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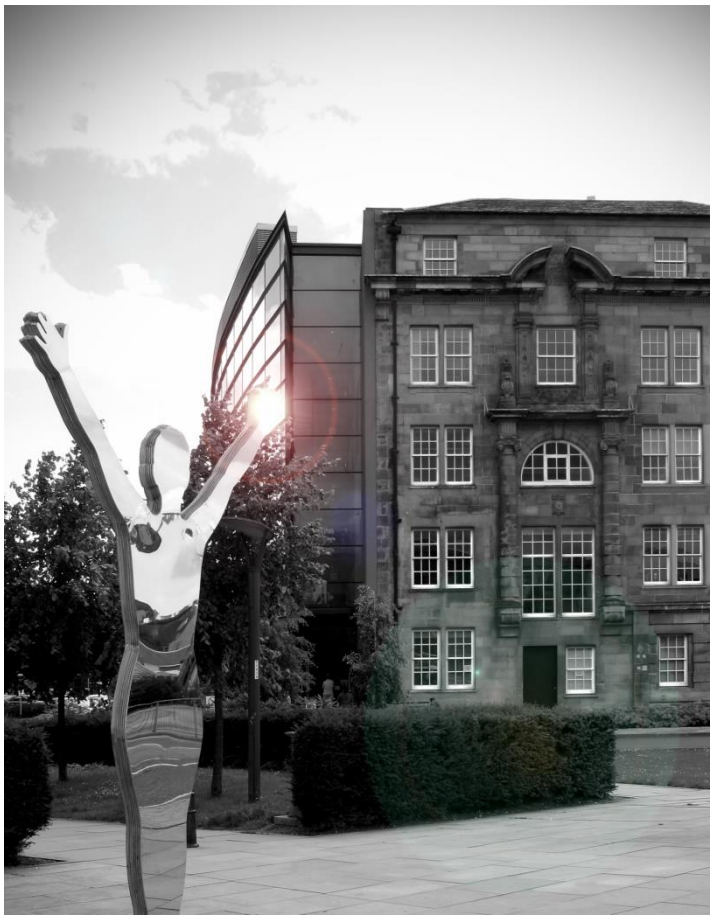
BUILDING STANDARDS VERIFICATION



ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

2020-21

Version Control

Version	Description of Change	Date
1.0	Introduction of Annual Performance Report	Nov 19
2.0	Updated age profile, organisation structure, provision of web link to Key Performance Data (Section 5), updated Service Improvements (Section 7)	Mar 21

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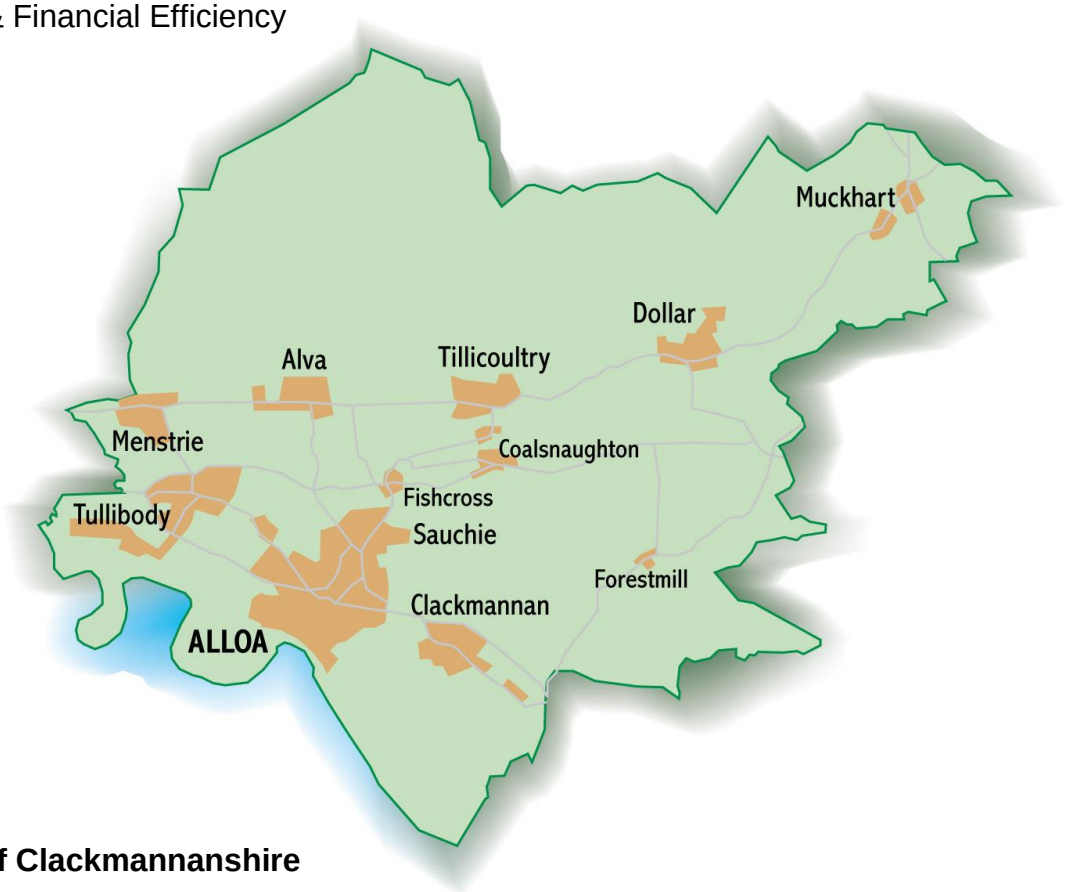
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE VERIFIER

