



Annual Performance Report 2023/24



Building Standards Verification

Building Standards Verification Service

Annual Performance Report
2023/24

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| Version | Date | Comments |
|---------|--------------|-------------------|
| 5.1 | August 2023 | Updated for 23/24 |
| 5.2 | October 2023 | Updated for Q2 |
| 5.3 | January 2024 | Updated for Q4 |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

1 Introduction to the verifier

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

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

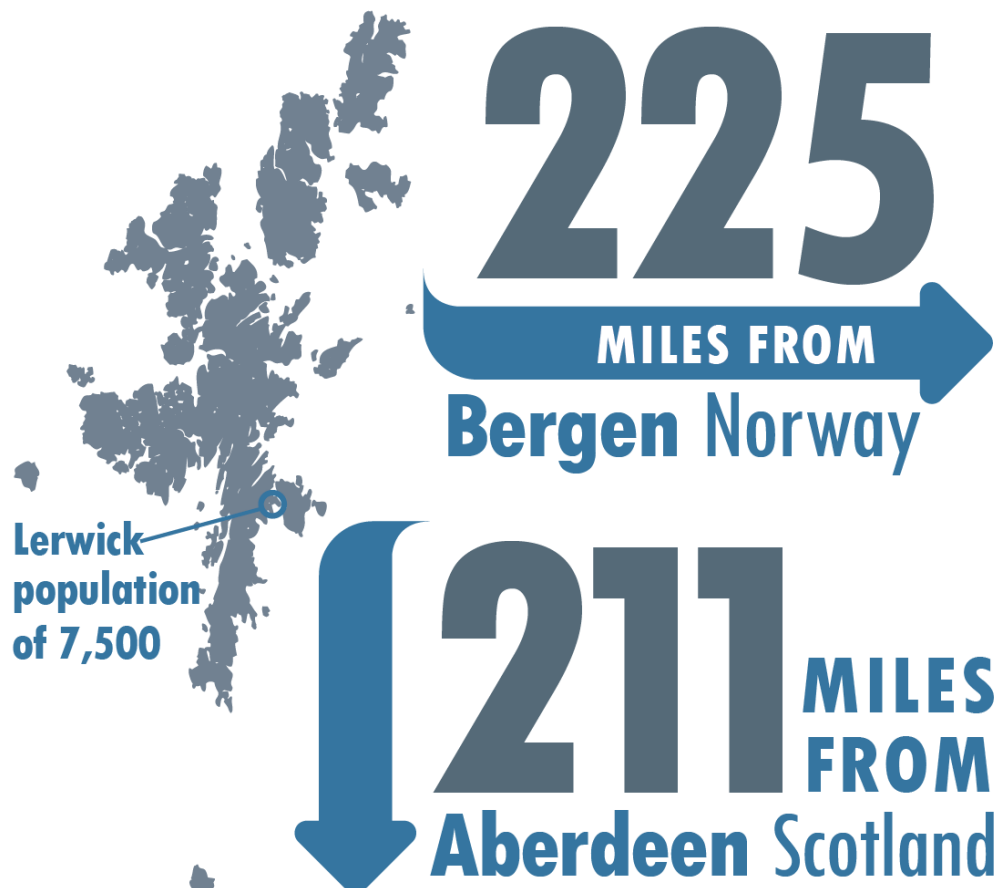
1.1 Shetland

Lying off the north-east coast of Scotland, approximately equidistant from Aberdeen, 211 miles away, and 225 miles from Bergen, Shetland is made up of over 100 islands, 16 of which are populated. With 1,697 miles of coastline, the islands cover a total area of 567 square miles, more than half of which is taken up by Mainland, the groups' largest island.

With a population of more than 23,200, the largest settlement is in the capital town of Lerwick with a population of 7,500.

The remainder of the population is dispersed throughout the rural areas. The population of the Shetland Islands accounts for 0.4 per cent of the total population of Scotland.

