·EDINBVRGH·
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Building Standards Verification Annual Performance Report
2022-2023

Contents

Front cover image – Old Town skyline, Edinburgh

Version Control Information

Version	Date	Comments	Date for next review
1.0	17 April 23	Draft Document Created	
1.1	20 April 23	CW Updates	
1.2	26 April 23	GG Updates	
1.3	28 April 23	Final Version	

Introduction statement from the Scottish Government

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.

Section 1. Introduction to the Verifier

Edinburgh is known throughout the world as a historic city and our nation's capital. Over recent decades it has built a reputation as a successful and prosperous city – regularly voted as one of the best cities in the world to live in, it attracts more visitors than any UK city outside London and sits in the top 3 cities in the UK for attracting inward investment.

Population and economy

The City of Edinburgh Council's area is home to an estimated 554,000 people.

The Council area includes the City of Edinburgh which contains most of the population, as well as a large rural hinterland. Within the rural area are the towns and villages of South Queensferry, Kirkliston, Newbridge and Ratho. Edinburgh has a rich built heritage with conservation areas covering much of the city. There are two World Heritage Sites: The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh and The Forth Bridge. It is a continuously growing, densely populated city with many flatted residential properties and has a vibrant economy with a mix of employment sectors.

Between 2006 to 2023 Edinburgh's population grew by 15.5% against a population increase in Scotland during the same period of 7%. This growth is expected to continue with a projected population of 586,566 by 2043.

Key employment sectors include health; financial and insurance; education; retail; professional, scientific, and technical; and accommodation and food services.
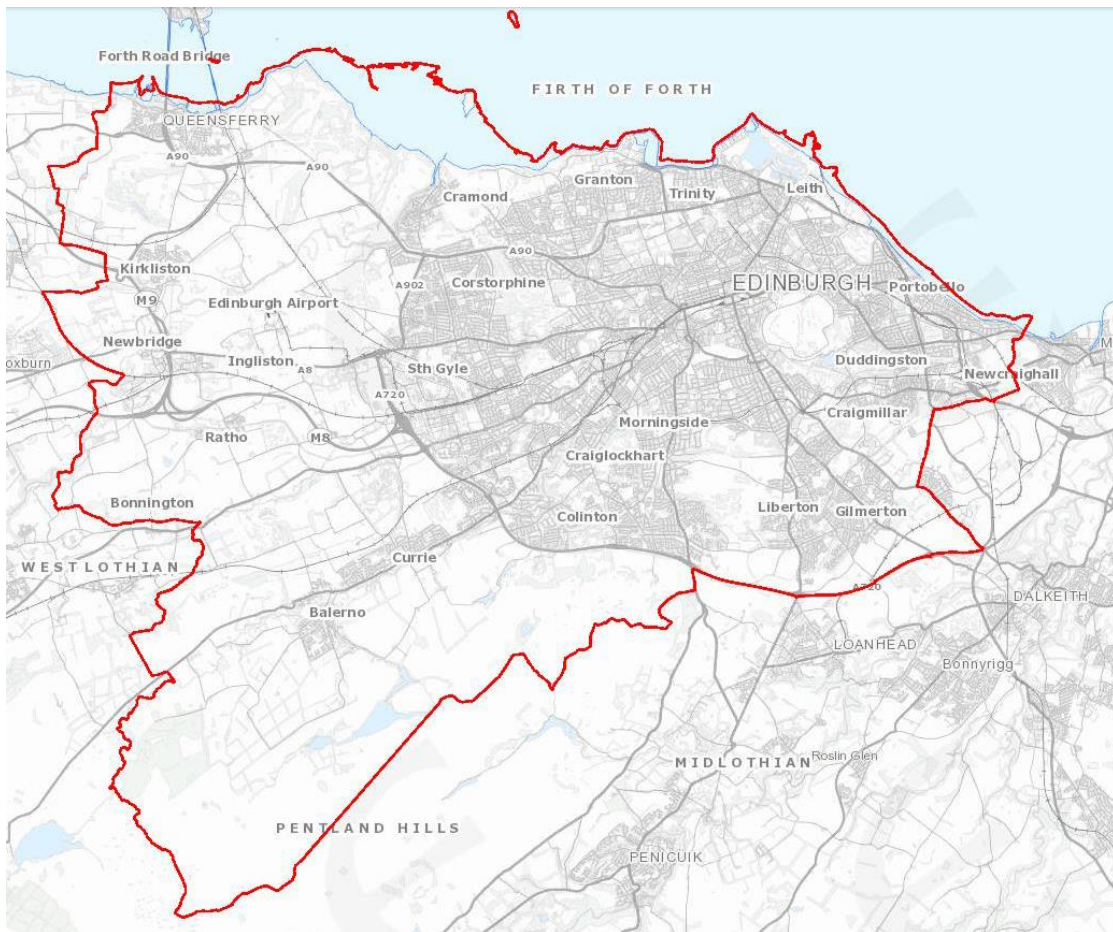
The Council is: -

- A transparent Council that works for all, committed to delivering improved public services and empowering our citizens.
- A Council that is committed to listening to local people and working together with local communities.
- A Council where co-operation, fairness, accountability, and responsibility really matter.
- A Council that supports businesses and ensures Edinburgh continues to be a city that provides opportunities for employment, innovation, growth, and investment.
- A Council that actively promotes and champions Edinburgh to the benefit of the city and its people.

Exciting and innovative pledges from the Council include:

- Further expansion of the tram network
- A drive towards the city operating on a "net-zero" carbon basis by 2030 – this is 15 years before Scotland's national net-zero target for 2045.
- Ending poverty in Edinburgh by 2030
- Building affordable and sustainable homes
- Investing in new, modern schools and early years facilities. Increased attainment in schools.
- Developing a 20 Minute Neighbourhood network where public transport and active travel are the best options.

We have made significant progress in the last ten years, however more of the same is not an option. Now is the time for bolder, more transformational action.

Map showing the extent of the Council's administrative boundary.

Section 2. Building Standards Service Verification Information

2.1 Where to find Building Standards

The Building Standards team along with colleagues in related Planning teams are all based on the ground floor of Waverley Court in East Market Street, Edinburgh. This building houses the majority of Council services.