Background

The verification performance report is a strategic planning and management tool that is used in business organisations to align business activities to the vision and strategy of the organisation, improve internal and external communications, and monitor performance against strategic goals.

Building standards verifiers in Scotland are required to utilise the performance report as a means to manage, monitor, review and develop strategies for their business with a focus on the three core perspectives listed below and the public interest and continuous improvement crosscutting themes:

- Professional Expertise & Technical Processes
- Quality Customer Experience
- Operational & Financial Efficiency



A Description of Clackmannanshire

Clackmannanshire is Scotland in miniature – magnificent scenery, a turbulent history and welcoming people. We may be the smallest mainland county in Scotland, but we have some big ambitions. We aim to deliver the best services possible to the people we serve. We aim to be innovative and to work in partnership with other organisations to achieve our goals.

The County covers some 160 square kilometres and has an increasing population of 51,400**.** The County is bounded to the north by the Ochil Hills and to the south by the River Forth. Clackmannanshire has geographical boundaries with Fife, and Perth & Kinross Councils to the north and east and Stirling Council to the west.

Clackmannanshire has a wide and diverse landscape which includes Areas of Great Landscape Value, Sites of Scientific Interest, a Nature Reserve and has a shoreline on the River Forth. The area also has significant historical and industrial relevance which has left the legacy of coal mining and contaminated land the consequences of which the Council continue to deal with. The area is also subject to the increasing frequency and risk posed by flooding due to climate change.

Clackmannanshire is a mix of both urban and rural communities which has in recent years benefitted from the additions of a new hospital, 3 new secondary schools, 3 primary schools and a Forth Valley College campus.

Development within the Council area has been maintained at a steady pace in recent post recession years, however in the last two years the housing sector has again shown signs of growth with a greater number of housing developments by major developers. Efficiency savings were previously made in the Planning and Building Standards Service when the Building Standards and Planning Team Leader positions were combined and a Building Standards Surveyor post was agreed to be replaced at a lower grade. Performance levels and customer service have been maintained at a high standard despite these challenges as a result of the introduction of smarter working arrangements and continued staff commitment. However recent housing growth is now placing a pressure on performance attainment.