Shetland population of 23,200



1.2 Environment

Shetland's landscape has been shaped over millions of years by rain, wind, ice and waves and the geology that underlines its landscape is some of the most complex and diverse in the UK. Shetland carries some of Scotland's oldest rocks, a sliver of deep ocean crust and a host of unusual minerals has been sculpted from this diverse geology by rivers, glaciers and the sea over the past few million years. Shetland's outer coast displays some of the most spectacular cliff scenery in the world whilst her inner coast is dotted with a myriad of sandy beaches and ayres.

1.3 Employment

The main employers are Shetland Islands Council (in its various guises), NHS Shetland, Lerwick Port Authority, Highlands and Islands Airport Authority, Bonded Warehousemen, Transport and Logistics companies, Shipwrights, Engineering and Marine Fabricators, Wholesalers and Retailers, the Farming, Fishing and Aquaculture Industry, and Tourism. 99% of the employable population within Shetland are in employment.

1.4 Responsibilities

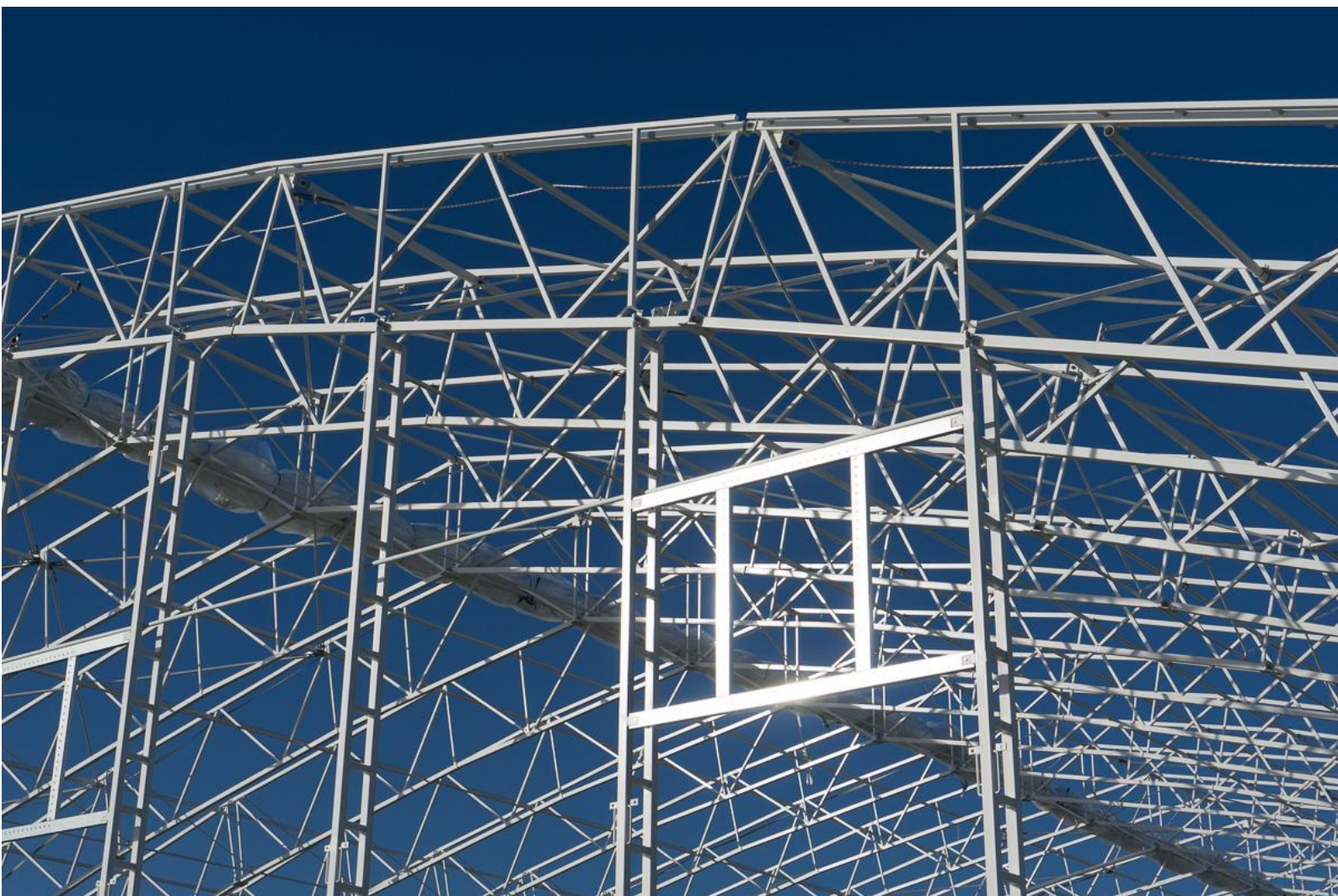
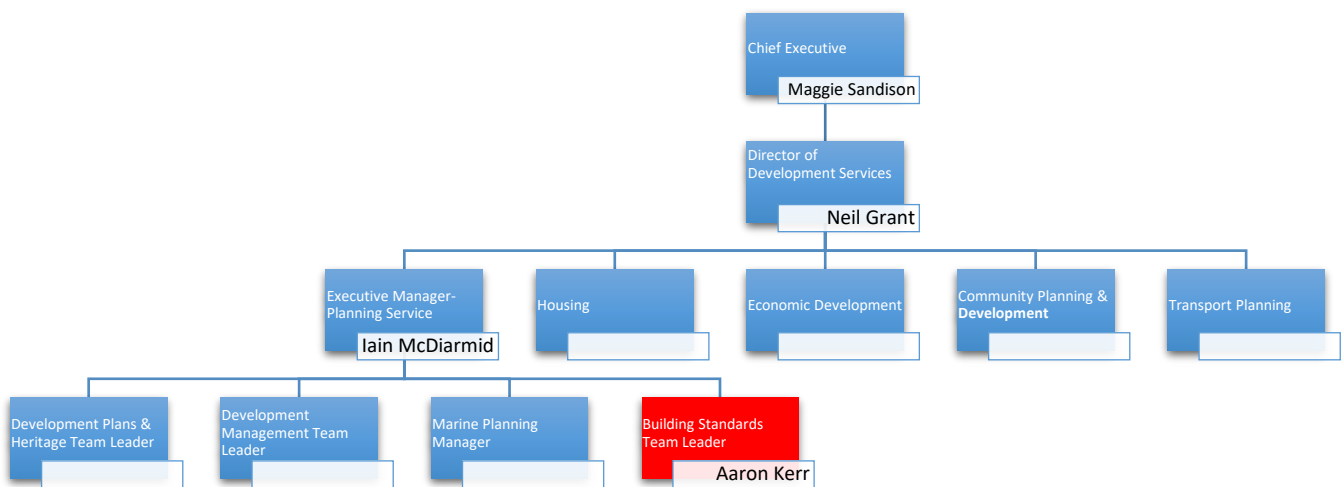
The Building Standards service has responsibility to secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings. It also aims to further the conservation of fuel and energy and achieve sustainable development.

