2 FTE	Accounts Payable & Receivable	Budget £0.592M	9.5 FTE	Business Support	Budget £0.274M	5.9 FTE
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Outcomes													
Efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant improvement on processing times compared to 2021/22, particularly for Housing Benefit (HB) & Council Tax Reduction (CTR). HB now tracking mid/upper quartile in Scotland for 2022/23. HB new claims averaged 20.8 days compared to 48.9 days last year and CTR new claims 35.2 days, improved from a challenging 88.2 days in the previous year. • Council Tax collections improved, back to pre-pandemic levels at 97.55% (96.76% 2021/22). £3.4m additional cash delivered • Debt recovery process effectiveness improved, customer changes approved at Council Dec 2022, Debt Recovery policy updated and approved at Cabinet March 2023 • Business Support restructure complete, all legal/licensing work moved to Chief Executive's Office from 1 May 2023, will allow full end to end process and system review • Accounts Payable processing times improving, with 89.3% of invoices paid within 30 days. This is based on the new PI methodology reflecting the Local Government Benchmarking Framework guidance. Focus continues on automation and improvement. 												
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18,000 cost of living grants delivered by Council Tax team in April 2022 at short notice from Scottish Government. Energy and Fuel Support payments delivered from February 2023 for UK Government - new process/systems with c.100 payments made to date • Council Tax online launched in May 2022, in conjunction with MyEastRen portal, using service design and user engagement techniques. Approx.6,000 sign ups to council tax online and e-billing. Around 40% of mail now being received electronically. • Education Benefits online live from July 2022, with all applications for Free School Meals and Clothing Grants processed online for this academic year (2213 CGs). Significant improvement in processing times and customer service. • Complaint volumes 5% lower in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. • Demand for Scottish Welfare Fund continues to increase, team having to prioritise workload. 1409 Crisis Grant applications in 2022/23 compared with 1015 last year and 709 in 2020/21. Community Care Grants have remained more stable at 706 compared to 709 last year. Self-Isolation Support Grants (SISGs) scheme ended January 2023. 												
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence rate higher than prior years, with several long term sicknesses within the team. High demand for services and budgetary pressures mean there is continued pressure on the teams. Resilience and well-being of staff continues to be a high priority, with HR supporting long term absences and providing additional absence training to managers. 												

Business Operations & Partnerships 2022/23
Other Indicators

Absence

Final year 2022/23 data not yet available.

Payment of Invoices within 30 days

94.7% of invoices (5,131) were paid within 30 days, above the Council figure of 89.3% (51,471) and slightly below the department's 2021/22 figure of 96.1%.

Complaints

A total of 182 complaints were received by the Business Operations and Partnerships Department in 2022/23. 165 complaints closed at frontline stage and 17 at investigation stage. The Department achieved the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) targets for responding to frontline complaints (5 days) recording an average 2.6 days and for investigation complaints (20 days) recording an average of 16.1 days.

Information Provision

	FOI requests (Business Operations & Partnerships Department)
Volume	273
Proportion answered within statutory timescale	82.8% (226) <i>(N.B. 249, 91% were answered within hours or minutes of the deadline, but system counts very precisely)</i>

Efficiency Outcome Indicators

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicators (latest data available provided):

Support Services as a percentage of total gross expenditure - the figure for 2021/22 was 4.5%, previously 4.83% in 2020/21. The 2022/23 figure will not be available until late October 2022.

Percentage of income due from council tax received by the end of the year - the figure for 2022/23 is 97.55%, previously 96.76% in 2021/22.

The percentage of the highest paid 5% employees who are women – the figure for 2022/23 is 62.57%, previously 61.90% in 2021/22.

The Gender Pay Gap - the figure for 2022/23 is 4.6%, previously 5.71% in 2021/22.

The cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax – the figure for 21/22 was £17.89, previously £15.03 in 20/21. The 2022/23 figure will not be available until late October 2022.

Percentage of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days - the figure for 2022/23 is 89.3% previously 86.65% in 2021/22.