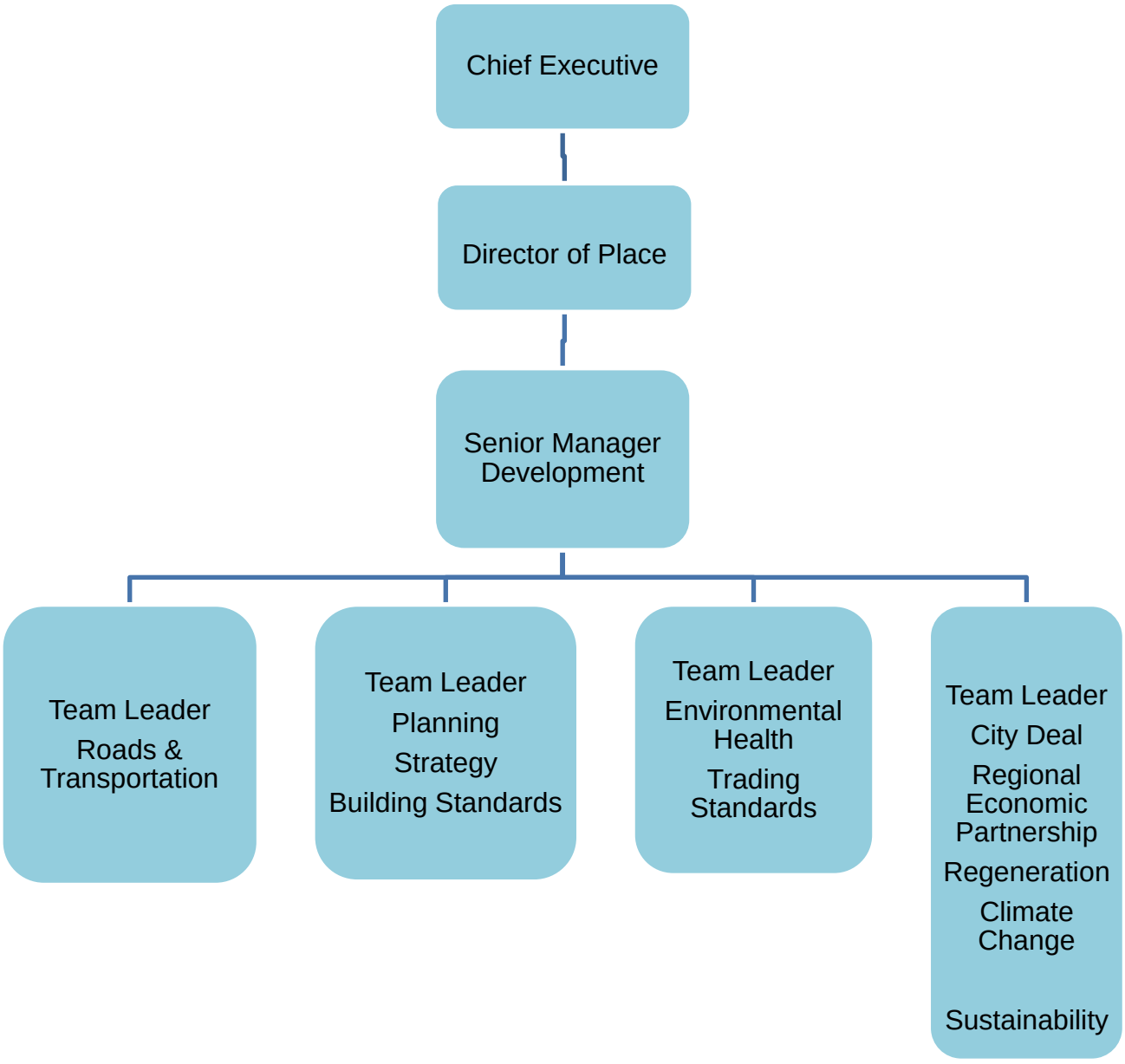
Building Standards Responsibilities

The Building Standards Service is responsible for providing a range of functions on behalf of the Council. These functions include the Team's core role in administering the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 as both verifier in dealing with Building Warrant applications, inspections during construction operations and acceptance/rejection of Completion Certificates, and in an enforcement role relating to unauthorised building operations, defective and dangerous buildings.

In addition to this core function the Team is also responsible for enforcement of Section 87 (Buildings in need of Repair), Section 89 (Safety of Platforms) and Section 97 (Street Naming and Numbering) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

The Service is responsible for administering the Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975 and the provision of formal responses to consultations in association with applications or enforcement operations related to the Planning and both Civic and Alcohol licensing.

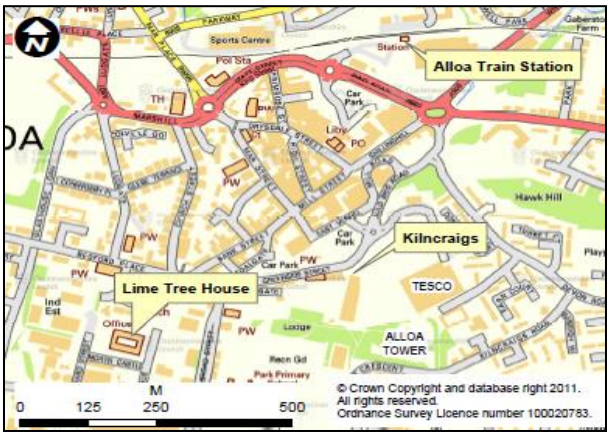
Organisational Chart (Council Structure) - Figure 1



1. INTRODUCTION TO THE VERIFIER

The Building Standards Team is based in the former Kilncraigs Mill which is located in the town centre of Alloa - the full postal address and contact information is as indicated below:

Clackmannanshire Council
Kilncraigs
Greenside Street
Alloa
Clackmannanshire
FK10 1EB



Public Interest

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.

