# ITEM No ...4.....

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 24 JANUARY 2022

REPORT ON: CORPORATE SERVICES SERVICE PLAN 2021-24 PROGRESS REPORT

#### REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

**REPORT NO: 25-2022** 

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide a mid-year progress report on the Service Plan for Corporate Services for the period 2021-2024.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee note the attached service plan progress report.

#### 3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In November 2020, elected members endorsed the Council's Action Plan to address the recommendations from the Best Value Audit (Article IV of the minute of the meeting of Dundee City Council on 16 November 2020, Report No: 284-2020 refers). The Action Plan sets out that all services are to develop a Service Plan for the period 2021-24 and present these plans to the appropriate Committee and provide progress reports twice yearly.
- 4.2 Report No 21-2021 presenting the Service Plan for Corporate Services for the period 2021/2024 was approved at the Policy & Resources Committee on 21 June 2021 (article IV refers). The Service Plan sets out the strategic direction for Corporate Services for the next three years (financial years 2021/22 to 2023/24) and outlines key priorities and improvements which the service intends to deliver, based on the financial and employee resources which are expected to be available. It also sets out in more detail the service's key responsibilities and identifies the key actions to be undertaken to meet these priorities, as well as the performance indicators which will be used to monitor progress.
- 4.3 The report attached in Appendix 1 is the first performance report in relation to this service plan and reports on performance for Quarters 1 and Quarter 2 of financial year 2021/22. It provides an update on the performance indicators and actions under each priority theme in the plan and in each theme where required identifies further improvement activity to achieve the targets and action in the plan.
- 4.4 As a strategic service area the key priorities for Corporate Services are:
  - 1. Sustainable financial strategy
  - 2. Implementation and delivery of Our People Strategy
  - 3. Implementation and delivery of the Digital Strategy
  - 4. Delivering a robust and secure corporate IT platform
  - 5. Improving income collection
  - 6. Developing collaborative partnerships
  - 7. Providing assurance of good corporate governance, including effective audit and benchmarking

4.5 The Corporate Services Service Plan sets out performance measures and actions for each specific service area. Performance in relation to these measures and actions will be monitored in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Framework and reported to Committee on a twice-yearly basis.

#### 5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been subject to an assessment of any impacts on Equality and Diversity, Fairness and Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. There are no major issues.

#### 6.0 CONSULTATIONS

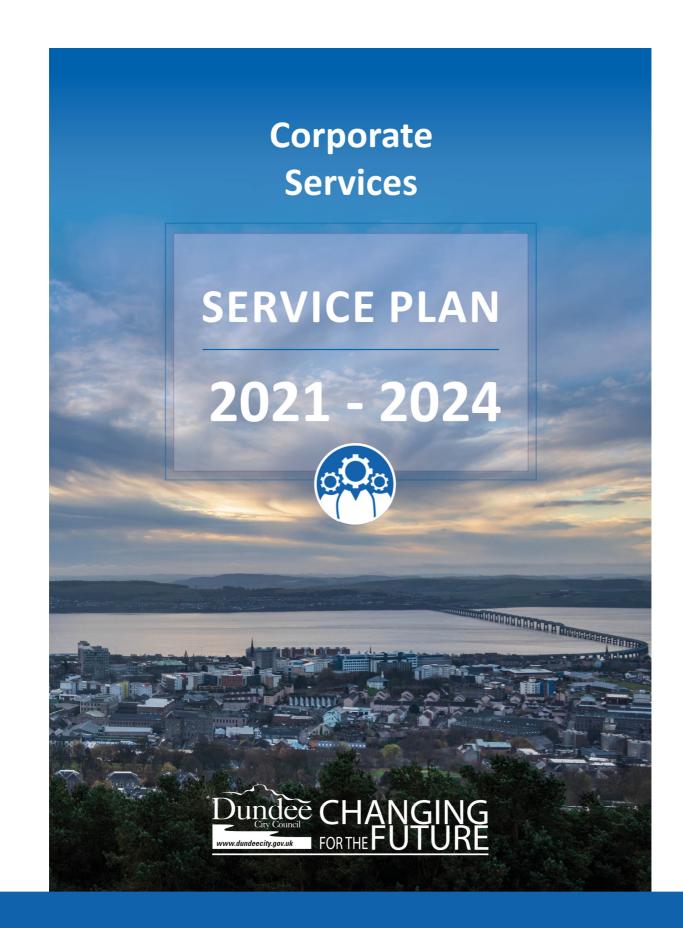
6.1 The Council Management Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

#### 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None

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# **Corporate Services**

Quarter 1 & 2 Performance Report November 2021

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**Corporate Services Executive Summary** 

This mid-year report sets out the progress of Corporate Services against its Service Plan for 2021/22.