Building Standards has two distinct roles, enforcement and verification. Verification is principally achieved through the application of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2004 when considering applications for Building Warrant and the submission of Completion Certificates.

In addition to this Building Standards also deal with dangerous and defective buildings, licenses Cinemas and provides advice to the Licensing board.

1.5 Organisational Chart

Building Standards is part of the planning service within the Development Services Directorate.



2 Building Standards Verification Service Information

2.1 Public Interest Statement

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

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

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

2.2 Building Standards

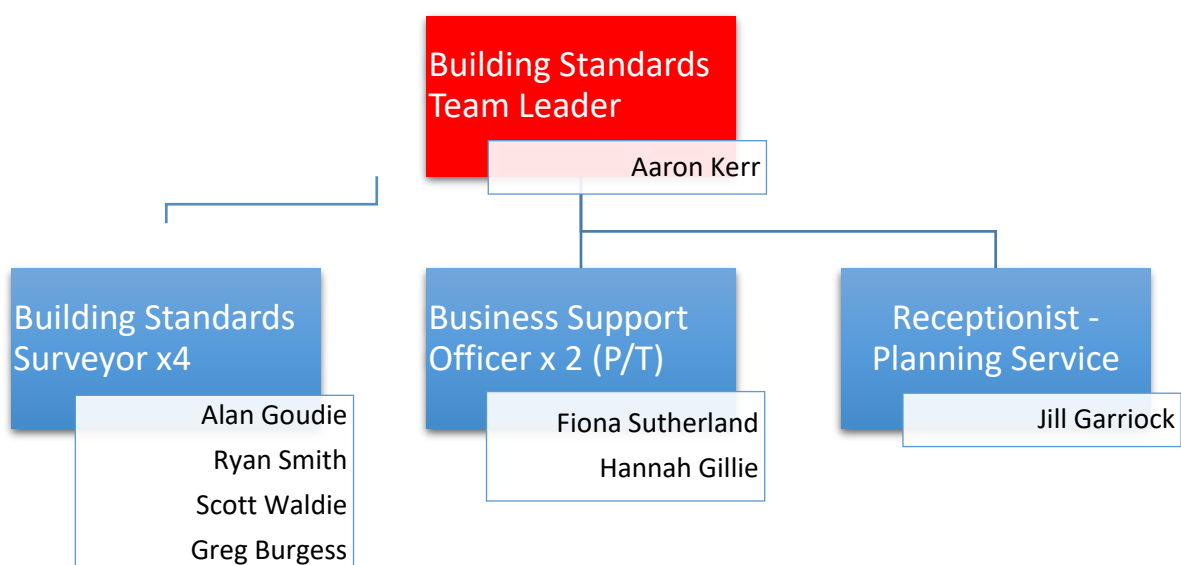
The Building Standards Service is delivered from the Council headquarters, 8 North Ness Business Park, Lerwick.

The service is responsible for the following:

- Verification of Building Warrants under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003
- Enforcement activity empowered by the Building (Scotland) Act 2003
- Maintenance of the Building Standards Register
- Raised structure consents under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
- Consultee to the Licensing Board in relation to Liquor Licensing
- Cinema licenses under the Cinemas Act 1985

Shetland Islands Building Standards Service works closely with Orkney, Highland and Western Isles Council as part of the Highland and Islands consortium (H&IC) group. The aim of the group is to develop and maintain consistency in the delivery of the Building Standards Service across the four Councils.

2.3 Organisational Chart – Building Standards Team



2.4 Staffing Position on 31 January 2023

| | Tier 1 | Tier 2 | Tier 3 | Tier 4 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Head of Building Standards Verification Service | | | | 1 |

Note: Tier 1 = Chief Executive; Tier 2 = Directors; Tier 3 = Heads of Service; Tier 4 = Managers

| | | Building Standards Verification Service | Other |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---|-------|
| Managers | No. posts | 1 | |
| | Vacant | 0 | |
| Main grade Posts (Surveyors) | No. posts | 4 | |
| | Vacant | 0 | |
| Technician | No. posts | 0 | |
| | Vacant | 0 | |
| Office support/ clerical | No. posts | 2 | 1 |
| | Vacant | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 7 | 1 |

Note: Managers are those staff responsible for the operational management of a team/division. They are not necessarily line managers.

| Staff age profile | Number |
|-------------------|--------|
| Under 30 | 1 |
| 30-39 | 0 |
| 40-49 | 3 |
| 50 and over | 4 |

3 Strategic Objectives

3.1 Shetland Islands Council: 2018–2028

[Shetlands Partnership Plan 2018-2028](#) is made up of a wide range of partners and community bodies who work together to deliver our collective ambitions for the future. It identifies a shared vision and priorities for all of us to work towards, both individually and collectively, to improve the lives of everyone in Shetland.

Our shared vision:

“Shetland is a place where everyone is able to thrive; living well in strong, resilient communities; and where people and communities are able to help plan and deliver solutions to future challenges”.

Our shared priorities:



Participation
People participate and influence decisions on services and use of resources



People
Individuals and families thrive and reach their full potential



Place
Shetland is an attractive place to live, work, study and invest



Money
All households can afford to have a good standard of living

The Partnership will monitor delivery and evaluate performance on a regular basis. They will also monitor key indicators to ensure that delivery is actually resulting in improvement to the outcomes identified. Reporting on this performance will be transparent, publicly available and will include community input.