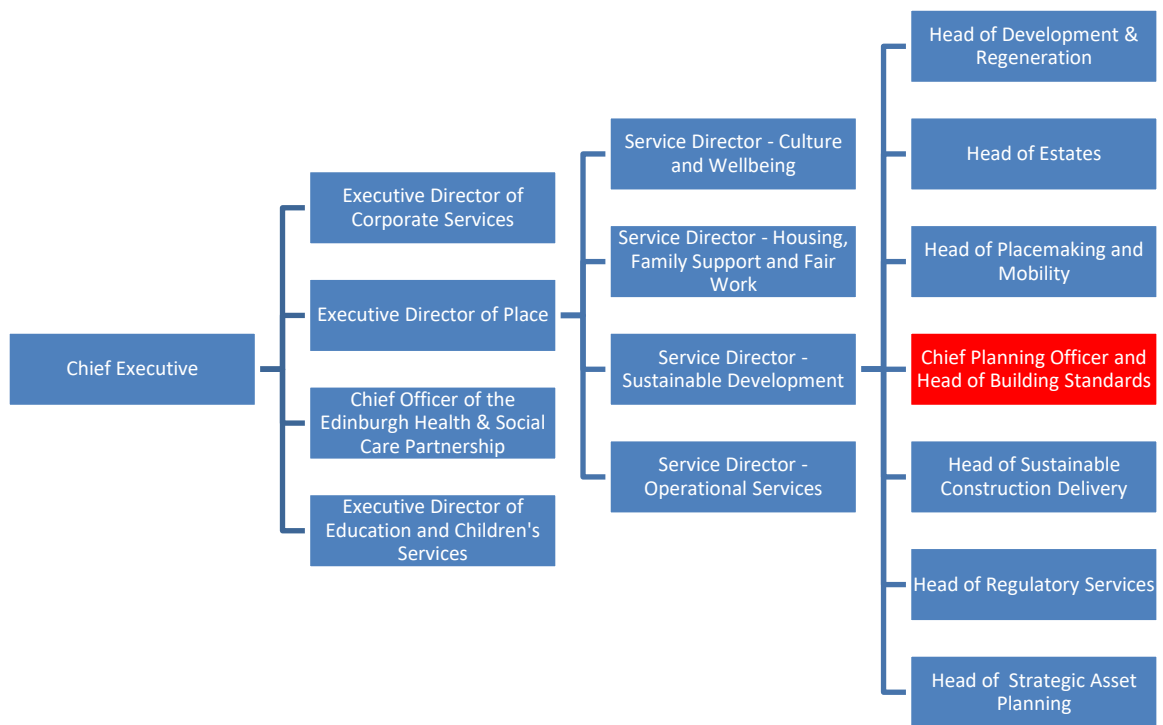### 2.2 Overall roles and responsibilities of Building Standards

The Building Standards service has a major role to play in the contribution of the overall Council commitments. The city is one of the largest Building Standards services in the UK in relation to both the number of building warrant applications processed each year and the fee income received. During the financial year 2022/23, the service received 5326 building warrant and associated applications, covering building construction work with an estimated value of £1.2 billion which generated approximately £5.2 million in fees.

The verification services and functions carried out include:

- Verification of Building Warrants under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Enforcement in relation to Building Standards matters under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Consultee to applications in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation and Liquor Licensing.
- Providing preliminary advice on the procedures to be followed to obtain building warrant approval, in advance of a formal application.
- Maintaining a public record register of building warrants, completion certificates and energy performance certificates.
- Work with the Scottish Government's Building Standards Division, to meet the fundamental overarching principles of driving forward the future of building standards throughout Scotland.

The Council's Building Standards service is located within the wider Sustainable Development service (part of the Place Directorate). Other services within Sustainable Development include Planning, Transport, Licensing, Housing, Business Growth/Inclusion and Housing Repairs. These support a wide range of services to local communities as well as the development industry.

Sustainable Development covers several of the Council's regulatory functions including enforcement, licensing, environmental health, social housing, and economic growth. The natural synergies across the directorate provide opportunities for collaboration, multi-disciplinary teams, and a high-level, consistent approach across delivery.

Organisation chart:

- Chief Executive
  - Executive Director of Corporate Services
  - Executive Director of Place
    - Service Director - Culture and Wellbeing
    - Service Director - Housing, Family Support and Fair Work
    - Service Director - Sustainable Development
      - Head of Development & Regeneration
      - Head of Estates
      - Head of Placemaking and Mobility
      - Chief Planning Officer and Head of Building Standards
      - Head of Sustainable Construction Delivery
      - Head of Regulatory Services
      - Head of Strategic Asset Planning
    - Service Director - Operational Services
  - Chief Officer of the Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership
  - Executive Director of Education and Children's Services

Senior Management with Council	Number of posts (FTE at 31 October 21)	Vacancies (not included in numbers of posts)
Chief Executive	1	
Executive Director of Place (Tier 1)	1	
Head of Sustainable Development (Tier 2)	1	

2.3 Building Standards Organisational Structure

The Building Standards Service chart on the following page sets out the revised structure of the Building Standards service. The Head of Building Standards reports to the Service Director of Sustainable Development.

One of our commitments to our employees was to ensure that once improved performance was back to meeting the Scottish Government targets and being sustained, we would look at introducing a revised structure. The revised structure including a temporary role of Operations Manager for the Service was implemented in February 2020. One of the aims of this change was a shift in the management levels within the Service. The appointment of the Operations Manager was made permanent in April 2022. This has allowed the Service Manager to keep oversight of Building Standards and have an increased focus on the management of the Planning Service.

It was important that we engaged and listened to our employees in shaping the final structure. A series of employee engagement sessions were undertaken over a 10-week period and feedback helped shape the transition into 4 key teams:

- Site Inspection/Compliance
- Plan Reporting (all applications up to £250k)
- Majors (all applications £250k and above and multi-plot housing sites)
- Improvement Team

The indications continue to show that the change is proving to be successful. There are weekly reviews with the Management Team and subsequent reviews with the Team Managers and their own teams.

