



REPORT TO: PLANNING & REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 3 AUGUST 2021

SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE REPORT (ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES) – PERIOD TO MARCH 2021

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To inform the Committee of the performance of the service for the period from 1 January to 31 March 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee –

- (i) scrutinises performance in the areas of Service Planning, Service Performance and other related data to the end of March 2021; and**
- (ii) notes the actions being taken to improve performance where required.**

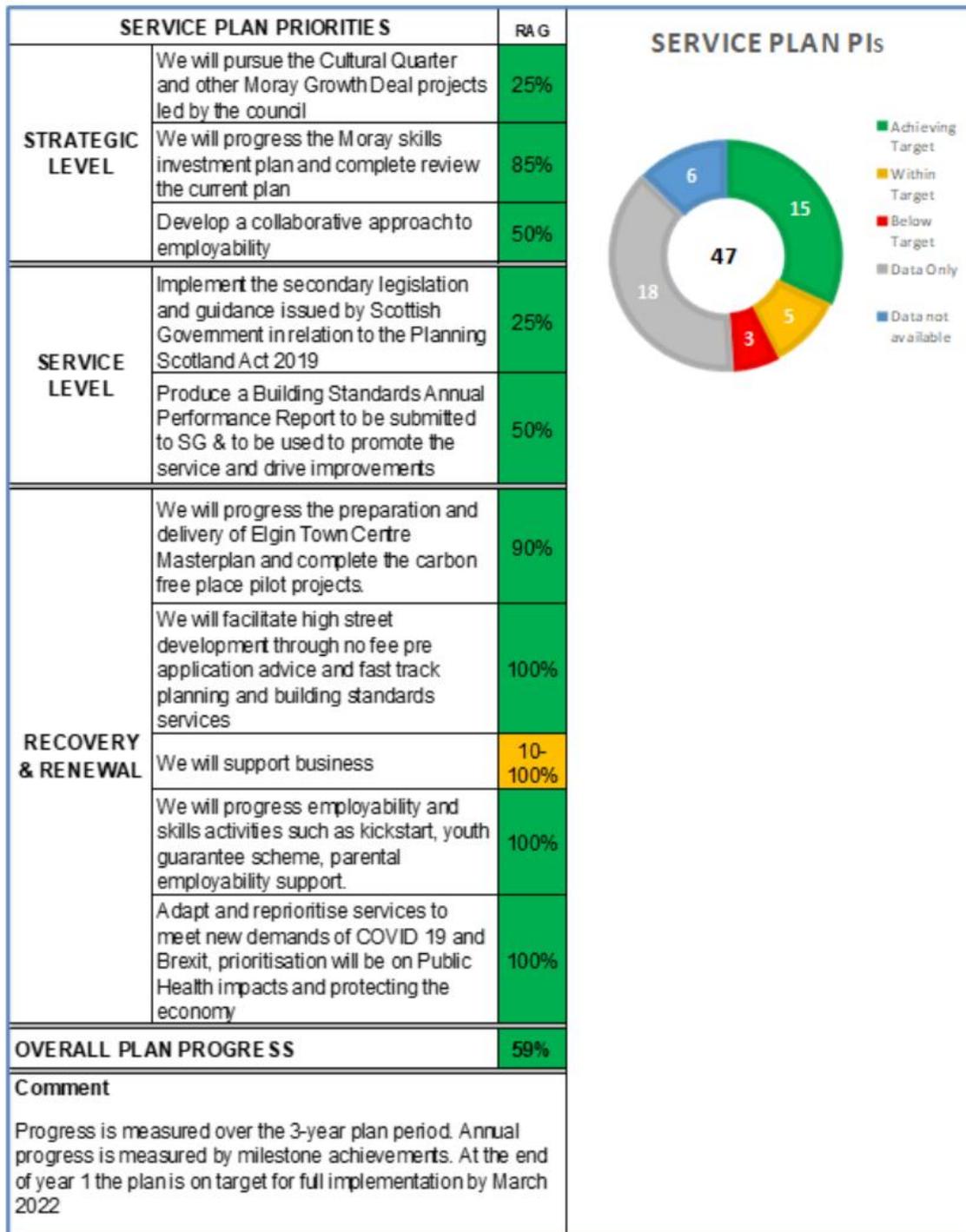
3. BACKGROUND

3.1 On 7 August 2019, the Moray Council, approved a revised Performance Management Framework for services (para 5 of the minute refers). The functions of the Service relating to Planning, Building Standards, Environmental Health and Trading Standards are delegated to this committee, economic development is delegated to the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee and this report was considered by that Committee on the 8th June 2021.