The [Shetland Islands Council corporate plan](#), **Our Ambition**, provides strategic political direction to help us (Shetland Islands Council) focus on the things that can create opportunities and achieve long-term sustainability for Shetland.

The plan sets out an ambitious set of priorities for our council over the next five years (2021-2026). Delivering these priorities, which we consider to be key to Shetland and the council's future sustainability, will require political engagement and support, as well as the right organisational values and culture.

3.2 Key Strategic Objectives

The Building Standards key strategic objectives for the coming year are:

- Ensure that the terms of the Verification Operating Framework are met and/or implemented.
- Continue to try and raise awareness of the CCNP process and aim to meet the inspection requirements.
- Address the actions for improvement set out in the Appointment of Verifiers in order to achieve the full 6 year period of appointment.
- Review our customer satisfaction methods and implement appropriate methods to capture relevant data.
- Review how paper applications are processed and retained on the Document Management system with a view to destroy completed paper files and have the statutory register held electronically.

4 Key Performance Outcomes and Targets

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

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

There are also three cross-cutting themes, comprising:

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

Summary of Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs)

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

Summary of Key Performance Targets

| KPO1 Targets | |
|--------------|---|
| 1.1 | 95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report). |
| 1.2 | 90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report). |
| KOP2 Targets | |
| | Targets to be developed as part of future review of KPO2. |
| KPO3 Targets | |
| 3.1 | National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly). |
| 3.2 | 95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days. |
| KPO4 Targets | |
| 4.1 | Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10. |
| KPO5 Targets | |
| 5.1 | Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%). |
| KPO6 Targets | |
| 6.1 | Details of eBuilding Standards to be published prominently on the verifier's website. |
| 6.2 | 75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan checking • Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued • Verification during construction • Completion certificates being accepted |
| KPO7 Targets | |
| 7.1 | Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly). |
| 7.2 | Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2016 – March 2017). |

5 Performance Data

5.1 Summary of performance against Key Performance Outcomes & Targets

| KPO TARGETS | 1.1 | 1.2 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 4.1 | 5.1 | 6.1 | 6.2 | 7.1 | 7.2 |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| | 95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report). | 90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report). | National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly). | 95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days. | Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10 | Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%). | Details of eBuilding Standards are published prominently on the verifier's website. | 75% of each key building warrant related processes being done electronically (Plan checking; BWs and amendments (and plans) issue; Verification during construction; CC acceptance) | Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly). | Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2016 – March 2017). |
| Performance 22/23 Q4 | 88.10% | 96.97% | Published prominently (with review) | No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service' | 8.9 | 101.29% | Published prominently | 4 of 4 done | Published prominently (with review) | Includes all performance data |
| Performance 23/24 Q1 | 81.25% | 100.00% | Published prominently (with review) | No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service' | 9.8 | 35.08% | Published prominently | 4 of 4 done | Published prominently (with review) | Includes all performance data |
| Performance 23/24 Q2 | 93.10% | 89.29% | Published prominently (with review) | No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service' | 9.2 | 32.32% | Published prominently | 4 of 4 done | Published prominently (with review) | Includes all performance data |
| Performance 23/24 Q3 | 96.77% | 100.00% | Published prominently (with review) | No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service' | 9.2 | 38.99% | Published prominently | 4 of 4 done | Published prominently (with review) | Includes all performance data |

5.2 Professional Expertise & Technical Processes

Protocols for dealing with work

A full suite of protocols exists which deals with how the Service works internally to assess warrant applications and completion certificates. The aspects of internal and external consultation are also covered.

Whilst these protocols have been audited previously by the BSD and the Council it is recognised that demands change with time and new national risk management controls have emerged with regard to reasonable inquiry. Work is ongoing to ensure that the protocols reflect nationally agreed parameters and local expectations.

The Enterprise management information system (MIS) is used to co-ordinate consistent workloads across all Surveyors. The same system is used to handle inspection requests in order to maximise time and minimise costs. Enquiries are dealt face to face during duty officer hours or by making contact with the caller as soon as possible thereafter.