The Improvement Team has become a permanent feature within the service (using resource from the current budget envelope). Ensuring improvements are sustained and continuous improvement is embedded, are a priority. The Improvement Team share tools/techniques with colleagues across the Planning Service and other areas within the Place directorate.
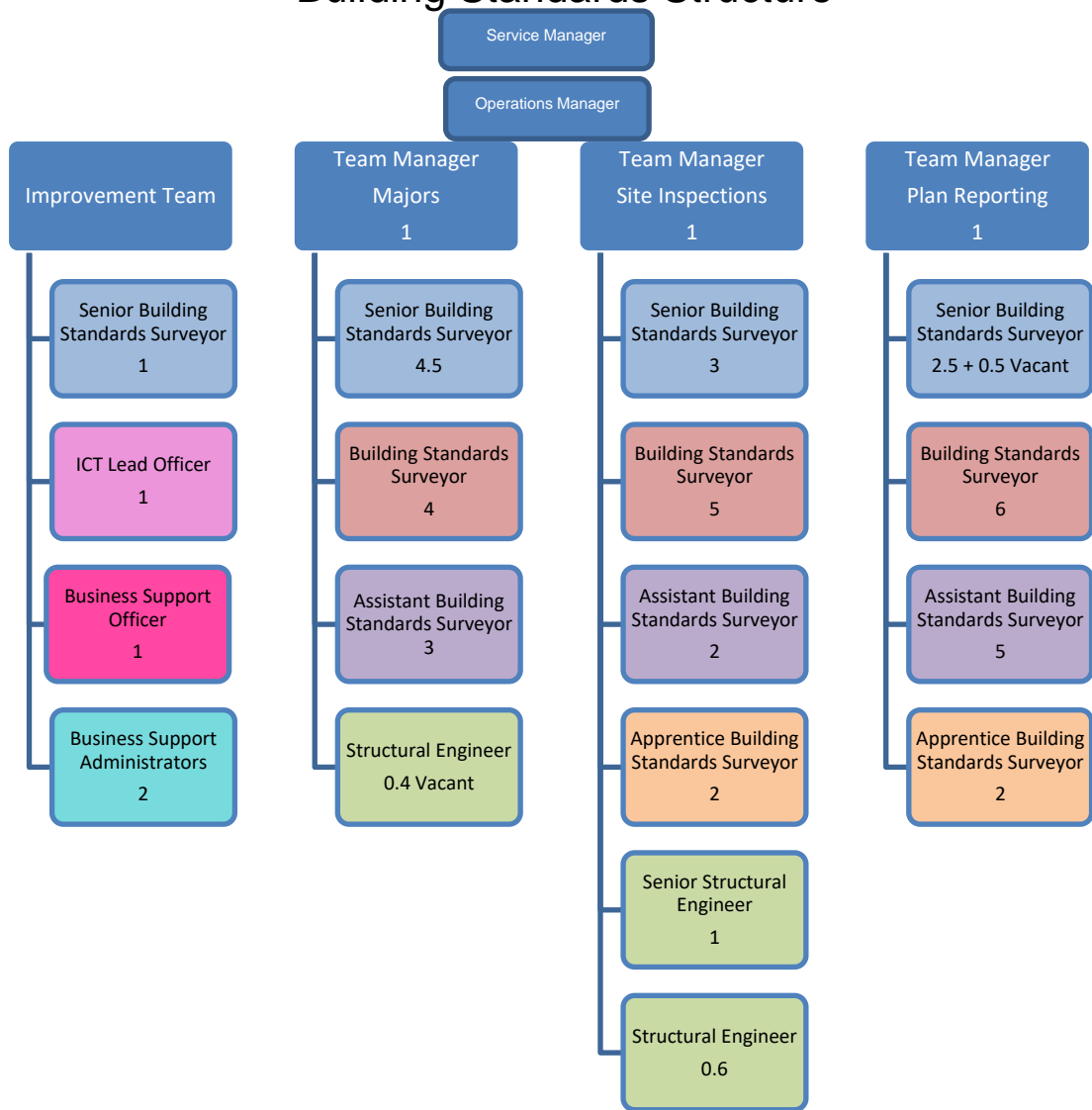
Transactions Team

The efficient and effective delivery of the building standards service relies heavily on input from the Council's Transactions team. Whilst the line management responsibilities for this team sit out with the direct control of Building Standards management, the team are included in all team briefings, training, and improvement initiatives.

Building Standards Full Time Equivalent Posts	Number of posts (FTE at 31 March 23)	Vacancies (not included in numbers of posts)
Head of Building Standards (Tier 3)	1	
Operations Manager	1	
Team Managers	3	
Senior Building Standards Surveyors	11	0.5
Senior Structural Engineers	1	
Building Standards Surveyors	15	
Structural Engineers	0.6	0.4
Assistant Building Standards Surveyors	10	
Apprentice Building Standards Surveyors	4	
ICT Lead Officer	1	
Business Support Officer	1	
Business Support Administrators	2	
Total employees (FTE within service area)	**50.6**	**0.9**
Transactions Team Manager (FTE)	1	
Transactions staff (FTE)	6	

Staff age Profile within service area	Number of posts
Under 30	15
30 – 39	11
40 – 49	8
50 and over	17

It is evident from the table above that our age profile is changing. It is more resilient and our succession planning for a more sustainable service is developing well. Over 50% of our staff are below the age of 40 and 67% of staff are under the age of 50. This is in contrast to many other service areas across the local authority. We have worked hard over the last few years to adjust this profile, bringing in and training new staff, with most having no previous experience in building standards.

Building Standards Structure

Service Manager

Operations Manager

Improvement Team

- Senior Building Standards Surveyor
  1
- ICT Lead Officer
  1
- Business Support Officer
  1
- Business Support Administrators
  2

Team Manager
Majors
1

- Senior Building Standards Surveyor
  4.5
- Building Standards Surveyor
  4
- Assistant Building Standards Surveyor
  3
- Structural Engineer
  0.4 Vacant

Team Manager
Site Inspections
1

- Senior Building Standards Surveyor
  3
- Building Standards Surveyor
  5
- Assistant Building Standards Surveyor
  2
- Apprentice Building Standards Surveyor
  2
- Senior Structural Engineer
  1
- Structural Engineer
  0.6

Team Manager
Plan Reporting
1

- Senior Building Standards Surveyor
  2.5 + 0.5 Vacant
- Building Standards Surveyor
  6
- Assistant Building Standards Surveyor
  5
- Apprentice Building Standards Surveyor
  2

Transactions Team

- Transactions Team Leader
  1
- Transactions Officer
  1
- Transactions Administrator
  7

- Transactions Team Leader
  1
- Transactions Officer
  1
- Transactions Administrator
  8

Public Interest Statement

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.

How to find us

Building Standards is located in the Council's headquarters at Waverley Court:

Building Standards   Telephone: 0131 529 3550
The City of Edinburgh Council
Waverley Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH8 8BG

www.edinburgh.gov.uk/buildingstandards

Section 3. Strategic Objectives

3.1 City of Edinburgh Council Strategic Goals

Both Covid-19 and budget pressures mean we need to look again at how we deliver services. Over the coming years, we'll focus on three priorities:

1. ending poverty and preventing adverse outcomes such as homelessness and unemployment
2. becoming a net zero city
3. ensuring wellbeing and equalities are enhanced for all.

These are ambitious targets and to meet them we need to do more than simply strive to return Edinburgh to where it was before the pandemic; we must take on board the lessons we've learned and build back better.

Under each priority we have grouped our targets under Ending Poverty, Wellbeing and Sustainability with a total of 15 Outcomes and actions to help us deliver our priorities.

The Business Plan is just one part of a golden thread that links and guides our operations, through to the shared goals and commitments of the Edinburgh Partnership (a city-wide partnership between the Public and Third Sectors).

By working together, we can achieve our long-term ambitions for Edinburgh to be a fair, welcoming, pioneering, and thriving city, as expressed by the 2050 Edinburgh City Vision.