4. SERVICE PLANNING

4.1 Each service plan sets out the planned strategic and service level priorities and outcomes it intends to deliver in the coming year aligning closely with financial planning, corporate and community planning partnership strategic priorities. This report provides an interim update on progress on the service plan, key outcomes and performance indicators. The Committee is invited to review progress to secure assurance that it is satisfactory and to provide scrutiny and further direction where performance requires attention.

4.2 The narrative included is by exception, however links to backing tables for all [Service Plan Actions](#) and [Performance Indicators](#) are provided.



Strategic Outcomes - successes

4.3 The Local Employability Partnership is in place with network support through the employability consortium, change management plans are underway to consolidate employability into a single service and completion is anticipated as planned by March 2022 (**ACTION** EG&D20-22.S4.1.2b)

Strategic Outcomes – challenges and actions to support

4.4 Historically, Moray has had an above average proportion of its workforce aged 18 years and over earning less than the living wage (Figure 1). In 2019/20 almost a quarter (24%) of people working in Moray earned less than the Living wage compared to the national average of 16.9%. This is the 6th highest proportion in Scotland and the highest in our family group. Moray Economic Strategy seeks to address this issue. As a living wage employer, the Council encourages other community planning partners to apply the living wage to the jobs they create, community wealth building includes fair work as one of its key pillars and will seek to address these often complex issues as part of a future strategy (**INDICATOR ECON7**).

Figure 1



Service Level Outcomes - successes

4.5 Contributing to improved performance reporting, Building Standards will present its annual report to this committee in August 2021. Although delayed, the Customer Engagement Strategy will have moved forward as planned by September 2021. An improving trend in performance is evident in service indicator results, in 2020/21, 97.7% of building warrants were issued within 10 working days of receipt of satisfactory information and amended plans were responded to, on average in 3.8 days, both exceeding local targets. (**ACTION EG&D20-22.S5.2, INDICATORS ENVDV-BS-KP01(C), ENVDV046b**).

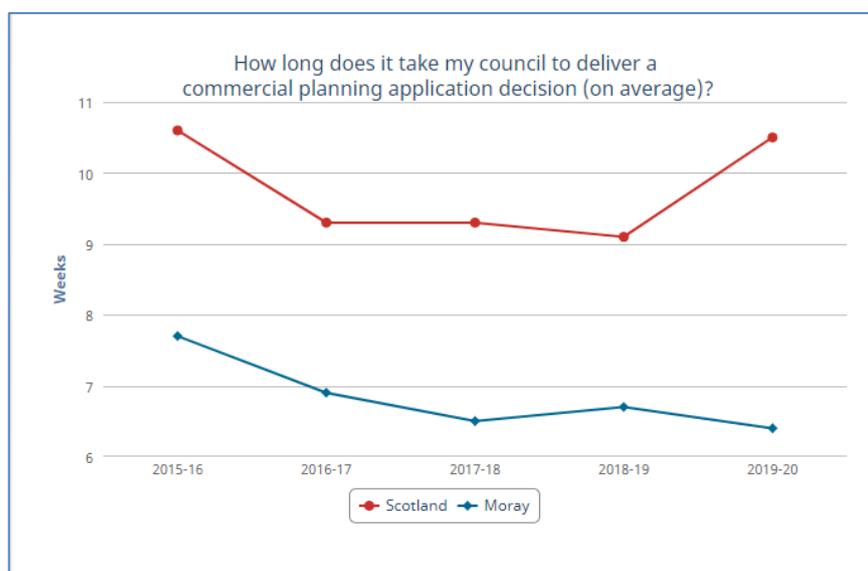
Service Level Outcomes – challenges and actions to support

4.6 Actions related to the review of the Skills Investment Plan and developing and alternative delivery model for the Falconer museum have been put on hold due to the COVID pandemic and priority being given to the economic recovery plan.

Recovery and Renewal – successes

- 4.7 Progress on the preparation and delivery of Elgin Town Centre Masterplan and the completion of the carbon-free place pilot projects, was 90% complete at the end of the financial year. Publication of the draft Elgin City Centre Masterplan was delayed due to the difficulty of carrying out public engagement during the various COVID-19 restrictions and to develop additional online engagement materials. The draft plan was approved by the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee at their meeting held on 26 January 2021 (para 13 of the minute refers) and is currently out for public consultation for 12 weeks ending 14 June 2021. (**ACTION** EG&D20-22.S6.1.1a).
- 4.8 Since 1 November 2020 free pre-application advice and fast-tracking, for high street developers, is now part of the standard process offering. These measures will facilitate high street development. It should be noted that Moray Council consistently out-performs most Councils in Scotland for dealing with commercial planning applications in a timely manner. For context, in 2019/20, on average Moray Council dealt with such applications in 6.4 weeks, against a national average of 10.5 weeks (Figure 2) (**ACTION** EG&D20-22.S6.1.1b, **INDICATOR** SECON03).