Performance management systems

Performance managements systems include the Service Plan, Balanced Scorecard, Building Standards Service Improvement Plan, time monitoring, internal (self) and external (consortia) peer review, and periodic management overview.

Training and development/CPD

Training and development needs are established through individual employee review sessions, and as the situation requires; such as with the introduction of new or revised software and processes. The Council requires that training needs be assessed regularly in conjunction with the needs of the individual and the Service. Training plans and budgets are now centralised within the HR Service.

Our business support officers are fully qualified in accordance with the single status review and hold, as a minimum, an SVQ3 qualification in business administration.

Close links are maintained with the BSD, LABSS, and external suppliers through direct attendance by staff at LABSS AGM and general meetings, local developers' workshops and via online CPD events hosted by professional bodies such as RICS, CIOB, CABE, RIAS, and product manufacturers.

Electronic communications such as video conferencing, webcasts, and email play a significant part in keeping up to date with industry and political developments. Video conferencing and Webinar facilities are available within the Council infrastructure and, when appropriate, help to reduce travel costs.

Continuing Professional Development is maintained through attendance, sometimes in the evening, at related events run by CIOB, RICS, and CABE. We continue to

explore ways of developing further CPD events through partnership working with those companies who provide sales and training support to the construction industry and suppliers within Shetland.

Some major sites in Shetland, notably those dealing with the petrochemical industry, require visitors to demonstrate competency in site safety. We maintain professional links with the HSE and each surveyor is qualified through the Construction Skills Certification Scheme and carries appropriate accreditation.

Benchmarking/shared services

The Highlands and Islands Consortium (for the Council areas shown in red) provides opportunity for benchmarking, discussion and peer review. It is most likely that, given the increasing cost of travel, such liaison will continue mainly through electronic methods such as email and web/telephone conferencing.

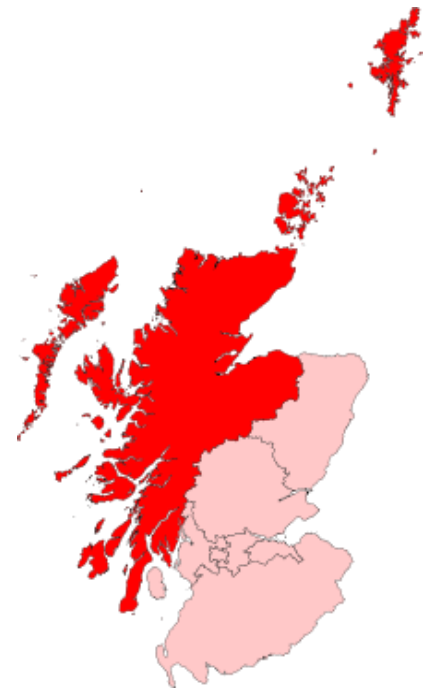
Shetland Islands Council continues to look for better ways of working through partnering and consolidation. Imaginative collaboration, such as that demonstrated by the Building Efficiencies programme, has sought to find efficiencies through sharing of resources between the Council and NHS Shetland. We will continue to look at how other services and resources may be shared.

Joint working is a hallmark of the Planning Service in Shetland where easy communication exists between the various teams; most often between the building standards and development management teams for aspects such as flooding risks.

Partnership working with our customers already exists with good working relationships fostered between Building Standards and the remainder of the Council, including Housing and Capital Projects. In such cases it is important to bear in mind that the Service has a responsibility to act impartially; a point which is sometimes not fully appreciated by other Council services who only see building standards as another Council department rather than as an impartial Verifier.

The developers' workshops and focus group have provided the ideal platform over the past 4 years for changes to be discussed with our stakeholders and to promote the message that the building standards are there to be met, not merely strived for.

Overall the standard of application which we receive now is of a better standard than previously seen and suggestions offered at developers meetings appear to be adopted



Succession planning

The failure to provide a balanced budget by 2015 and the continuing drawdown from reserves will mean further cuts in services. Our operations will have to be tailored to whatever reduction in budget is decided by senior management for 2018-19.