These priorities represent a core focus for all our teams over the next phase of the city's development and for the way we'll reform our services.

We'll achieve this by:

- promoting fairness and tackling inequality
- building affordable and sustainable homes
- creating safe and welcoming communities
- developing a '20-minute neighbourhood' network where public transport and active travel are the best options for getting around
- investing in new, modern schools and early years facilities for our children and young people
- listening to and empowering our local communities
- creating a strong and positive culture for our colleagues

This business plan marks an exciting new opportunity for us, one that will make sure we're shaping the future and responding positively to its challenges.

3.2 The Vision of the Service

> **Vision**
>
> **Our aspiration of the service is to be one of the top performing Building Standards Verifiers in Scotland. We will build a reputation as a great organisation to do business with and to work for.**

We strive to improve our service to:

- Deliver an excellent Verification service that fulfils the requirements of Scottish Government Ministers as set out in the Operating Framework,
- Be customer focused, taking account of customers' needs, and deliver best practice in terms of consistency of interpretation and predictability of service,
- Deliver high levels of performance in terms of meeting the targets set in the Building Standards Performance Framework,
- Review service delivery practices as required to address any issues identified through national customer surveys, and
- Deliver targeted, cost effective, value for money services that meet operational needs and customer demand.

3.3 Building Standards Strategic Objectives

For the forthcoming year the primary objectives for Building Standards are: -

- To continue to deliver timeous and consistent service to our customers.
- To maintain our current levels of performance.
- To undertake a series of customer service improvements.
- To ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of our employees.

The role of Building Standards within this business plan is to:

- Assist economic growth,
- Support the housing programme,
- Help ensure our built environment is protected and enhanced,
- Ensure compliance and resilience across the construction industry,
- Ensure value for money while meeting the needs of our citizens; and,
- Deliver excellent customer service.

3.4 Delivering Building Standards services

We have learned from our experiences during the last three years that there are many positives to be built on. Staff working from home has continued in a more hybrid fashion with great results. We continue to achieve some of our best performance in years. The use of Remote Video Inspections (RVI) will continue to be utilised where possible and help cut travelling around our city and reduce our carbon footprint.

Operational plans during this period

We constantly monitor our processes and procedures, to check performance and involve staff in the development of any improvements. We have managed to play our part in addressing the nationwide shortage of building standards surveyors. Our Graduate Apprentices successfully completed their Honours Degrees in the summer of last year. With one of the graduates moving to work in another local authority Building Standards service in the west of Scotland. This allowed us to create four new posts for Modern Apprentices, opening the door to younger people in our community to start a career in Building Standards. From the successful recruitment to these posts and other staff training and development planned over the coming year, we will continue to build on these successes.

We will work with Scottish Government and partners to explore innovative ways to improve the efficiencies of our service, along with colleagues in our Planning service, locally and nationally.

Staff Wellbeing

The wellbeing of all our staff is a priority for our Service. Regular contact using video technology and monthly in person meetings along with regular 1-1 telephone calls with all staff, helps to identify those who may find they are struggling with the new operating environment. Additionally, equipment has been distributed to staff to aid home working where this has been requested. Most staff have now adopted a hybrid working pattern.

ICT

The refresh of our ICT hardware is being explored to ensure we remain resilient and able to maintain the delivery of service in a manner that meets the ever-changing expectations of our customers. In a more informed and tech-savvy age we have to ensure we are providing services that are fit for purpose, adaptable and meet our customers' needs.

Customer engagement

We review our customer survey comments and results monthly and take measures to address matters within our control, to help improve the customer experience. We have started face-to-face meetings with the main national housing developers that are operating in our area. This along with meetings and training sessions with ECAN are the start of our re-establishment of relationships with our customers.

Section 4. Key Performance Outcomes and Targets

4.1 Introduction

Continuous improvement is recognised as key in 'raising the bar' for quality, compliance, consistency, and predictability of verification activities. This principle was at the core of the introduction of a best value Balanced Scorecard for verifiers in 2005. This approach was assessed by the Scottish Government when the appointment of verifiers was reviewed in 2011. As a result, a Building Standards Performance Framework (BSPF) which set out 9 Key Performance Outcomes (KPO's) that Verifiers were required to achieve was introduced. In 2017, following a further Scottish Government review, the framework was updated to bring it more in line with current practice and to reduce the KPOs in number from 9 down to 7.

The verifier is required to complete and submit performance reports quarterly to the Scottish Government. 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.

4.2 Summary of Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs)

The table below sets out the current list of KPO's for which targets are set by the Scottish Government. In Section 5 more detailed information on these KPO's is provided to explain the targets that have been set.

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

4.3 Summary of Key Performance Targets

The table below summarises the 7 KPO's including, where appropriate, the targets against which verifiers are assessed by the Scottish Government. It is of note that not all the Outcomes necessarily relate to performance e.g. KPO6.1

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 • 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 2021 – March 2022).

Section 5. Key Performance Outcome Data

KPO1 Targets - Minimise time taken to issue a first report or issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant

1.1	

Quarter of year 2022/23	% of 1st reports and grants of warrant with no 1st report within 20 day target
1	92%
2	93%
3	91%
4	95%

We have increased the use of Customer Service Agreements to help in the processing of applications as efficiently as possible whilst meeting customers' expectations. This has, in part, lead to what appears to be a small reduction in our performance compared to last year. This performance is also against a backdrop of an unprecedented turnover of staff, due primarily to retirements. Please refer to the age profile data in previous pages.

2.1	

Quarter of year 2022/23	% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days
1	91%
2	92%
3	93%
4	96%

The figures show that we met one of our priorities for the year by keeping this figure as high as possible and consistently meeting/exceeding the national KPO target.

The priority for the next year is to ensure that the figures remain at this high level as we replace the lost experience of the retired members of staff and train our newer members of staff.

KPO3 Targets – Commit to the Building Standards Customer Charter

3.1	The National Customer Charter is displayed prominently on the website. This document was reviewed quarterly to ensure it reflects current targets.
3.2	All BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' cases are responded to by the Council within 5 days.

KPO4 Targets - Understand and respond to the customer experience

4.1	The overall satisfaction with the Building Standards service from the 2022/23 National Customer Survey conducted by the Building Standards Division was 6.5, up from 5.5 last year. With a score of 7.2 being achieved in Q4. This is an excellent result and testimony to the work we have put in over the year. Key issues arising from our customers are: • Communications There are several measures underway to address this, examples include: • Identifying which staff have issues with communication with customer. Staff sharing their knowledge and experiences of what good communication looks like through mentoring. • We issue a regular newsletter to over 1500 customers, and our Councillors. It sets out progress we are making on improvements and provides information to assist customers in understanding all our roles and responsibilities. • Promotion of the Scottish Government's guidance on how to make a good building warrant application. • Single point of contact for each of our new workstreams. • Encouraging customers to use the generic email addresses for our workstreams that are provided in our communications rather than using individual's email addresses. • A follow up series of report writing workshops for all surveyors and updating our standard checklists for surveyors to improve consistency. The introduction of our new workstreams has provided a greater degree of consistency throughout all tasks but there is still much to be done. Additionally, a number of measures have now been embedded which will further aid consistency throughout the Section. These include regular reviews and updates of our procedures, training and mentoring for staff and template checklists for smaller applications such as conservatories and extensions. Our quality assurance process has also been developed to ensure that procedures are followed and kept up to date.