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.

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.

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Organisational information

The Head of the Building Standards Verification Service in Clackmannanshire is the Senior Manager (Development). The Planning and Building Standards Team Leader has responsibility for the operation of the verification service and performance achievement.

Two Principal Building Standards Officers lead the service on a daily basis and will be supported by an Assistant Building Standards Officer on filling of this vacant post.

Technical and administrative support is provided by two Business Support Officers (one full time post shared equally with Planning and one part-time post dedicated to Building Standards) providing additional technical assistance.

The Service therefore comprises two managerial posts (with additional responsibilities for Planning, Roads, Economic Development and Environmental Health), three main grade posts and one and a third FTE business/technical support post.

The age profile of the service is:

AGE PROFILE			
Under 30	**30-39**	**40-49**	**Over 50**
0	0	2	4

The rising age profile of the service is a concern that it is hoped can be addressed in the recruitment of the Assistant Building Standards Officer vacancy and Graduate Apprenticeships opportunities.

The use of agency staff has been required to temporarily address difficulties experienced in the absence on long term sickness of a Principal Building Standards Officer, the subsequent departure of this member of staff and the recruitment of a suitable replacement. This period of staff shortage has extended from February 2018 until November 2019.

The Principal Building Standards Surveyors have significant experience and expertise, educated to degree level with Chartered professional membership of CABE. The vacant Assistant Building Standards Surveyor post will be filled with a similarly qualified person expected to work towards Chartered professional membership.

The administrative support for the Service comprises 1.35 (FTE) business support staff responsible for all technical and business support to professional Surveyors including the validation and registration of all applications, generation of all relevant documentation, correspondence and scanning to the Idox/Uniform document management system, the notification of building warrant etc approval, including electronic plan sharing where applicable, and all other aspects of the Building Standards Service including the operation of the Building Standards duty service comprising reception cover and dedicated enquiry telephone on a daily basis (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).