5.3 Quality Customer Experience

Customer communication strategies

We communicate with our customers by letter, email, by phone, or directly face to face depending on the situation and circumstances. The Council provides alternative methods of communication for any person who requires information in an accessible format suitable to their own needs.

A recent customer questionnaire established that the majority of our customers prefer face to face contact. The remaining options in order of priority are: by email, by letter, by online portal (under consideration), and by using social media (under consideration).

Customer Charter

The Building Standards Charter is reviewed/updated quarterly and is available on our website.

Customer feedback (national/local)/analysing and changes to systems

Locally, customer feedback is invited through feedback forms issued with all approvals. Feedback can also be received via our email address, interaction with customers and our formal complaints procedures.

Customer feedback on a national level is received from LABSS and the Building Standards Division (BSD). The feedback from the National Customer Satisfaction Survey is useful to make comparisons with other authorities and some useful comments are normally received. Due to the anonymous nature of the feedback, it is not always possible to follow up act on matters raised.

Accessibility of service

We provide an open and transparent service and are happy to receive suggestions from our customers as to how we might improve the existing level of accessibility.

Duty Officers are available for general enquires 9.00 – 10.30, Monday to Thursday and also by appointment.

All forms and guidance documents are also available on our website.

Pre-application advice

Pre-application advice where relevant is welcomed and allows Building Warrants when submitted to be dealt with as efficiently as possible. Written enquires are also encouraged and we have a form available for this purpose on our website.

Customer agreements

The Building Standards Team offer customer agreements where the standard 20 days is not appropriate. The take up has not been particularly high but have proved successful for more complex projects.

Customer dissatisfaction (procedural or technical)

If you disagree with an interpretation of the Building Standards that the Building Standards Authority is adopting in the consideration of a building warrant that you have submitted or will require to submit you may request an interpretation through Local Authority Building Standards Scotland. The [Dispute Resolution Process](#) deals with disputes relating to technical and procedural processes. This does not remove a local authorities' formal comments and complaints processes.

Recognised external customer service accreditations

Following Audit Scotland's positive report Shetland Islands Council continues to review Service expenditure. In the meantime we continue to look for ways to improve the customer experience by working smarter to provide a first class service to our customers. Shetland is a close-knit island community which hitherto has been provided with, and demands, a high level of service delivery; following 3 years of financial prudence and pruning there appears to be an acceptance within the wider community that the cost of service provision has to be sustainable.

5.4 Operational and Financial Efficiency

Team structure

The assessment of a building warrant requires the Council to have proficient administrative and technical capabilities and the team comprises skills in each discipline.

Time recording system

The Council operates a Flexible Working Hours system and leave is managed electronically. Cover is arranged to ensure that a response can be provided to any enquiry within corporate timescales, such as a reply within 5 days. Review of the Council's services places emphasis on meeting our statutory obligations. Back-office administration is monitored using the Enterprise system.

Financial monitoring/governance

Financial reporting is conducted through the Council's INTEGRA system. Financial Accountancy provides scheduled monthly updates. Service costs and income can be directly compared against current and past records. The Building Standards Team Leader is named as a budgetary responsible officer, with ultimate budget responsibility resting with the Executive Manager-Planning Service.

IT systems

An intensive review of the administration systems used within the Planning Service in 2010 resulted in the adoption of the IDOX UNIFORM back-office administration system.

The team works aims to maintain consistency of operation and ICT support is obtained from the Council's own IT Service, the IDOX helpdesk, and the IDOX User Group.

The Service now uses the IDOX Enterprise system for monitoring of workloads by the entire team, with individual tasks assigned or agreed at weekly meetings.

Digital services

We currently receive around 80% of all new applications electronically via the national web portal. All application which are received in paper format are scanned into our back-office system and processed electronically thereafter. We have invested heavily in additional hardware including dual monitors and tablets which enable officers to carry out assessment and site inspections electronically.

Finance systems

Comments in 2010/2011 from internal audit regarding the raising of invoices for internal applications were noted and procedural changes made to ensure that income is not delayed. With the exception of warrant applications eligible for 100% discount all building warrant applications are required to be accompanied by the required fee. Internal applications are now accompanied by the requisite journal.