	KPO5 Targets - Maintain financial governance
5.1	

	Q1	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**
Fee income	£1,052,484	£1,191,275	£1,411,266	£1,248,937
Expenditure	£637,251	£683,108	£825,950	£759,307
Staffing costs:	£578,179	£591,422	£736,717	£676,541
Non staff costs:	£46,846	£36,473	£38,166	£146,048
Other investment:	£570	£1,34	£807	£1,739

Building standards verification fee income is to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).

The service continues to generate sufficient income overall, to cover staff costs plus 30%.

	KPO6 Targets - Commit to eBuilding Standards
6.1	Full details of the Building Standards Service in Edinburgh are available on the Council website at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/buildingstandards This includes a link to the eBuilding Standards website.
6.2	Plan checking of both building warrants and amendments are in excess of the 75% target with 100% being processed electronically during 2022/23. The major investment that we made in mobile technology with all members of staff receiving Microsoft Surface Pro computers, has allowed all staff to continue working a hybrid pattern and to carry out video site inspections. Completion certificates are submitted online and processed electronically in most cases.

	KPO7 Targets - Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report
7.1	The annual verification performance report for 2022-23 is on the Council website at: https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/council-performance-reports/building-standards-performance/1
7.2	The annual verification performance report for 2022/23 includes performance data.

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes

Protocols for dealing with work –
- A fundamental review of our Procedures was undertaken in 2020. This is an ongoing area of activity to ensure we continually change and improve and that our procedures are amended to reflect these changes.
- All staff briefing sessions and workshops are held to discuss and test the procedures and to ensure that they are fully understood.
- We have a robust Quality Assurance Framework in place.
- We have a skills matrix that is used to ensure applications are allocated to staff who are suitably qualified and experienced to deal with them.
- In addition, a minimum of 5% of building warrants are checked by senior surveyors to ensure consistency.

Performance management systems –
- At divisional level - Building Standards Senior Managers meet with colleagues across Sustainable Development weekly to discuss a range of current issues, with performance management being a standing monthly agenda item.
- At service level - we have a dedicated Improvement Team that develops an ongoing programme of improvement, including details of the work and performance targets of the Service.
- At team level - staff utilise the Enterprise workflow management system; this uses a traffic light system to prioritise workloads to ensure key outcomes are met.
- Weekly management teams have a structured agenda which includes service performance.
- Individually - staff have the opportunity to participate in monthly one to one session with the team leader so any performance issues can be discussed and addressed. They also take part in the Councils' Annual Performance Framework where individual discussions take place on "looking back" at performance in the last 6 months and "looking forward" for the next 6 months.
- The Enterprise Reporting Tool provides a clear view of workload allocation for every application. It is flexible and allows reallocation of work during periods of staff absence. Targets are also set through annual performance conversations. Regular meetings are held between team managers and senior managers to discuss performance and an improvement plan is in place to remedy current problems.

Training and development/CPD –
The organisation recognises that staff are key to efficient and effective service delivery. On this basis we seek to ensure they receive regular training on all aspects of the role, be it procedural or technical.
- Whilst we have captured the data from staff, we have yet to utilise fully the CAS to achieve its potential. Using the information gathered, we are yet to complete our exploration and development of this program to ensure maximum benefit can be achieved for all staff and the service.
- We hold monthly All Staff Team meetings which include training as a standing item on the agenda. This allows for those who have attended events to share knowledge with colleagues as well as identifying any training requirements.

- Formal training is provided internally to aid surveyors pursuing a professional membership (CABE/RICS/CIOB). A formal training partnership with the CIOB also provides surveyors a platform to pursue a professional membership to aid the individual and ensure the service has suitably qualified professionals.
- The service aims to provide 36 hours of training per year per member of staff.
- In addition to this, other centralised training is given which concentrates on health and safety requirements and changes to legislation. This helps to meet RICS professional training requirements.
- Staff are encouraged to attend meetings of LABSS to keep abreast of national issues affecting the Building Standards profession.
- Forums have been set up to discuss technical/procedural issues encountered by staff, the outcomes of which are adopted as best practice.

Benchmarking –

We recognise the benefit of active participation in benchmarking and closer collaborative working. To this end we continue benchmarking with: -
- Southeast Scotland Consortium which comprises colleagues from Fife, Midlothian, East Lothian, West Lothian, Scottish Borders and ourselves. This is one of 7 consortia set up by LABSS. The consortia aims are: -
    - Developing best practice in the application of procedures.
    - Improving uniformity of interpretation and application of the technical standards.
    - Feeding into the work of the Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS).
- The Building Standards Division of the Scottish Government (BSD)
- The 32 Scottish Local Authorities through the work of Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS).
- The SOLACE group of authorities which share data to allow us to compare ourselves against a variety of similar authorities (with a mix of urban and large rural areas)

Shared Services –
Currently CEC Building Standards provides structural engineering resource to another local authority (Midlothian) and conversations took place with East Lothian Council & West Lothian Council regarding similar engineer resource. We will pursue further discussions on this matter in the coming year. In the past, we collaborated with Argyle and Bute Council and Aberdeen Council on the processing of warrant applications.

Succession planning –
- The age profile has changed significantly within the service, with a good mix of ages now throughout.
- Exploration of a number of flexible contracts is considered alongside our ongoing commitment to appoint Modern Apprentices.

Quality Customer Experience: -

Customer communication strategies –

A review of the feedback from our National Customer Survey (NCS) was carried out and revealed that communication is an issue. The information disclosed that the problem is not service wide and there are many examples of good communication and excellent customer service. Our updated strategy will:

- Focus and build on the examples of good communications and service provided by the majority of staff. Staff sharing their approach through workshops and setting out the aims and ambitions to improve the customer experience across the entire service.
- Use the more immediate feedback from the new NCS to identify problems and areas of improvement and react in a timelier manner.
- A customer newsletter continues to be issued and ongoing updates on blog and twitter will become more common practice.

Customer Charter –

- The Building Standards Customer Charter is reviewed quarterly and is published on the Council website. This document clearly sets out the level of service the Council will provide for the Building Standards service in Edinburgh.