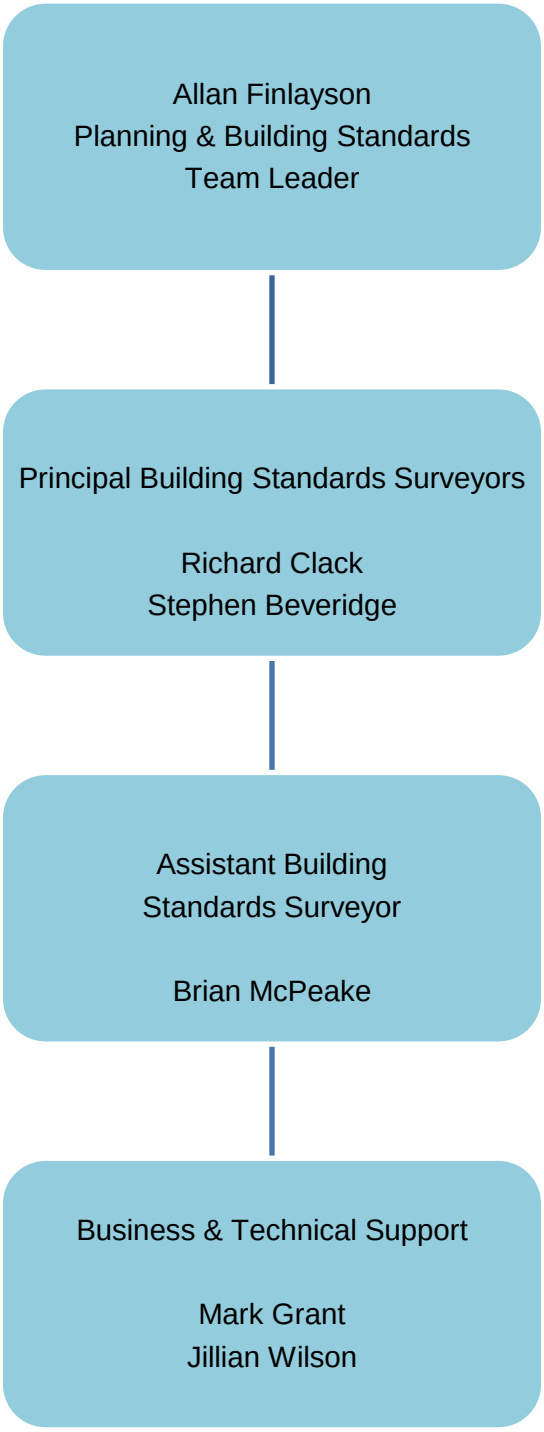
2. VERIFICATION SERVICE INFORMATION

Scottish Ministers have appointed Clackmananshire Council as sole verifier of building works in its geographical area. The council are responsible for the independent assessment and processing of applications for building warrant and completion certificate submissions.

The verification services and functions carried out include:

- Assessment and processing of applications for building warrant, including amendment to warrant applications, staged applications and extension to warrant applications.
- Inspection of approved building operations during construction and on completion.
- Assessment and processing of Completion Certificate submissions and applications.
- A regularisation service in relation to works undertaken without statutory consent or the necessary Completion Certificate.
- An advisory service to the Council's Licensing Section for Houses in Multiple Occupation, Temporary Raised Structures and Premises requiring a Liquor Licence.
- A 24 hour emergency call out service to investigate reported Dangerous Buildings.
- Search and copying of Building Warrant documents (subject to conditions).
- Maintain a building standards register containing information on building warrants amendment to warrants, application decisions, completion certificate submissions and decision details.
- Provide a Building Standards Duty service for advice and guidance (9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday).

Organisational Chart (Team) - Figure 2



3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Service vision and objectives

The key issues for Development & Environment Services reflect the challenges and opportunities of Clackmannanshire Council as a whole. Development Service's vision is for safe and sustainable communities where individual citizens can achieve their potential.

SERVICE OBJECTIVES	
1 *	Provide excellent Development & Environmental Services which protect the health, safety, and welfare of people living, working and visiting Clackmannanshire
2	Ensure that every household in our area has access to good quality and affordable homes that meets their needs
3 *	Promote economic growth and inward investment while protecting and enhancing the natural and built heritage of Clackmannanshire
4	Facilitate the movement people and goods within Clackmannanshire by a choice of travel modes through a transportation network that is safe, accessible, well maintained and well integrated

* Items 1 & 3 are linked to the function and services carried out by the Building Standards Team

Service Links to Corporate Priority Outcomes

Clackmannanshire Council Corporate Plan 2018-22 – "Be the Future" outlines the following Council priorities;

- ❖ Inclusive Growth, Jobs & Employability
- ❖ Reducing Child Poverty
- ❖ Raising Attainment
- ❖ Sustainable Health & Social Care
- ❖ Empowering Families & Communities
- ❖ Organisational Transformation

Council priorities relating to Inclusive Growth, Jobs and Economy; Raising Attainment; Empowering Families and Communities and Organisational Transformation can all be linked to the function and services carried out by the Building Standards Service.

Service issues to be addressed in the coming year

The Building Standards service will be best achieved by the continued appointment of Clackmannanshire Council as sole verifier for the Authority area. The re-appointment of the Council as verifier until 2020 is validation that the Council is achieving the standards required by Scottish Government's Operating and Performance Frameworks for Verifiers.

The main priority for Clackmannanshire Council's Building Standards service in the coming year is to ensure that it continues to meet both Frameworks and seeks to implement continuous improvement.

Significant challenges to the achievement of these aims have been experienced by the service over the period since February 2018. Since that time a Principal Building Standards Officer was absent though illness for a period of one year before subsequently leaving the Council. These circumstances have effectively resulted in the loss of 33% of the verification service over this period.

The focus of the service over this extended period has therefore been targeted on maintaining performance targets with a lesser emphasis on continuous improvement. Performance targets have been achieved as a result of the commendable commitment of all verification staff over a lengthy and challenging period.

In continuing to meet both Frameworks and implement continuous improvement the Council is currently seeking to recruit the vacant Principal Building Standards Officer post at a lower grade as required by the Council's budget for 2019-20. The recruitment of this vacant post has not been straightforward given well documented challenges to recruitment within the Building Standards profession in Scotland.