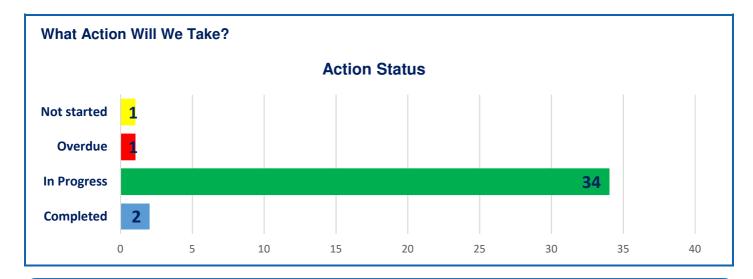
It reflects good progress in the context of significant additional demands for support due to COVID.

Highlights are the maintenance of essential public services, the delivery of extensive support to citizens and businesses, the completion of the statutory accounts, support for the Mass Vaccination Centre, and the continuation of core support services, including the delivery of online Council meetings.

#### **Service Priorities**

- Sustainable financial strategy
- Implementation and delivery of Our People and Workforce Strategy
- Implementation and delivery of the Digital Strategy
- Delivering a robust and secure corporate IT platform
- Improving income collection
- Developing collaborative partnerships
- Providing assurance of good corporate governance, including effective audit and benchmarking





Action Status: Not started: Action has been assigned to an officer but not started Overdue: The action's due date has passed and the action is not yet complete. In Progress: The action has progress and is not at no update. Completed: The action is complete.

# **Corporate Finance**

Action we have taken

# Accounting Strategy

The accounts for the Council and all relevant external bodies have been prepared and audited in line with established timetables with 'clean' audit certificates received in all instances. The service has continued to monitor the Council's revenue and capital budgets with regular reports to elected members.

#### **Financial Services & Investment**

The service has supported capital planning by providing affordability analysis in relation to loans charges and has undertaken analysis of budget efficiencies in relation to treasury management. Accurate cashflow management and projections ensured that the Council could take advantage of low borrowing costs which will support future financial sustainability. The service has also continued to provide operational solutions to support pandemic related payments to citizens and businesses.

Specifically, in relation to the management of Tayside Pension Fund a revised funding strategy was introduced to accommodate employers requiring to exit the fund at minimised risk to remaining employers and we have introduced self-service pension systems for both employers and fund members. Statutory requirements in relation to the publication of annual benefit statements were met. Internal and external audits have been completed that have provided assurance on governance and operations of the pension fund.

The Local Authority Fund Statistics 2020/21 published rankings of all UK Local Government Pension Schemes based on annual returns for the year to 31 March 2021. Tayside Pension Fund performance ranked very favourably within these results.

#### Internal Audit, Corporate Fraud & Risk Management

The service has assisted, through the provision of advice and guidance, to make improvements to the governance, risk management and control framework (e.g. the Officers' Register of Interests and Gifts, Gratuities and Hospitality processes).

Corporate Fraud staff investigated 164 suspected fraudulent / incorrect applications relating to the Covid-19 Strategic Framework Business Fund. These investigations prevented £381,500 payments being incorrectly awarded via 143 applications. The team worked in collaboration with other Scottish local authorities to maintain a list of suspected fraud cases. In partnership by the Corporate Procurement Team General Government Procurement Card fraud awareness training was delivered to a variety of staff across council service areas.

The Covid-19 Recovery Risk Register was developed and maintained by the Corporate Risk Management Co-ordinator in conjunction with Services across the Council, the Risk Management Working Group. The Corporate Risk Register which contains the Council's strategic risks, was refreshed taking cognisance of the above and service level risk registers with 3 new risks being incorporated.

# **Corporate Procurement**

Key performance indicators were all maintained. The team continues to lead the development of the Council's Community Wealth Building Strategy.

#### Insurance

The team have continued to run an effective service to ensure that the Council's assets are adequately and effectively insured and have provided regular professional advice and guidance to departments on insurance and operational risk management issues. The Home Contents Insurance Scheme continues to be administered for Council tenants.