Customer Engagement and feedback –

- The service has fully embraced the new NCS with the aim of obtaining timely and meaningful customer feedback from more customers.
- Complaints are monitored and lessons learned are used to make changes to the service.
- The service has also re-established meetings with national housebuilders and ECAN to build on the delivery of improvements.

Customer Advice –

- General advice is available through our general enquiry email service. Customers are also directed to self-serve from the information on the Council website.
- Our phone service is available from 9am to 1pm every weekday.

Accessibility of Service –

As a customer focussed service, we aim to make the service as accessible as possible which we do through the following methods: -

- The customer contact centre is manned by staff who are specifically trained to deal with general enquiries at first point of contact.
- We publicise, on our website generic e-mail addresses for our three workstreams to which enquiries can be sent. These are monitored daily to ensure there are no delays in responding.
- We are prepared to meet locally with agents to discuss proposed warrants, although more and more 'discussions' now take place through electronic means.

Pre-Application Service –

- We actively encourage pre-application discussions for all applications with a construction cost of £250,000 or greater and other complex developments incorporating new or innovative design. This helps to pre-empt any major technical matters applicable to the proposals and to also agree critical procedural

elements such as the staging of the warrant. We advise that this service can be undertaken at the designer's office, if coming to Waverly Court is inconvenient.

- Electronic pre-warrant discussions also take place on a regular non-formal basis for smaller development proposals.

Customer Agreements –

A customer agreement is offered for application which fall within the service's Major Applications Team with a construction cost of £250,000 or greater. The customer is contacted as soon as reasonably practicable after an application has been received, to open dialogue around the design and programming of works, thus aiding the appropriate allocation of resources.

Customer Dissatisfaction (procedural or technical) –

The technical standards are presented as guidance in contrast to the regulations which are mandatory. On occasion there can be differences in opinions over a technical or procedural matter, or a perceived lack of consistency with another verifier. To address this Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS) have in place a dispute resolution service. This can involve the verifier escalating the enquiry to LABSS who then seek a national view before publishing their interpretation.
The Council has a robust complaints procedure for dealing with all forms of complaint.

Operational and Financial Efficiency: -

Team Structures –
The Building Standards teams are based on a workstream structure as set out on page 9.

Financial Monitoring –
Monthly monitoring of fee income is undertaken, and verification costs and income are reported on a quarterly basis to the BSD.
We have monthly meetings taking place with finance across the Planning & Building Standards service as well as quarterly meetings with the wider Place Directorate, these are supported with regular financial monitoring meetings with the Senior Accountants (allocated to BS) and the BS Management team.

IT Systems –
We have continued to develop the use of Uniform Enterprise to help workflow through the service. The system is linked to the IDOX document management system, which in turn links in to the Scottish Government eDevelopment Portal. This permits customers to lodge applications electronically and submit additional supporting documentation directly into their building warrant file. We are working with our ICT Partners through UAT to ensure a smooth implementation of Idox solutions to host our data directly on the Cloud. This will provide significant improvements in productivity, stability, capacity, and costs.

Digital Services –
A full range of digital services including online applications and website information is available. We are seeking to continually look at a channel shift and increase the levels of business conducted electronically. We have invested in the appointment of an ICT Lead officer who is dedicated to align our improvement programme with digital opportunities.

<u>Finance Systems</u> –
The Building Standards service adheres to the Council's financial policies and budgets and spending is kept under review. At a team level, all monies received in respect of building warrant fees are logged. This permits money received and budgets to be monitored by our finance colleagues.

<u>Internal communication strategies</u> –
The Council recognises the importance of having clear lines of communications to ensure staff are kept motivated and feel involved. There are regular corporate updates, including a blog from the Chief Executive. Our internal intranet (the ORB) provides excellent updates on all news, vacancies, wellbeing, and self-service. The Building Standard service hold regular team briefs and team meetings which are very interactive and encourage participation of staff across the service.

Section 6. Service Improvement and Partnership Working

The Building Standards service has made significant improvement since the audit of November 2017, where the Scottish Government identified a range of areas for improvement. These included: -

- Leadership and Management
- Performance
- Culture of Continuous Improvement; and,
- Customer.

Specific objectives were developed as part of the Building Standards Improvement Plan 2018-2021 which was agreed with the Scottish Government.

The Service reports to the Building Standards Division, annually on key deliverables achieved, and key objectives planned for next year.

Continuous Improvement Actions delivered 2022/23: -
The Service has delivered significant improvements over the past 12 months: -

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
Leadership and Management	**Workforce profile** ✓ The workforce profile is a key factor in sustaining our performance and ensuring a balance of experience and attracting new talent to the service. During the course of the next year, it will be reviewed regularly. It will also recognise the recent work undertaken at national	**Ongoing**	A business case to recruit additional staff was successful, allowing us to employ the following – 4 Assistant Surveyors, and 4 Modern Apprentice Surveyors Due to retirements, we also appointed two new Team managers, one being a promotion from within the department and the other an external candidate. We currently have a small number of vacancies within the

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	level with BSD on the workforce planning strand of improvements.		department due to retirement/part time work and we will explore filling these along with any other retirements/surveyors leaving over the coming year.
	Stress Risk Survey/Workshop ✓ A Stress Survey will be carried out for all staff with a follow-up workshop to drill down and focus on key findings. Regular pulse checks on staff wellbeing will be carried out throughout the year.	**Complete**	The main themes arising from Stress/Risk dialogue are regularly discussed with managers/staff in team and 1 to 1 meetings.
	Staff Training ✓ Staff to be trained on all updated procedures and legislation.	**Complete**	Ongoing training sessions have taken place with all staff and a training register maintained.
	Future Service Delivery Model – Review ✓ It is important to ensure the new model of operation is efficient and effective. Ongoing review will take place during 2022/2023 to ensure the model is not only affordable but flexible and offers a collaborative approach with key internal services and wider Council pressures.	**Complete**	The model was reviewed regularly throughout the year with resource redistributed where and when required to meet demands in workload.

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	Risk Register Review ✓ Carryout a review of the present department Risk Register.	**Complete**	A complete review of the Risk Register has been undertaken to ensure it is more relevant and aligns with the requirements of the wider Council.
	Return to Office – ✓ Ensure all requirements are in place to allow a safe return to Office working for staff.	**Complete**	A full review of working practices was carried out to determine and allow those members of staff who wanted to permanently work from the office/work hybrid, to return to the office. A full audit of all office equipment and office protocol was undertaken and replaced/updated as required.
Performance and Continuous Improvement	**Internal Audit – Follow up** ✓ In order to reassure Internal Audit that actions are being sustained a follow up internal audit will be conducted later in 2022. There has been an excellent working relationship with colleagues in Audit and we engage them on a number of occasions to test our procedures.	**Not Carried Out**	Due to more demanding pressures elsewhere within the council, Internal Audit have had to redirect their resources to other areas. Depending on other demands, Internal Audit hope to re-engage with the department at a later date. In the absence of this Audit, it was decided to carry out a full review of our own Internal Quality Audit processes (see below).
	Internal Quality Audit – ✓ A full review of our Internal Quality Audit process to be undertaken with quarterly audits rolled out to all staff.	**Ongoing**	The review and subsequent updates of the process has now been completed. A Pilot audit will take place in May/June with regular quarterly audits commencing in July.