Figure 2



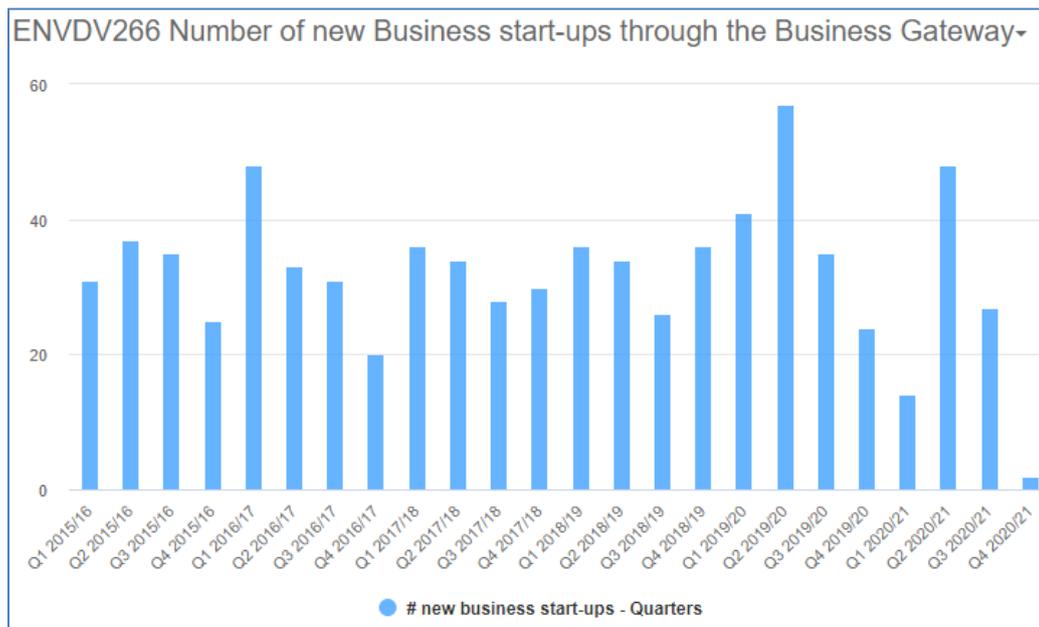
- 4.9 The actions contributing to employability and skills within the Economic Recovery Action Plan are being progressed with much of it related to additional funding received as part of the Youth Guarantee Scheme. At this early stage of the implementation, data is not yet available for the impact on earnings, the availability of more skilled jobs and an increase in apprenticeships in key sectors. [Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group](#) indicators submitted as an information report to the meeting of the this Committee on 13 April 2021 will help to better understand those impacts going forward. For example, the percentage change in median income over 5 years to 2020, in comparison with the percentage change of income in the lowest quintile indicates a growing inequality gap in Moray in contrast to the national position where the earnings gap between these 2 groups has been reducing reinforcing the importance of the ongoing collaborative work around employability (EG&D20-22.S6.2.1)

- 4.10 To adapt the services to meet the new demands of COVID-19 and Brexit, priority was given to Public Health impacts and protecting the economy. Environmental Health remain focused on COVID-19 related work, albeit with some concerns around capacity with the resumption of normal service provision relating to food hygiene, private water supplies and health and safety as pandemic declines. The Economic Development team continues to prioritise business support and economic recovery. (**ACTIONS** EG&D20-22.S6.1.3, EG&D20-22.S6.2.1).
- 4.11 Other support currently underway includes the work of Business Gateway providing post Brexit 1-2-1 support. Starting in January 2021, this is enabling small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Moray to continue to trade in Europe and/or access and enter new markets. Assistance continues to be given to SMEs with high exposure to EU markets to strengthen the local supply chain, and help create a more prosperous, growing economy. This additional demand is likely to increase further the number of instances of assistance to SMEs that the Business Gateway provides, which totalled 574 during the first half of 2020/21 (latest available data; this indicator is reported 6 months in arrears). For comparison, during the first half of the previous 2 years the numbers were 430 and 413 respectively (**INDICATOR** ENVDV260).