In addition and also required by the Council's budget plans, the embedded business/technical support officers have been incorporated within the service in August 2019. This change presents an opportunity to implement service improvements not previously possible in the current centralised delivery of business support.

Strategic Objectives for the coming year

The key strategic objective for Clackmannanshire Councils Building Standards Service in 2019-20 is the continued alignment of service performance to Scottish Government's verification Operating Framework and verification Performance Framework. This annual Verification Report evaluates performance in 2018-19 against verifier requirements and identifies the actions and continuous improvements in 2019-20 which will be necessary to satisfy continued verification appointment.

Key strategic objectives will be achieved by undertaking of the following actions:

- Continue to deliver obligations of the National Performance Framework
- Maintain existing high performance levels with a future focus on continuous improvement following successful recruitment
- Continued participation in partnership working with Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS)
- Continued participation in partnership working with Building Standards Central Authorities Consortium.

4. KEY PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES AND TARGETS

The national verification performance framework is based on three core areas;

- 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	
KPO 1	Minimise time taken to issue a first report or issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant
KPO 2	Increase quality of compliance during the construction process
Quality Customer Experience	
KPO3	Commit to the building standards customer charter
KPO4	Understand and respond to the customer experience
Operational and Financial Efficiency	
KPO 5	Maintain financial governance
KPO 6	Commit to eBuilding Standards
KPO 7	Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report

Summary of Key Performance Targets

KPO 1 Targets	
1.1	95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including building warrants 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 issued without a first report).
KPO 2 Targets	
	Targets to be developed as part of a future review
KPO 3 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.
KPO 4 Targets	
4.1	Minimum overall average satisfaction rating 7.5 out of 10
KPO 5 Targets	
5.1	Building Standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).
KPO 6 Targets	
6.1	Details of eBuilding Standards to be published prominently of 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
KPO 7 Targets	
7.1	Annual performance report published prominently on the verifier's 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).

5. PERFORMANCE DATA

Our **Annual Performance Report and Quarterly Performance Data** are held on a dedicated page on our website and can be accessed at the link above. This page is updated on a regular 3 month basis

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 following table provides information relating to the previous 12 months (2018/2019).

Building warrants and amendments to building warrant	
Applications	**357**
Decisions	**229**
Completion certificates	
Submissions	**463**
Decisions	**391**
Certification	
Certificates to design submitted	**114**
Certificates of construction submitted	**56**
Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's)	
Copy of certificates received (domestic)	**83**
Copy of certificates received (non domestic)	**2**
Statements of Sustainability	
Copy of certificates received (domestic)	**82**
Copy of certificates received (non domestic)	**1**
Enforcement	
Notices served under sections 25 to 30	**1**
Cases referred to procurator fiscal	**0**
Cases where LA has undertaken work	**1**

6. PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE AND TECHNICAL PROCESSES

The Building Standards Team is responsible for administering all aspects of the Building (Scotland) Act and subsidiary legislation on behalf of Clackmannanshire Council.

Protocols for Dealing with Work

Building Standards operate agreed risk management procedures for the allocation and assessment of building warrant applications, site inspections and completion submissions from receipt to decision in accordance with a risk assessment matrix. This process ensures that risk is managed and monitored aligning complexity of work with the skills, qualifications and experience of staff.

Performance Management Systems

Performance management is achieved through the utilisation of close team working assisted by performance management tools. These are regularly monitored and reviewed in order to satisfy the Performance Improvement Framework agreement to ensure delivery of Key Performance Outcome (KPO) requirements in performance reporting to Scottish Government Building Standards Division (BSD) and meeting agreed Verification targets.

High levels of performance achievement is assisted by the following examples of technology solutions:

- IDOX electronic document management system
- IDOX Uniform case management database
- IDOX Enterprise case handling project manager
- IDOX mobile working solutions (nearing implementation)
- Development of in-house electronic plan sharing solution

Training and Development CPD

The service embraces the Council's Training Needs Analysis (TNA) which ordinarily incorporates twice yearly formal reviews. This permits two way dialogue between staff member and manager to identify any training development or operational needs and address any issues impacting on the quality, effectiveness or efficiency of the services provided. In addition CPD events are attended in collaboration with private sector colleagues, consortium group members and in house Council services.

The Council is has recently reviewed TNA to introduce an electronic base approach with the intention of making it easier to identify training needs, request training opportunities and manage training.