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	Review of Procedures – ✓ All internal Procedure to be reviewed and updated prior to commencement of refreshed Internal Quality Audit.	**Complete**	In preparation for the refreshed Internal Quality Audit, it was decided that all Procedures should be reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure their relevance and accuracy. A small team of experienced surveyors was formed to carry out the review over the course of 6 months.
	Performance ✓ Sustain performance - above 95% of warrants being issued first reports within 20 day target and 90% of warrants being granted within 10 days of receiving satisfactory info.	**Ongoing**	Performance has continued to improve with our best figures for a number of years being achieved - 95% of warrants were issued first reports within 20 day target and 93% of warrants were granted within 10 days of receiving satisfactory info.
	Performance ✓ Error reports to be produced detailing data input errors within Uniform.	**Ongoing**	Error reports have been successfully operating throughout the year. Further reports will be established as new Enterprise tasks are launched.
	Performance ✓ Rationalise all drop down menus and letters within Uniform.	**Delayed**	Due to the prioritising of the new Uniform upgrade and our imminent migration to a Cloud based Idox operating system, a lack of available IT resource has resulted in this delay. However, upon completion of the migration, this will once again be advanced.
	Performance ✓ Improve response times for progressing completion certificates and ensure compliance with completion certificate processes.	**Complete**	New Team Managers have been appointed to the Site Inspection and Majors workstreams – new processes have now been put in place to ensure improved response times and compliance with the updated Procedures are implemented.

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	Delivering Excellence ✓ A series of "Delivering Excellence" sessions are planned to take an end-to-end approach to our business-as-usual activities for our Majors and Plan Reporting teams. These provide a walkthrough of the current key processes, examined, and challenged by teams and will provide improved processes for introduction.	**Complete**	Regular team meetings took place, with the findings helping to shape our new Plan Reporting and Inspection Procedures. These new and updated Procedures have now been introduced and implemented across the teams.
	Efficient/Effective working ✓ We will continue to look at the use of ICT to drive forward efficiencies and streamline service.	**Ongoing**	This is a continual process and several improvements have been made over the course of the year, including upgrades to our Uniform operating system, a greater use of our Enterprise system along with greater automation within Uniform itself and the provision of updated equipment to staff who have chosen to Home/Hybrid work.
	ICT ✓ Migrate operating systems to Idox hosted Cloud.	**Delayed**	There have been a number of delays arising out of user testing, however, most have now been overcome and it is hoped that those still outstanding, can be resolved to allow for implementation by end of June 23.
	Uniform Upgrade ✓ Upgrade the Uniform database.	**Complete**	Uniform was successfully upgraded, and training given to all staff.
	Transactions Procedures ✓ Review the current Transactions Procedures	**Complete**	A number of workshops were completed with our Transactions colleagues to determine "best practice" – Procedures were updated and staff trained/informed as required.

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	and amend for best practice.		
	Procedures ✓ Introduce a new procedure for processing Section 50 Licensing applications.	**Ongoing**	This is near completion but still requires a small piece of supplementary work to be completed before going Live.
	Procedures ✓ Produce new Procedures for Pre-Application Advice and Customer Agreements.	**Complete**	New Procedures were created, and training sessions undertaken for all staff.
	Procedures ✓ Update the procedures for Building Warrant assessments, revised plans, and approval.	**Complete**	All Procedures were completely re-written and training sessions undertaken for all staff.
	Procedures ✓ Review the procedures for our Property Inspection and Conformation of Completion services.	**Complete**	The Procedures were reviewed and are now Live. We may look at further amendments to the Procedures as we develop the use of Enterprise around these areas.
	Procedures ✓ Develop a new procedure for checking warrant reports utilising the new Uniform Peer Review Tab.	**Delayed**	Due to the prioritising of the new Uniform upgrade and our imminent migration to a Cloud based Idox operating system, a lack of available IT resource has resulted in this delay. However, upon completion of the migration, this will once again be advanced.

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	Website Publishing ✓ Upskill members of the team on Website Publishing to enable a greater flexibility over our content.	**Complete**	Two members of staff have now undergone website publishing training and carryout all Building Standards content updates.
	Website Update ✓ Ensure website content is up to date.	**Complete**	Regular reviews are carried out on the website content and updates made as required.
	Training ✓ Train staff on updates to the Technical Standards.	**Complete**	A series of training session were delivered to staff on changes to the Technical Standards.
	Enforcement ✓ Review current Procedures around Enforcement of Works without Warrant, Occupation without Completion, Dangerous and Defective Buildings.	**Delayed**	It was decided to wait until such times as the new BS Enforcement Handbook was published and to use this as the basis for our review.
Customer Improvements	**Customer Satisfaction on change activities** ✓ In order to test recent changes with our customers, we will continue undertaking a series of outbound calls to test customer satisfaction on a variety of service areas.	**Ongoing**	A programme of face-to-face engagement with all major housebuilders, along with targeted outbound calls, has provided invaluable feedback on recent changes, performance, and future improvements withing the service.

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	National Customer Survey / Customer Engagement Plan ✓ Following the publication and analysis of the National Customer Survey results, our focus this year will be to develop an effective customer communication strategy.	**Complete**	The new National Customer Survey format has allowed us to react much quicker to common issues arising from the feedback. This has permitted us to target improvements and training needs, and instantly feedback to staff on not only negative but also positive comments. Our new approach appears to be paying dividends as our Survey score has continued to rise quarterly throughout the year.
	Review of Contact Centre call provision ✓ We will review the use of an automated Interactive Voice Response (IVR) phone system to improve our customer journey.	**Delayed**	Due to a requirement for our colleagues in Planning to implement the new IVR System concurrently with ourselves, there has been a delay in rolling the new system out. Scripts have now been produced for both Building Standards and Planning and are presently sitting with the system provider to input into the new system. User testing will then require to be undertaken and it is hoped to have full implementation by autumn 23.
	Working in partnership with our customers to design and implement our change activities ✓ Engage customers, partners, and stakeholders to test change initiatives. ✓ Re-introduce our stakeholder panels.	**Complete**	A programme of face-to-face engagement with all major housebuilders, along with targeted outbound calls has been carried out. Regular Newsletters are sent to all our Customers detailing new and proposed changes and encouraging feedback and opinion. It has been decided not to re-introduce our stakeholder panel in its previous format but to instead concentrate on our new ways of engagement which are proving successful.
	Procedures ✓ Produce a new Report Writing Procedure to aid in consistency for customers.	**Complete**	Following feedback on consistency of reports from our customers, a new Procedure was created, and training rolled out to all staff.