Recovery and Renewal – challenges and actions to support

- 4.12 In contrast, the number of new businesses starting-up through the Business Gateway has reduced to just 91 during 2020/21 compared to 157 and 132 in the previous 2 years. In quarter 4 there were only 2 new business start-ups supported (Figure 3). (**INDICATOR** ENVDV266).

Figure 3

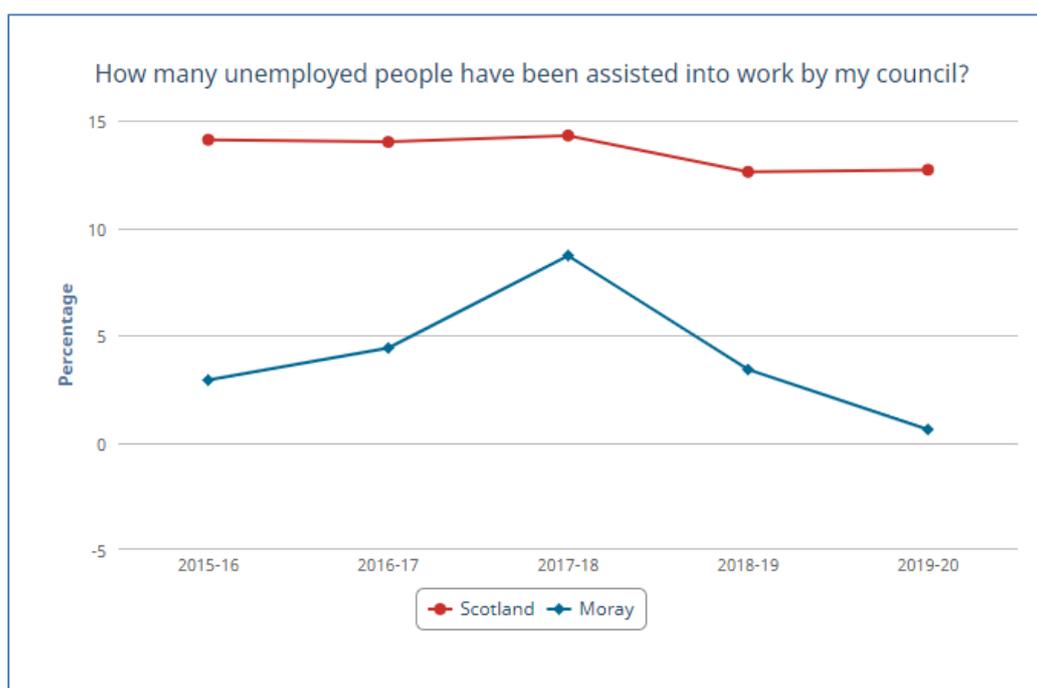


- 4.13 The action to support business will continue past its due date of 31 March 2021. Whilst some aspects are complete; 1,639 businesses have been supported through the range of COVID-19 funds receiving £13.335m during 2020/21, other aspects are still in progress such as the Town Centre Capital Fund, which has awarded grants to 51 businesses totalling £1.189m for transforming empty space to living space, altering large retail units into smaller ones, shop front improvements and small grants, all of which

combined will lead to an investment of £3.839m on completion (**ACTION EG&D20-22.S6.1.2**).

- 4.14 A selection of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) measures is included to provide some historical context for the task facing the Economic Development team and the wider partnership. In 2019/20, Moray had the lowest proportion of unemployed people assisted into work of all Scottish Councils. The Scottish average was 12.7%, whereas the proportion in Moray was 0.62%. Figure 4 illustrates the trend over the previous 5 years, and after the increase in 2017/18 the proportion has dropped once more for 2 consecutive years. The Council's participation in the in ESf funding for Employability and the wider funding streams available for economic recovery will improve these figures moving forward (**INDICATOR ECON1**).

Figure 4

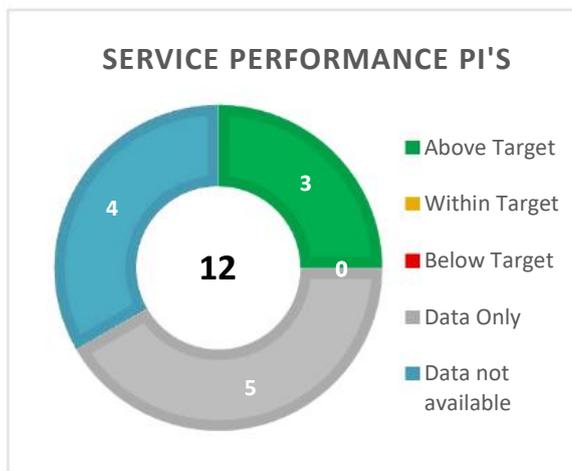


- 4.15 The percentage of Council procurement expenditure spent with local enterprises dropped slightly from 25.2% in 2017/18, 23.9% in 2018/19 to 21.9% in 2019/20, ranking Moray 22nd. This compared to a rise from 27.4% to 28.5% over the same period in the national average. A Community Wealth Building officer was approved as part of the Economic Recovery Plan and part of the work will involve improving local spend and the supply chain with a clear focus on increasing local spend and wider community and sustainability benefits (**INDICATOR ECON4**).