#### **Performance indicator**

Performance Indicator	2021/22 Q1	2021/22 Q2	2020/21 Target	Short Term Trend	Comments
Payment of creditors - % < 30 days	97%	96%	95%	•	There has been a marginal dip in performance and work is being carried out with services to identify the cause and any required corrective actions. Performance remains above target.
Payment of local creditors - % < 14 days	94%	95%	90%		Performance remains above target.

Action	% Progress	Comments
Explore opportunities to better link our financial planning and Transformation priorities to address the significant financial impacts of COVID-19	10%	A new board has been established which will oversee the Council's transformation programme, including the financial benefits of projects.
Review opportunities for collaborative procurement across Tayside	25%	A number of 'tests of change' projects on arrangements for procuring Fleet, Roads Maintenance and Hard FM are being considered and led through the Tayside Procurement Consortium Steering Group. Project and programme support are being engaged to support this work and further progress will be reported in due course.
Community Wealth Building	25%	The Council has engaged with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to support the development of a Community Wealth Building (CWB) strategy. CLES have now completed this review and reported their findings. This report and proposed action plan are being considered by officers and will be submitted to elected members together with the Council's response in due course.
Review the areas for improvement in relation to the management of assets	45%	The Executive Directors of City Development and Corporate Services have

Action	% Progress	Comments
within the Council's Annual Governance Statement and their relevance in line with the priorities emerging from Covid19, as set out in the recovery plan priorities.		agreed that a report will be presented to P&R committee to provide a summary of the proposed approach and target dates for individual service asset management plans.
Develop a Strategic Asset Management Plan to guide the Council through the recovery phase and support the ambition to build back better	45%	The Executive Directors of City Development and Corporate Services have agreed that a report will be presented to P&R committee to provide a summary of the proposed approach and target dates for individual service asset management plans.
Manage revenue and capital budgets in light of monitoring information	50%	Revenue and Capital Budgets are being monitored and the outcome of this is reported timeously to CMT. Detailed information is also submitted regularly to elected members and reports outlining the forecasted position to 30 September 2021 will be considered by Policy & Resources Committee on 25 October 2021. Both outturns are currently projected to be within the approved budget. This position will continue to be closely monitored.
Update the medium- and long-term financial plans	50%	Officers are undertaking a review of these financial plans. The latest Local Government Finance Settlement is scheduled to be announced in December 2021 after which a report will be submitted to elected members providing further information on the financial outlook for the Council.

# Customer Services & IT

Action we have taken

#### **Customer Services (Contact Centre)**

The Contact Centre aims for a performance of 90% of all calls answered, however it should be noted this is a centre average and there are variances across the different services. Another target is speed to answer with the target of calls to be answered within 90 seconds. While call answering and speed to answer are important it should be noted the most important criteria is that customers are dealt with by well-informed professional advisors who provide clear advice and leave customers clear as to what happens next. Progress through Covid recovery has been challenging, the team still have responsibilities around Isolate and Support where they undertake outbound calling on behalf of Scottish Government to engage with people who have been asked to self-isolate to identify where they may require support.

#### Advice Services (Scottish Welfare Fund & Self Isolation Support Grants)

The Scottish Welfare Fund has seen increasing demand over recent years and was under additional strain during the pandemic. Demand for Crisis Grants is increasing consistently year on year, with the first two quarters of 2021/22 show the demand is not easing. Processing timescales have been maintained within the Scottish Government guidelines with resources being deployed from other areas of the service.

Self-Isolation Support Grants were introduced in October 2020 to provide financial support to meet basic needs during a period of self-isolation for workers on low incomes. The grants have undergone several amendments to improve the eligibility criteria. The service has dealt with 2374 self-isolation support grant applications which ranged from between 7 and 381 in any given week in the first 2 quarters of 2021/22.

Advice provision continued on a remote basis with 2,842 incoming calls to Welfare Rights and Connect in the first two quarters of 2,770 (97%) answered.

#### **Benefit Delivery**

In addition to business-as-usual work the Benefit Delivery Team have been tasked with delivering Scottish Government Grants to individuals. These include: Holiday Support Payments of £11.25 per week paid directly into bank account of around 5,700 families; Low Income Pandemic Payments of £130 paid to over 19,000 individuals in receipt of Council Tax Reduction; and Scottish Child Bridging Payments totalling over £1.4million paid to eligible families throughout the financial year 2021/22.

# **Corporate Debt**

Despite operational and Covid challenges, Council Tax collection has improved on pre pandemic levels in the first two quarters of 2021/22. The team work closely with Council Advice Services to identify where interventions to support those in debt would be helpful.

The Rent Arrears Team aim to maximise the amount of rent collected and support individuals to maintain their tenancies by working closely with and signposting to other support services. Evictions and other recovery actions were suspended during the pandemic, this has resulted in higher levels of rent arrears which is a consistent trend throughout Scotland. Investment has recently been made in RentSense Data Analytical Software which will allow a more targeted approach to those experiencing rent arrears. The Local Authority Tenant Hardship Fund and SG Tenant Grant Support Fund are available to support tenants in arrears. The Sales Ledger Team, who deal with outstanding invoices on behalf of various services, continue to concentrate on collection with the overall arrears balance reduced by £1m as at Sept 2021 compared to Sept 2020.

Non-Domestic Rates collection have improved month on month in the first two quarters of 2021/22.

#### **IT Service**

The service has developed and responded flexibly to the Covid pandemic. Improvements have continued in the first two quarters of this financial year with additional investment cyber security software to ensure the council remains a cyber resilient organisation. The IT Service has continued to support new agile and digital ways of working within service areas, specifically supporting online forms via the Customer Services platform to allow 24/7 access to services.

#### Performance indicator

Performance Indicator	2021/22 Q1	2021/22 Q2	2020/21 Target	Short Term Trend	Comments
Average number of days taken to process new claims.	13.33	14.67	17	•	Due to continued Covid demand performance has decreased. Additional resources are now in place to support the increased demand.

Action	% Progress	Comments
Continued development of IT solutions, including collaboration tools for remote working	5%	The Council has established systems to support mobile and hybrid working. Further work is needed to implement Wi-Fi across the Council Estate and to facilitate video conferencing.
		Future plans will consider:
		<ul> <li>the number of employees expected to work at each Council location;</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>the number and type of devices required for mobile and working and in fixed locations;</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>what Wi-Fi provision is needed to meet typical usage levels at Council locations; and</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>what capital investment is needed to support the future delivery of services.</li> </ul>
		Progress has been made in identifying desk top equipment which will enable office-

Action	% Progress	Comments
		based video conferencing and in configuring devices for personal issue.
Refresh the IT Strategy	10%	Work has commenced on the development of an updated IT strategy.
Update the Digital Strategy	10%	A review of the digital strategy is underway.
Review new models of operational front-line work in light of changes in priorities following review of Council and City plans	25%	Ongoing reviews of Service Delivery are underway to ensure our communities receive the support needed in the current climate, by advancing current technologies, and implementing areas of automation.
Evaluate changing city poverty profiles and ensure service specification meets changing needs at city and ward levels	25%	Work has started with data being gathered from Fuel Well Dundee 2021/22 as well as work in conjunction with Equality and Fairness Officers in Chief Executives Service. This will be interrogated with GSI data being used to understand city and ward level issues for coming year's activity.
Review and revise city wide co- ordinated advice plan with main local advice partners	50%	Work is currently ongoing to revise the co- ordinated advice plan in light of recent Covid recovery issues, cost of living increases and the rise in the price of fuel. As a result, SCARF have been invited in as a partner in the Co-ordinated advice strategy from winter 2021.
Lead on exploring the potential of MS Teams to enable Council/Committee meetings to continue to take place virtually	50%	Meetings having been taken place using MS Teams since the start of the pandemic with elected members and officers all being able to fully participate. Investigations are ongoing to consider options to consider introducing a hybrid approach.
Increase take-up of warm home discounts by 7% through the Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project	50%	Most warm home discount schemes apart from SSE have ended at the present time. Fuel Well Dundee 2021/22 will ask customers to sign up for a yearly reminder of the WHD scheme which will automatically be sent to them based on the provider they identified at the point of their Fuel Well Dundee application. With up to 3,000 households being planned to be able to apply to Fuel Well Dundee DEEAP hopes that customers will sign up for an automated notification when their supplier's WHD scheme opens each year.
Increase fuel debt write-off cases by 10% through Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project	60%	Fuel Well Dundee 2021/22 design will again concentrate on identifying fuel debt and subsequent write off to increase Dundee Citizens access to fuel write off.

Action	% Progress	Comments
Adopt an "advice first" principle and strategy response to food insecurity, ensuring people in financial crisis are supported to access all the financial support to which they are entitled	80%	All food insecurity agencies understand the advice first principle and are currently working with Council Advice Services to identify champions within their organisations to be trained in referral and signposting procedures, basic interviewing skills and eventually some elements of advice provision. Basic and Intermediary training courses are being planned for early 2022 when it is hoped it will benefit from face-to-face sessions. Referrals will be tracked and reported through the advice strategy business plan from April 2022.
Examine repeat Scottish Welfare Fund applicants and identify preventative approaches to achieve longer-term solutions	80%	Following on from previous work, Fuel Well Dundee 2.0 (2021/22) design will ask applicants to sign up for assistance to maximise income and reduce reliance on Scottish Welfare Fund. Applicants will be asked about use of the Scottish Welfare Fund and their reliance on it. Use of holistic advice will look to concentrate heavily on these customer needs in terms of fuel, income and financial capability.
Prepare and implement a new advice strategy for Dundee incorporating the recommendations of the Dundee Fairness Commission	85%	The Advice Strategy is scheduled to be taken to the Policy and Resources Committee during 2022/23 following a final draft report being compiled in conjunction with voluntary sector partners.
Maximise take up of school clothing grants, free school meals, Educational Maintenance Allowance and Best Start Grants	100%	Educational benefits have been awarded in line with Council Tax Reduction scheme. To maximise take up single applications have been used as far as possible.

# **Democratic & Legal Services**

Action we have taken

Democratic and Legal Services principal focus from April 2020 onwards has been to:

- make the case for a more sustainable, public, national laboratory service for Scotland;
- ensure that the democratic institutions continue to operate in as close to normal a fashion as possible, both for the City Council and also for outside bodies including the Dundee City Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board, Tayside Valuation Joint Board, Tayside Contracts Joint Committee, Tay Road Bridge Joint Board and Tay Cities Region Joint Committee and also for individual Elected Members, as they all continue to support the City and the Region in its response to and its recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic;
- successfully administer the Scottish Parliament Election which took place on 5 May, the first Scottish Election to be held during a public health emergency;
- begin preparations for next year's Council Election; and
- continue to provide a safe and sensitive registration service for significant life events, including births and deaths, and, where possible, to celebrate weddings and civil partnerships.

Action	% Progress	Comments
Deliver the 2022 Local Government Elections	10%	Preparations have begun for delivering the 2022 Local Government Election for Dundee City Council. The Elections Team will formally meet on 21st December and will then meet regularly until the date of the Election.
Develop long term plans for Tayside Scientific Services	20%	Discussions have begun with key stakeholders, including the Provider Laboratories, Food Standards Scotland and Public Health Scotland, to develop a detailed and fully costed proposal for a sustainable Scottish Scientific Service. Further meetings will take place in 2021 and the intention is that the proposal should be finalised in early 2022.

# People

Action we have taken

#### Our People and Workforce Strategy

The actions associated with our current People and Workforce Strategy have been largely achieved. Previous actions that were identified have been superseded or improved quickly because our workforce responded so positively to the challenges of the Covid pandemic. Changing practices rapidly, the emergence of new digital tools, developing creative approaches to the deployment of employees and the development of new workforce skills have meant that we are able to review our strategy in the coming months.

Work has therefore commenced to develop a new People and Workforce Strategy which will reflect the progress we have made and take account of the priorities ahead to continue our journey of supporting and modernising our workforce of the future. The joint Heads of People are reviewing how best to respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead for our workforce. There also continues to be ongoing positive engagement and partnership with our Trade Union colleagues in workforce matters.

#### **Deployment and Recruitment**

The remobilisation of Services has required practical support and professional advice from People Services. The Deployment Team have supported the mass vaccination programme in the last six months and continue to do so. The teams continue to respond to other deployment requests however, this has decreased following a fall in Covid demand and a significant effort by the Recruitment and Staffing Teams to ensure that critical posts have been recruited to. The Payroll has also supported this high volume activity ensuring contractual and pay arrangements have been progressed quickly.

The additional payroll and HR activity around furlough, the Scottish Government payments to social care and education employees, the implementation of the Scottish Local Government Living Wage and most recently the implementation of the national pay awards, have been met despite the pressure of close timelines between all these initiatives or awards.

# **Employee Well-being**

The teams continue to progress support around employee well-being and resilience. The Health and Safety team has been crucial to the safe working practices, including workplaces across all services. The production and communication of new employee guidance and policy has been achieved. A new sickness absence dashboard is in development. This will support employees, inform our decision making and ensure proactive approaches to reduce absence. There has been investment in the flu vaccination programme for our employees this autumn and into the winter period, to mitigate current health risk factors.

The new Well-being Support Service continues to develop approaches to ensure the resilience of employees and has invested in methods to mitigate potential trauma in the future.

# Workforce Planning

Workforce planning tools have been developed and circulated to services with support given from Learning and Organisational Development and Human Resources. This has progressed in some services more than others but will be a strategic focus of our new People and Workforce Strategy and Transformation programmes.

#### Young People Workforce Initiatives – Youth Employability Team

There has been significant effort and investment to support young people into local employment in Dundee and there are currently 28 modern apprentices and 20 graduate apprenticeships in DCC across services and disciplines. There is also a graduate programme ready to be launched in the new year to support 12 fully funded placement opportunities for 12 months for young unemployed/underemployed graduates, (up to age 24), providing them with relevant work experience, increasing their employability skills to improve future employment prospects. Further research is also being undertaken by the Youth Employability Team to improve recruitment and engagement of young people.

#### **Modernisation of Workforce Practices**

The Council has always had a positive approach to work-life balance and flexible working. A Corporate strategic group is exploring the possibilities of new agile approaches to how we work in the future, taking account of the most recent research with a view that key services have the right people at the right time and the best tools to be flexible, effective, and efficient.

Corporate Business Support has been critical to supporting the pandemic effort and continues to review and modernise administrative and system improvement.

#### **Skills Development**

Priorities around mandatory and essential job requirements have been met. New digital ways of connecting and working together have been accelerated in recent months. The Digital Champion Network has been critical in supporting employees to learn or enhance new skills relating to Office 365, ensure individual and team development and development of working with digital systems. Considerable progress has been made around broader learning approaches which will be set out in a future People and Workforce Strategy.

Action	% Progress	Comments
Review terms and conditions of service to reflect our 'new normal'	3%	Alongside developing work roles, manager and employee guidance, People Services are reviewing current policies and procedures to support with new ways of working.
Review of terms and conditions	3%	Work is ongoing to identify areas for review including benchmarking with other local authorities.
Work with all services to review working practices to increase flexibility and mobility	5%	Preparation of project plan has commenced and currently examining and reviewing tools to support services. Some services have already started their own workforce planning. The Well-being Support Service is providing a range of support and information for employees. The new sickness absence dashboard is in final stages of development.

Action	% Progress	Comments
Staff Deployment Team consolidated and development of internal jobs market	5%	This will form part of the wider workforce planning action. An initial exercise has been completed to identify scope.
Build on the success of the Mass Vaccination Centre deployment models	5%	This will form part of the wider workforce planning action and will consider the lessons learned from deployment during the pandemic.
Review Our People and Workforce Strategy to reflect the new normal	10%	Work has started reviewing the current Our People and Workforce Strategy and the framework for the new People Strategy will be considered by CMT early in 2022.
Work with Services to review workforce resources and succession plans	10%	A working group is currently scoping succession planning tools and the Well- being service has regular employee and manager information. A new dashboard for managing absences is in the final stage of development.
Review all policies and procedures to reflect changes to the way we work including the requirement for an increasingly flexible workforce	10%	Work has commenced reviewing current guidance and drafting new guidance and FAQs on hybrid working. This will be subject to consideration by CMT in early 2022.
Review Health and Safety Policy corporately and in Services to reflect new ways of working	30%	Systems have been developed and discussed with trade unions in respect of fire evacuation and first aid to support new ways of working.
Continue to promote learning and development and health and wellbeing strategies	35%	The Well-being support service is in place. Succession planning learning and development are being reviewed and the Leadership framework in progress.
Ensure that our young people are supported with Employability opportunities in Dundee and across the Tay Cities	40%	Several employability initiatives for young people have been put in place supported by various funding streams. The Workplace Graduate Programme is currently being recruited to.

# **Best Value**

Action we have taken

Progressing Workforce Planning in the first half of the year was delayed as a result of the ongoing Covid response, however, this is now increasing in pace.

Recruitment continues to be a challenge across the Council and workforce planning and the new People Strategy are important components of our forward planning.

Action	% Progress	Comments
Corporate Services - Develop a workforce plan	0%	Workforce plans will be developed in conjunction with the Corporate Services 3- year service plans.
Corporate Services - Report progress towards Service Plans to Service and Scrutiny twice yearly	30%	A Service Plan performance report template has been agreed by Council Management Team and all services and performance reports for Q1 and Q2 are being prepared for presentation to Committee.
Corporate Services - Implement 3- year service plans which set out clear prioritisation of key actions and targets for each strategic service area to enable transparency in reporting service performance to service committees	100%	Corporate Services Service Plan for 2021- 2024 was approved at Policy & Resources Committee on 21 June 2021.

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