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	Customer Insight / Satisfaction ✓ Continue to develop insight on customer experiences, needs and preferences and make positive changes as a result of analysing these.	**Ongoing**	This is an ongoing process through customer feedback and is helping to shape our future improvements and communication strategy.

Continuous Improvement Actions planned for 2023/24: -

The Service has a number of improvement actions planned for the year ahead.

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
Leadership and Management	**Workforce profile** ✓ The workforce profile is a key factor in sustaining our performance and ensuring a balance of experience and attracting new talent to the service. During the course of the next year, it will be reviewed regularly. It will also recognise the recent work undertaken at national level with BSD on the workforce planning strand of improvements.	**Ongoing**	
	Stress/Wellbeing ✓ Regular meetings will be held throughout the year via 1 to 1 meetings, team meetings and drop-in sessions to help assess the Stress levels/Wellbeing of staff.	**Ongoing**	
	Staff Training ✓ Staff to be trained on all updated procedures and legislation.	**Ongoing**	

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	Future Service Delivery Model – Review ✓ It is important to ensure the new model of operation is efficient and effective. Ongoing review will take place during 2023/2024 to ensure the model is not only affordable but flexible and offers a collaborative approach with key internal services and wider Council pressures.	Ongoing	
Performance and Continuous Improvement	**Internal Quality Audit –** ✓ A running programme of quarterly Quality Audits will be undertaken by all staff members. ✓ Outcomes of the audits will be fed back to the Management Team and appropriate actions implemented.	Ongoing	
	Performance ✓ Sustain performance - above 95% of warrants being issued first reports within 20 day target and 90% of warrants being	Ongoing	

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	granted within 10 days of receiving satisfactory info.		
	Performance ✓ Error reports to be produced detailing data input errors within Uniform.	**Ongoing**	
	Performance ✓ Rationalise all drop down menus and letters within Uniform.	**Mar 24**	
	Efficient/Effective working ✓ We will continue to look at the use of ICT to drive forward efficiencies and streamline the service.	**Ongoing**	
	ICT ✓ Migrate operating systems to Idox hosted Cloud. ✓ Carryout user testing. ✓ Train staff on new system. ✓ New Procedures to be completed.	**Jun 23**	
	Transactions Procedures ✓ Review the Procedures for Validating and Rejecting warrant applications.	**Aug 23**	

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	Transactions Procedures ✓ Review the Procedure for registering Certificates of Design and Schedule 1's.	**Sept 23**	
	Procedures ✓ Introduce a new procedure for processing Section 50 Licensing applications.	**Dec 23**	
	Procedures ✓ New Procedures required for processing Structural Engineers information. ✓ New Enterprise tasks linked to the above to be created.	**Dec 23**	
	Procedures ✓ Review the Procedure for Staged Warrants and update document templates as necessary.	**Aug 23**	
	Procedures ✓ Review the Procedure for CCNP's and re-train all staff.	**Nov 23**	
	Procedures ✓ Develop a new Procedure for registering and processing Relaxations.	**Sept 23**	

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	Procedures ✓ Investigate a new Procedure for checking warrant reports utilising the new Uniform Peer Review Tab.	**Feb 24**	
	Website Update ✓ Ensure website content is up to date.	**Ongoing**	
	Enforcement ✓ Review current Procedures around Enforcement of Works without Warrant, Occupation without Completion, Dangerous and Defective Buildings. ✓ Investigate the use of Enterprise tasks to align with the updated Procedures.	**Nov 23**	
Customer Improvements	**Customer Satisfaction on change activities** ✓ Undertake a programme of face-to-face engagement with all major housebuilders, along with targeted, customer outbound calls, to analyse recent changes, and future improvements withing the service.	**Ongoing**	

Improvement Theme	Objective	Timescale / Rating	Evidence
	National Customer Survey ✓ Analyse feedback from the National Customer Survey to target improvements and training needs.	**Ongoing**	
	Review of Contact Centre call provision ✓ We will review the use of an automated Interactive Voice Response (IVR) phone system to improve our customer journey.	**Oct 23**	
	Review of Website Content ✓ Continually review the website content to help improve the customer journey.	**Ongoing**	
	Customer Insight / Satisfaction ✓ Continue to develop insight on customer experiences, needs and preferences and make positive changes as a result of analysing these.	**Ongoing**	

Partnership working

Building Standards does not and cannot operate effectively and efficiently by working in isolation. The following are examples of how partnership working has driven collaboration and improved service delivery.

Within the Council

Planning Services	Working collaboratively to encourage development within the city.
Legal Services	Consult and discuss matters of legislative interpretation with our solicitors and progress applications. Consultation on enforcement.
Licensing	Consultee for applications in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation and Liquor Licensing.
Housing Services	Work with colleagues to ensure the delivery of the Council's commitment to social housing.
Economic Development/Inclusive Growth	Collaborative working on building warrants that have significant impact for inward investment, ensuring early engagement & efficient progression through the process.

Outwith the Council

Southeast Scotland Consortium which comprises colleagues from Fife, Midlothian, East Lothian, West Lothian, Scottish Borders and ourselves	Identifying best practice; improving consistency in the application and interpretation of technical standards.
LABSS	Participate in consultations and attend meetings.
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	Consultation as and when required on dangerous buildings and other specified applications.
Scottish Government	Participation in strategy forums, benchmarking and sharing of best practice.
Midlothian Council	Sharing resource with structural engineer.
NHS Lothian	Regular discussions and updates took place during the Covid-19 Pandemic.
BSD	Work with the Scottish Government's Building Standards Division, to meet the fundamental overarching principles of driving forward the future of building standards throughout Scotland.

Section 7. Building Standards – Additional Data

In 2022/23, Building Standards performance was as follows:

Building warrants and amendments to building warrant	• 5323 building warrant and associated applications received including amendment to warrants. • 5161 decisions made on building warrant applications.
Completion certificates	• 5748 completion certificates submitted. • 6596 decisions made.
Certification	• 1256 certificates of design submitted. • 835 certificates of construction submitted.
Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)	• 1262 copy certificates received (domestic). • 37 copy certificates received (non-domestic).
Statements of Sustainability	• 892 copy certificates received (domestic). • 15 copy certificates received (non-domestic).
Enforcement	• 1 Notices served under sections 25 to 30. • 0 Cases referred to procurator fiscal. • 0 Cases where LA has undertaken work.