

FINANCIAL SERVICES SERVICE PLAN

1. Service Definition:	FINANCIAL SERVICES: Financial Services provide support to services across the Council, to Grampian Valuation Joint Board and in partnership with NHS colleagues, contribute towards the support of Moray Integration Joint Board. Main functions are Accountancy, Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable, Banking, Insurance, Procurement, Taxation (Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates), Treasury Management and VAT.
2. Service Resources:	FTE 60.36 Budget £2,116,000

3. What have we identified for improvement in 2024/25	What evidence did we use to identify this improvement? Please add benchmark information wherever available and relevant to the improvement.
<p>Ensure financial sustainability by strengthening the financial planning process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refresh the council's short term and medium to long term financial strategies, Capital Strategy and Reserves policy - Identify savings through increased pace of transformation and develop a savings plan for 2024/25 - Review affordability and slippage relating to the capital plan and strengthen capital monitoring - Review the forecasting process to ensure accurate projections 	Identified as an area for improvement in the Best Value Audit Review 2024
Working with communities to further develop Participatory Budgeting	Identified as an area for improvement in the Best Value Audit Review 2024
<p>Implement legislative / regulatory changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IFRS 16 	A requirement with which the council has no choice but to comply and which will involve significant work to ensure compliance

Note: Progress against BV Actions will be monitored and reporting out with Service Plan process

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4. Strategic Outcome or Priority	Action	Planned Outcome	Outcome measures	Completion target	Lead	Priority Rating (1 high 3 low and 4 for ongoing, 5 for on hold)
(CP) Strategic Framework: Financial, Workforce, Digital, Transformation Strategies. Performance Management Framework	Financial Planning Per detail below	Financial plans show how the local authority will align service provision with funding to ensure the sustainability of its services in the future. Short to Medium Term Financial Plans show a balanced budget with reduced reliance on reserves. Long-term financial plans prepare for a range of funding levels and linked to strategic priorities.	Financial planning is viewed as improving in line with recommendations by reporting of the 2023/24 Annual Audit Review	June 2024	LP	1 BV 3.3
	Refresh the Council's Short to Medum Term Financial Strategy	Plan reflects approved budget and further SG funding for 2024/25 Revised savings target 2025/26 Thematic approach set out in more detail	Strategy agreed to reduce funding gap in 2024/25 in year and address funding gap for 2025/26 Savings targets agreed			

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		Link to latest Medium to Long Term Financial Strategy Savings Plan for 2024/25 agreed	All reserves adequate for purpose	August 2024		
	Review Reserves Policy	Reflect current planned use of ear-marked reserves	Use of ear-marked reserves mapped out	September 2024		
	Refresh the Council's Medium to Long Term Financial Strategy	To reflect Transformation Strategy and Action Plan	Removal of budget gap	October 2024		
	Review affordability of Capital Plan	Develop approach to implement cap	Cap mechanism agreed	August 2024		
		Update Corporate Asset Management Plan	CAMP reflects capital cap	September 2024		
		Revise Capital Strategy	Strategy reflects cap	September 2024		
			Affordable, prioritised capital plan	January 2025		
	Review forecasting procedures for revenue budget	More accurate estimated actual	Estimated actual reported	December 2024		
			Estimated outturn v actual outturn	June 2025		
	Strengthen capital monitoring	Automated monthly monitoring reports	Reports generated per agreed timetable	October 2024		
		More accurate forecasts of capital spend	Lower level of slippage at year end	June 2025		

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(CP) Strategic Framework: Financial, Workforce, Digital, Transformation Strategies. Performance Management Framework	Partnership working (MIJB): Develop arrangement for additional assurance on financial management	Clear and effective governance and accountability arrangements in place for performance monitoring and the early identification of any significant financial risks.	Collective agreement that specific delivery plans in place to reduce budget deficit that can be relied upon for partner financial planning	January 2025	LP	4 BV 2.2
	Further develop Participatory Budgeting	Successful implementation of PB projects within the community Capture more information on community led decision making	Year on year increase in amount allocated until reach of 1% of budget (as defined by COSLA) is allocated via PB process	March 2025	LP	1 BV5.1 4

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5. Service Level Outcomes or Priorities	Action	Planned Outcome	Outcome Measures	Completion Target	Lead	Priority rating (1 high 3 low and 4 for ongoing, 5 for on hold)
Implement legislative / regulatory changes	Implement requirements of IFRS 16 from 01 April 2024	Fully compliant accounts	Audit opinion	September 2026	LP	1
Implement the annual Procurement Action Plan (PSAP)	Implement the actions identified as priorities in the Procurement Action Plan	Strategic Action Plan targets achieved	80% of PSAP indicators achieving or exceeding target	March 2025	LP	2
Implement recommendations from the Annual Audit Report	<p>Implement the actions agreed with the auditors</p> <p>Review GL journals and determine if authorisation can be proportionately introduced</p> <p>Review reconciliation of PPE note to FAR</p> <p>Review assets with nil NBV</p> <p>Review terminology used to describe Group reserves</p>	<p>Improved processes</p> <p>Amend process if considered proportionate</p> <p>Prepare reconciliation</p> <p>Determine if any amendments required</p> <p>Determine is any amendments required</p>	<p>Auditor agreement that actions implemented in full</p> <p>Record review and any process amendments</p> <p>Working paper</p> <p>Audit trail for treatment of assets with nil NBV</p> <p>Amendments made</p>	September 2024	LP	1

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	Review classification of assets under construction	Reclassify any assets which became operational during 2023/24	Assets correctly disclosed				
Implement actions from the Corporate Asset Management Plan	Implement the actions assigned to Financial Services	Improve Asset Management Planning	Actions complete within due dates	March 2025	LP	2	
Procurement Support for MIJB	Support and drive forward the working relationships required for effective procurement and commissioning	Reduced backlog of contracts requiring review	Revised contractual arrangements in place	Milestones as per MIJB Action Plan TBC	LP / JH	1	
Increase Service Efficiency – Taxation	<p>Increase efficiency and availability of digital processes for Taxation;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Automation of Council Tax back-room processes and promote availability 	Develop CT services for delivery on-line	Uptake of self service (currently not available)	March 2025	JT	2	
		Bank agreement for DD		30 October 2024			
		Proof of concept for on-line change of address		30 October 2024			
		On-line DD available		31 March 2025			
		On-line change of address available		31 March 2025			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Streamline Council Tax e-billing sign up process 	Improved e-billing uptake	Increased uptake of e-billing	31 March 2025		3	
		Proof of concept Streamlined system operational			30 November 2024		
							31 March 2025

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	- Non-Domestic Rates e-billing	Introduce e-billing for NDR payers. Proof of concept System operational Once introduced, identify best practice with other LAs to maximise uptake	Generate and maximise uptake of NDR e-billing	30 November 2024 31 March 2025		2
Increase Service Efficiency – Accounts	Increase efficiency and availability of digital processes for Accounts; - Investigate workflow for authorisation database	Introduction of workflow to facilitate management of task	Database up to date	March 2025	LP	2
Increase Service Efficiency - Payments	Increase efficiency and availability of digital processes for Payments; - Roll out e-Accounts Payable form	Introduction of workflow to streamline process for Payments and service departments	More efficient and timely processing of invoices	September 2024	DL	4
Health and Wellbeing	Ensure revised operational implementation of absence management procedures are applied by managers	Absence is managed effectively, and levels of absence are reduced efficiently and timeously	reduction in number of days absence per employee	March 2025	LP and Managers	2