Examples of how training and development is currently achieved for staff is provided below:

- TNA fulfilment to identify individual training needs
- LABSS meeting attendance for all staff
- LABSS Central Consortia technical working group attendance and contribution
- Attendance at specialist training events as required
- Targeted training to align with Performance Framework Agreement

7. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

Service improvements undertaken and planned are summarised below and are measured against all KPO's and performance targets.

In the previous year (2019/2020) we completed the following continuing Service improvement actions;

No	Continuous Improvement Plan	Status
1	Migrated towards a hosted IDOX/UNIform case handling system	Complete
2	Implemented IDOX Enterprise case handling management system	Complete
3	82% of BW and CC applications now received electronically	Complete
4	Submitted KPO reporting info contained in the Performance Framework	Complete
5	Customer Charter and review programme published on our website	Complete
6	Register of Compliance and Enforcement published on our website	Complete
7	Demonstration of our plan sharing solution with Falkirk and Stirling Councils and implemented refined improvements following shared discussion	Complete
8	Recruit an Assistant Building Standards Surveyor	Complete

In the current year (2020/2021) we will implement the following continuous Service improvement actions;

No	Continuous Improvement Plan	Status
1	Seek to improve current high levels of existing performance once full staffing is achieved	Ongoing
2	Develop additional Enterprise tasks to improve workflow	Ongoing
3	Trial IDOX mobile working solutions to improve on-site reporting and casework handling	Ongoing
4	Implement TNA and CPD for all Building Standards staff	Ongoing
5	Review business support processes following integration within Service to identify opportunities for Service improvement	Ongoing

Succession Planning

The Council's performance review and development (TNA) process identifies any training and development needs from the perspective of both the employee and the employer. This process is designed to enhance and progress staff member's skills, knowledge and experience.

Training and development issues are identified within the Building Warrant process risk matrix. Procedures are in place which include the mentoring of team members to expand their knowledge and experience to allow them to deal with more complex casework.

The service recognises the advanced age profile of staff and has sought to address this in the recruitment process following the loss of a Principal Building Standards Surveyor in January 2019. Council budget savings required that this post would be replaced with a lower grade post.

A re-evaluation of the Service structure has therefore been undertaken to promote an internal Building Standards Surveyor to a Principal post taking on additional responsibilities. The vacant Building Standards post was subsequently advertised as an Assistant Building Standards Surveyor and has now been filled by a younger person and now offers the potential for career progression.

In addition to the above the integration of previously embedded Business Support officers (1.5 posts) to within the Service as part of Council savings initiatives has provided the opportunity to develop these posts with an enhanced Building Standards focus. It is also hoped that this may provide the opportunity to develop these posts in participation with the LABBS graduate apprentice proposals for which the Council has confirmed interest in.

8. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Service will continue to champion the benefits and promote and support the work of the Building Standards Division, Local Authority Building Standards for Scotland, Central Authorities Consortium Group and other Council services in providing quality local authority services.

The service contributes towards the Central Authority Consortium Technical Group and participates in joint training and interpretational debates to establish a consistent approach and interpretation and the production of jointly prepared guidance documents used within the consortium's geographical area.

The service has plans to re-introduce its Customer Forum Group/Meetings which have not been held within the last few years as a result of lack of confirmed interest from customers. Whilst this is considered to be an indication of the general satisfaction of our customers with service provision we remain committed to re-introducing this initiative.

Within the small Building Standards Team regular discussion and agreement is reached regarding technical/interpretational issues. All significant issues debated are also referred to the Central Authorities Consortium Technical Working Group should further discussion be necessary to establish a consistent agreement throughout the geographical area covered by the consortium. Matters of significant/national importance can be directed to LABSS and/or BSD.

In the previous year (2018/2019) we worked in partnership with;

- Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS)
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Falkirk Council, North Lanarkshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Stirling Council as part of the Central Authorities Consortia Group

In the coming year (2019/2020) we will continue the above partnership working and:

- Enhance working on CPD and local training in conjunction with the Council's new TNA
- Re-participate in LABSS and BSD technical working once full staffing is achieved
- Undertake enhanced customer satisfaction research
- Undertake a developer/agent/customer workshop to engage on issues raised and general Building Standards matters
- Investigate the potential to provide verification service assistance to other approved verifiers

9. QUALITY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Customer Communication Strategies

The Service seeks to communicate and engage with customers and stakeholders through a variety of channels including:

- Council's website - information on Services and performance
- Social media
- Local press
- Targeted awareness campaigns
- Face to face
- Consultations
- Letter, e-mail
- Marketing, public forums, residents and business forums

In addition, there are several corporate approaches in place to allow customers and stakeholders to feed back to use on our service delivery. These include: MP & MSP enquiries, Councillor enquiries, complaints, compliments and FOIs.

Our web pages provide information, guidance and relevant documentation and also provide a facility to submit electronic enquiries. The Council's Contact Centre (phone contacts) provides "one stop shop" point of contact and forwards messages to Building Standards Team members when they are unavailable. We provide direct contact numbers for relevant staff on all documents and guidance to assist direct public contact.

Charter (Local/National)

The Council's Corporate Customer Charter is available online at the link below or in hard copy format. When requested it outlines what the Charter is, the key commitments to the customer and highlights service standards and consistency with the national approach.

https://www.clacks.gov.uk/site/documents/councilperformance/customercharter/

Engagement (National and Local Forums)

The Building Standards Team is committed to and regularly engages with Scottish Government, BSD, LABSS, other agencies, consortium groups, other authorities, fellow professionals or customers and agents.

Accessibility of Service

Access to the Building Standards Service is available through a number of routes; personal contact (office or site location), telephone, email, web or by hard copy correspondence.

The Council operates flexible working between the hours of 8am and 6pm and when a Building Standards Surveyor is unavailable messages are relayed via the Council's Contact Centre or Building Standards Business Support colleagues.

The introduction of eBuilding Standards has provided customers with the ability to electronically submit Building Warrant application and supporting information 24-7.

Telephone messages received are recorded including data on date, time, subject matter together with response information included in order to address any complaints which may be received and to allow management monitoring.

10. OPERATIONAL & FINANCIAL EFFICIENCY

Team Structure

Being the smallest mainland authority in Scotland the Team has been structured (see fig 2) to meet the needs and reasonable expectations of our customers.

The Team, in its entirety is based at the Council Headquarters, Kilncraigs. The County is divided in two geographical areas each having a Principal Building Standards Surveyor who will be assisted with the shared resource of the Assistant Building Standards Surveyor once recruited.

In addition to the general geographical split, workload is apportioned relative to risk, experience and caseload in accordance with the agreed risk matrix process.

Time Recording System

The Team operates a computerised time recording system which produces reports which can accommodate any time period required for monitoring purposes. The present system does not record time relative to individual case files.

Financial

The Building Standards financial processes are regulated under the auditing and accounting protocols of the Council's Finance Section and external auditing regimes.

Budgets are set annually through a "budget challenge" process where senior management may challenge budget proposals submitted by other sections of the Council to achieve best value.

Cost centres are created with unique ledger codes to allow accurate recording of all costs associated with the Building Standards Team.

Budget monitoring occurs monthly with the Building Standards Team Leader, Line Manager and Service Accountant present which highlights any anomalies or exceptions to the expected expenditure and fee income.

I.T Systems

The Building Standards Team utilise Idox/Uniform software for both the statutory and non-statutory services provided by the Team. The migration to a “hosted” Idox/Uniform system was introduced in late 2018 as part of Service improvement plans and wider Council savings. Significant pressure was placed on Business Support staff in the configuration and testing of this migration process over an extended period of 6 months. However the introduction of this “hosted” service and associated improvements such as the introduction of the Enterprise case handling solution are now realising improvements to service delivery and will enable the future development of further improvements such as the implementation of the mobile case handling system currently being evaluated.

The national key performance outcomes have necessitated an upgrade and customisation of these software packages and consequent redesign of internal procedures. Information recorded on these packages will also interface with the Council's Corporate performance monitoring system called “Pentana”. Monthly performance monitoring by senior managers/Councillors is now possible.

The Service has continually developed its own web platform for Building Standards as development of Scottish Governments eDevelopment has continued to evolve to ensure consistency with nationally applied approaches to modernisation of the Building Standards Service and electronic plan sharing, checking and issuing.

Internal Communication Strategies

Clackmannanshire Council has adopted an internal communications strategy based on the following:

- Senior Management/Management Team Meetings
- Weekly electronic bulletins
- Information released through the Council's Communications Unit

The management and team meetings allows for 2 way communication of information through the Council.

All Council staff participate in the Council's TNA processes therefore in addition to the normal staff meetings, 6 monthly one to one meetings are organised for staff and line managers to discuss any issues of concern.