The administration team process these applications in accordance with agreed protocols, which includes carrying out an initial check to ensure that the appropriate fee has been paid. Amendments to warrants are treated in a similar way.

Payment may be made by cheque/cash/ credit or debit card and by journal (for internal Council applications).

The Planning Service works closely with the Finance Department and financial records are accessed through the INTEGRA financial system.

Records are retained on the Uniform system for subsequent reporting to the Scottish Government. Our performance monitoring and reporting is now carried out electronically through the ScotXed portal.

Internal communication strategies

Opportunities to inform and listen to the staff are available through face to face discussion/ staff meetings / management meetings and corporate news briefings.

The team works with other Council departments to help develop an understanding of the building standards and to emphasise the exemplar role and responsibility that the Council has regarding any in-house warrantable work.

Review of operations has become a constant team activity to promote consistency of understanding and application in everything we do.

The bi-weekly planning team meeting is used to promote decisions made at the Corporate and Directorate management team meetings which are relevant to the Planning Service and how our work affects and is affected by other Services. The meeting is also used to inform others on what the various parts of the Service are doing, to advise on forthcoming events and changes, to advise on any training opportunities, and to provide a sounding board for information intended to be passed up the chain of command. Guests are invited on occasion to speak on areas of interest. Reports on seminars and courses attended by others are included when appropriate.

The meeting is usually chaired by the Executive Manager-Planning Service. Ample opportunity is given for all staff to attend although the duty officers for each part of the Service remain on-call.

Work is ongoing to provide fibre-optic broadband availability throughout Shetland to stimulate business opportunities. Corporate information is available to our staff via the intranet and supplemented by regular team and Service meetings.

6 Service Improvement and Partnership Working

In the previous 12 months (2022/2023) we did:

| Number | Continuous Improvement action | Status |
|--------|---|------------------|
| 1 | Ensure terms of the Verifiers Operating Framework met/implemented | Complete/Ongoing |
| 2 | Work to achieve targets set out in the National Performance Framework | Complete/Ongoing |
| 3 | Develop Remote Verification Inspection (RVI) Capabilities | Complete |
| 4 | Continue and improve benchmarking leading to service improvements | Complete/Ongoing |

In the next 12 months (2023/2024) we will do:

| Number | Continuous Improvement action | Status |
|--------|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Review/update policies and procedures | March 2024 |
| 2 | Review customer satisfaction methods | March 2024 |
| 4 | Work to achieve targets set out in National Performance Framework | March 2024/ Ongoing |

In the previous 12 months (2022/2023) we worked with:

- Highlands and Islands Consortium Group
- Other Local Authorities via Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS)

- Local Development Management Service
- Local Agents and Developers through Developers Workshops.
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- External Structural Engineers

In the next 12 months (2023/2024) we will:

- Engage with other local authorities and groups e.g. LABSS
- Engage with local agents and developers through meetings and workshops
- Engage with external stakeholder organisations and groups
- Commit to work together on technical issues

7 Building Standards – Additional Data

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

The information in the table relates to 2022/23 Quarter 3.

| Description | Measure | 2022/ 23 | 2023/24 | | | |
|---|---|-------------|---------|----|----|----|
| | | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| Building warrants and amendment to building warrant | Applications | 200 | 33 | 36 | 37 | |
| | Decisions | 172 | 37 | 31 | 22 | |
| Completion certificates | Submissions | 134 | 32 | 63 | 33 | |
| | Decisions | 142 | 29 | 58 | 21 | |
| Certification | Certificates of design submitted | 96 | 19 | 11 | 29 | |
| | Certificates of construction submitted | 13 | 3 | 32 | 2 | |
| Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) | Copy certificates received (domestic) | 39 | 4 | 36 | 5 | |
| | Copy certificates received (non-domestic) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | |
| Statements of Sustainability | Copy certificates received (domestic) | 39 | 6 | 2 | 4 | |
| | Copy certificates received (non-domestic) | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| Enforcement | Notices served under sections 25 to 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | Cases referred to procurator fiscal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | Cases where LA has undertaken work | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |





ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Building Standards Verification

www.shetland.gov.uk/buildingstandards