5. **SERVICE PERFORMANCE**

- 5.1 In line with the Performance Management Framework, operational performance is reviewed quarterly by departmental management. Areas performing well and/or areas subject to a decreasing trend or where benchmarking results show performance significantly below comparators will be reported to this committee for member scrutiny.

- 5.2 Initial publication of Local Government Benchmarking Framework Indicators in February 2021 will be refreshed in early May. The full suite can be viewed using the [My Local Council](#) tool.
- 5.3 Report is by exception, however links to backing tables for all [Service Performance Indicators](#) is provided, indicators 78a and 86 do not have full data as the quarters with N/A did not have any targets associated with them.



Operational Indicators - successes

- 5.4 Despite the additional restrictions in place to deal with the pandemic, the Environmental Health Pest Control team responded to all low and high priority requests within the national target times (**INDICATORS** ENVDV086 & ENVDV0870).

Operational Indicators - challenges and actions to support

- 5.5 There were no reportable exceptions amongst the remaining operational indicators.

6. OTHER PERFORMANCE RELATED DATA

Complaints & MP/MSP Enquiries

- 6.1 In line with the Performance Management Framework, complaints are reviewed quarterly by departmental management in terms of time taken to respond, outcome and learning points. Links to backing tables for all [Service Complaints](#) is provided.
- 6.2 There were 13 complaints raised this quarter, 3 more than the same period last year. Six (46%) were closed at frontline taking an average of 4.5 days to resolve, within the target of 5 working days. Seven investigative resolutions took an average of 20.14 days, fractionally beyond the 20-day target. Both average closure timescales are a significant improvement on the 8 days for frontline and 33.3 days for investigations that were recorded during the same quarter in 2019/20.

There were 31 MP/MSP enquiries dealt with during the reporting quarter, a significant increase from 5 in the same period last year. The majority of enquiries related to guidance on the implementation of the pandemic

regulations or the applications for funds and grants provided in response to the pandemic.

Other Performance (not included within Service Plan)

- 6.3 The work of the team was focussed on meeting the actions in the Service Plan with the added constraints of working within the Covid-19 guidelines. However, Building Services were able to offer support to health service providers as illustrated in the following case studies.

Case Studies

- 6.4 Building Standards have worked with health service providers to allow the provision of temporary buildings as a matter of urgency to assist in providing much needed care to our population and help prevent the further spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

The service worked in partnership to demonstrate that any temporary building can be operated safely, particularly in relation to structure, fire, escape, ventilation, electrical work and access. Building Standards also provided links for access to partners such as Scottish Fire and Rescue and the Council's Health and Safety team.

The safe introduction of the Fiona Elcock Vaccination Centre in Elgin is an example of what has been achieved.

Consultation and Engagement

- 6.5 Throughout the pandemic the service has consulted with business directly and through their representative organisations to inform the economic recovery plan and discretionary grants. Environmental Health and Economic Development have participated in webinars and virtual meetings to disseminate information to businesses.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Performance measurement is used to ensure the efficient and sustainable delivery of services to meet the Council's priorities in both the Corporate Plan and the LOIP.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council has a statutory requirement to publish a range of information that will demonstrate that it is securing best value and assist in comparing performance both over time and between authorities where appropriate.

(c) Financial implications

None.

(d) Risk Implications

None.

(e) Staffing Implications

None.

(f) Property

None.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as this report is to inform the Committee on performance.

(h) Consultations

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Legal Services Manager, the Development Management and Building Standards Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Strategic Planning and Delivery Manager, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, Economic Growth and Regeneration Manager and Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer) have been consulted, and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 As at 31 March 2021, 5 Service Plan outcomes were due to complete, of which 1 has been achieved. Both of the incomplete actions are part of the Recovery and Renewal priorities and have been delayed due to the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions. Overall, the plan is 59% complete and on target to meet its planned completion date.

8.2 Despite the unusual and challenging circumstances facing the service in 2020/21 and the additional measures and controls the teams had to put in place, the service made good progress on delivering the actions in the Service Plan. In addition, the team were able to support other community partners.

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Background Papers: Held by Author

Ref: