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Working together for Orkney

Welcome to the Council Plan for 2023-2028, which charts the direction of your Council through the next five years and beyond. “Working together for Orkney” is our mission, and this plan sets out how we will deliver our shared ambitions for Orkney’s future to deliver the very best for our Community.

Our plan doesn’t cover the wide range of services across the Council that are delivered daily but provides clear direction and focus on some key strategic priorities that we will work towards and the positive impact we will make for our community. We are in uncertain times and recognise the impact the cost of living crisis is having. In the short term the Council will continue to consider providing support and work with our Community Planning Partners and the cost of living taskforce group to identify further help and support to those who need it. With the impact of the cost of living crisis likely to continue for some time, the first couple of years of this plan could be the most challenging and we will focus efforts on supporting our community and local businesses.

However, it’s important to emphasise that the critical core services we deliver are always our top priority and we will continue to maintain those that are high quality and improve the standards of others throughout the life of this plan.

This plan aims to look beyond these hard times and focus on our improvement and development ambitions which can help improve our local economy. The Council will therefore further explore delivery of strategic projects to identify those that could provide additional income to fund services or contribute to economic growth in our community. We know that much of Orkney’s future economic growth will come from our flourishing renewables sector and many of tomorrow’s jobs will be in the green and blue economies, on land and at sea. Our task as a Council is to make sure that everyone in Orkney benefits from this transition, and no-one is left behind. To support growth, our infrastructure must be fit for purpose and we will be considering the potential to deliver some major projects during this time. We will be making important decisions on progressing with for example, the Community Wind Farms, the Islands Deal and the Harbours Masterplan. In addition, we need to ensure that everything we do makes a contribution on our journey to Net Zero.

It’s fair to say that we have set out an ambitious plan but recognise the need to review regularly and remain flexible and adapt to the prevailing circumstances over the next 5 years.

Many of our communities have their own plans and aspirations, and we will support them to pursue their aims. We will protect the most vulnerable in our community and ensure that everyone has a fair share in Orkney’s future prosperity.

The Council too must be fit for purpose. We have seen major change and challenge during the pandemic and we have emerged more versatile, mobile and adaptable in how we do things. Like all employers we must attract and retain the best staff, and building a sustainable workforce is an essential part of our plan. We will invest in our employees, transform our working practices and streamline our property estate to optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of everything we do.

A vital part of the Council’s job is to lobby for Orkney in national forums. Our campaign for better transport and digital connectivity will not stop until our services are the equal of anywhere in the world. We are gearing up for further change and challenge in such areas as social care, energy, housing, land reform and climate change, and we are ready to champion Orkney every step of the way.

Whatever lies ahead, you can be certain that your Council will be working together tirelessly to secure the best possible future for you and your community.



James Stockan
Council Leader



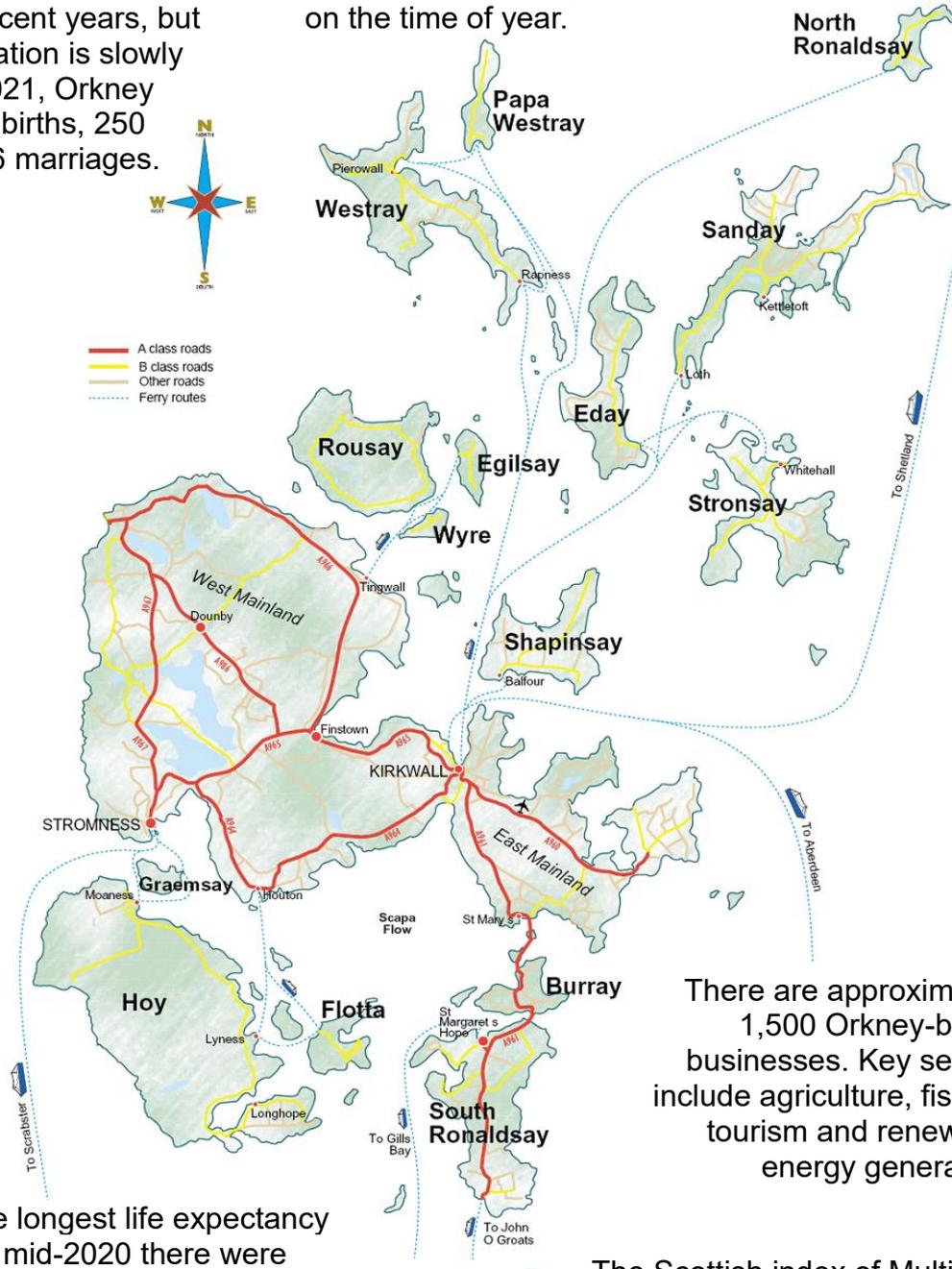
John W Mundell
Interim Chief Executive

Orkney and our community

Orkney's estimated population in mid-2020 was 22,400, occupying 10,635 households. The Orkney Mainland population has increased in recent years, but the isles population is slowly declining. In 2021, Orkney registered 169 births, 250 deaths and 116 marriages.

Orkney comprises 70+ islands and skerries, with a total land area of 1000km². Around 19 islands are inhabited, depending on the time of year.

Employment rates in Orkney are high, with only 250 people (1.9%) claiming unemployment-related benefits in January 2022.



Orkney has the longest life expectancy in Scotland. In mid-2020 there were approximately 2,519 people aged 75 or over, 11% of the overall population. By 2028, this is forecast to rise to 3,221, or 14.4% of the population.

There are approximately 1,500 Orkney-based businesses. Key sectors include agriculture, fishing, tourism and renewable energy generation.

The Scottish index of Multiple Deprivation shows that Orkney's most prosperous areas are St Ola (East of Kirkwall) and North Stromness, while the highest levels of deprivation are found in Kirkwall and the ferry-linked isles.

The strategic context of the Council Plan

In formulating the Council Plan, Elected Members must take many factors into account. As well as the Orkney public's priorities, gathered through consultation and engagement, the plan reflects the core services which the Council provides day to day. It must take account of new duties arising in legislation and regulation, together with improvements recommended by audit and inspection teams. The plan also includes a small number of long-term actions carried over from the previous council plan.

The Council works closely with its community planning partners through the Orkney Partnership. Five agencies share in the facilitation of the Partnership: the Council, NHS Orkney, Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Many others help to steer the collective planning and delivery of services through membership of the Orkney Partnership Board. Orkney's Community Plan (which incorporates our statutory Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) addresses the strategic priorities which need concerted partnership action, while individual partner plans - such as the Council Plan - set out the priorities and actions to be delivered by that particular agency.

All of our plans take into account the strategic context set by the UK and Scottish Governments. The Council must navigate the policy areas reserved by the UK Government under its own control (e.g. defence and telecommunications) as well as those devolved to Scottish Government control (e.g. health and education). We willingly support UK and Scottish national policy where it furthers our ambitions for Orkney. Renewable energy development has generated significant inward investment and Orkney is a major contributor to achieving Scotland's net zero target. The National Islands Plan has focused attention on many areas of critical importance to Orkney, including demographic balance, transport and housing. However, we will always challenge national policy where it disadvantages Orkney or has unforeseen consequences for island communities, and the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 has given us new powers with which to hold Scottish Ministers to account.

A long-term ambition of the Council is to create a Single Public Authority for Orkney. This would see multiple public agencies formally joined together to reduce bureaucracy, merging their governing bodies and senior management in order to free up more resources for local front-line services. We will explore this concept further during the lifetime of this plan.

The Council Plan does not sit in on its own. There is an accompanying Delivery Plan which describes some of the projects, services and policies which will progress our priorities and achieve tangible outcomes for Orkney. There are linked strategies and plans which support the delivery of the Council Plan. Examples of these are listed below but there are many more:

- Orkney Child Poverty Strategy 2022 – 2026.
- Orkney's Children's Services Plan 2021-23.
- The Orkney Play Area Strategy.
- The Orkney Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 – 2022.
- Orkney Islands Council Carbon Management Programme 2016-2026.



Strategic context | affordability

We live in uncertain times. The Council must budget for the continuing impact of Brexit, socio-economic recovery from COVID-19 restrictions and an unpredictable geo-political environment. Funding pressures are likely to be acute during the lifetime of this plan.

We are already seeing inflation rates not experienced since the early 1980s with rates being pushed up by supply shortages in fuel, components and materials. The Scottish Government, who provide the majority of the Council's funding, are unlikely to raise funding to meet these pressures. Ultimately there will be real terms funding reductions. Add to that interest rates at levels not seen since 2008, resulting in increased costs of borrowing and difficult decisions to make if we are to deliver on this plan.

What can we do then? We have reserves: we need to maximise the return from our investments as more and more, year on year, these are required to maintain front-line service provision. But, as well as an investment return, can we make the reserves work more effectively for us? We have to find efficiencies: not necessarily cuts, but better ways to do things: to make it easier for customers to access services and for staff to do their jobs, increase service-user contact time when necessary. We have to sell Orkney: promote it, develop industries, attract inward investment, create jobs and, in general, develop and maintain an economically active population.

Not every decision will be popular, but all are made with the Orkney people, its communities, its heritage and its environment at their heart. We must strive to create a sustainable future for us all to live in, and a legacy for those who follow. It's a difficult balancing act.

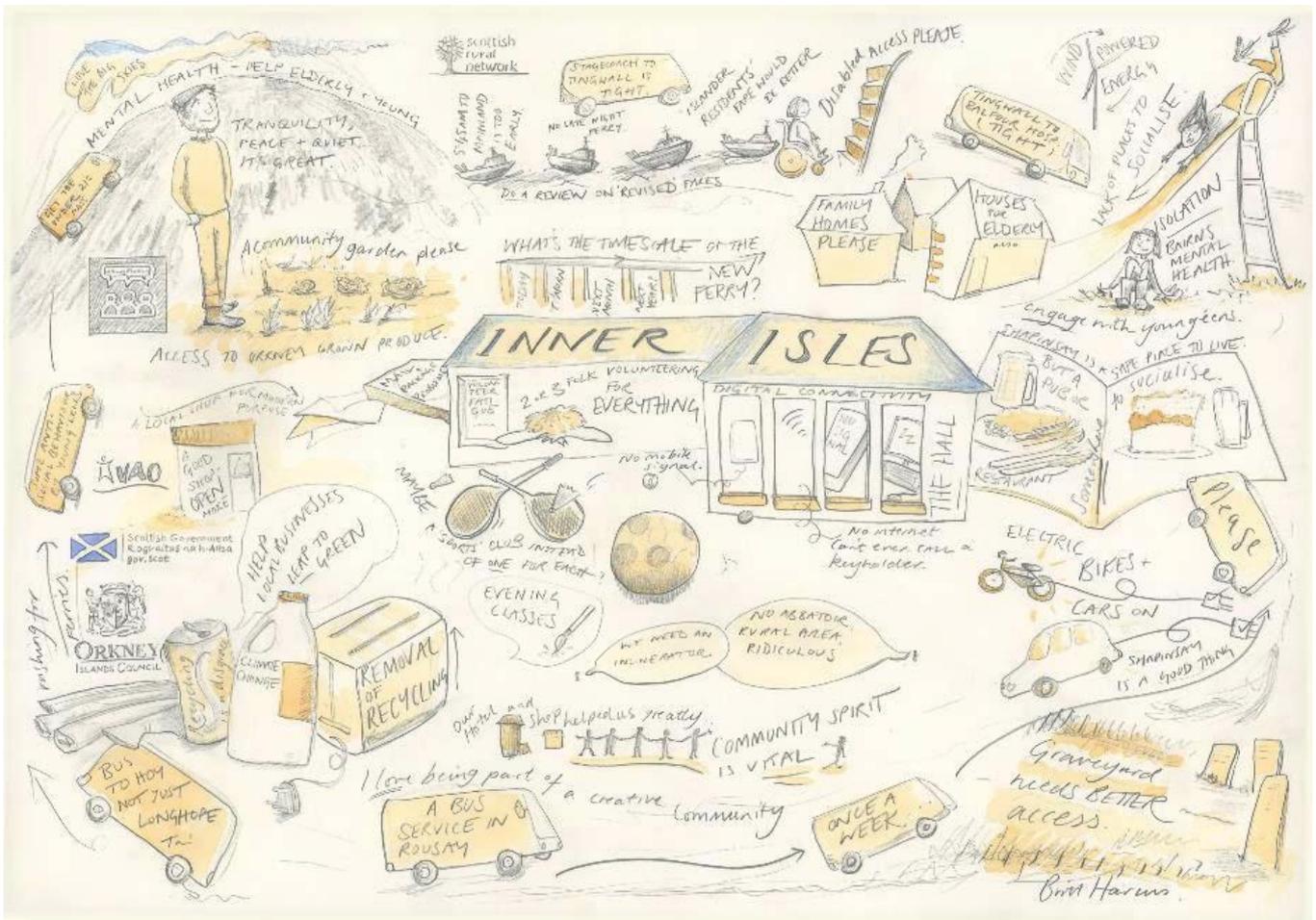


You said, we did: How Orkney's communities formed this plan

The Council keeps in regular contact with communities in Orkney via channels such as social media, local radio and regular press releases. We consult individuals and community bodies in detail on specific topics when developing new plans and policy. And importantly, members of the public are always welcome to contact their local ward councillors who are keen to discuss issues of interest or concern to them.

Consultation to inform this plan was carried out in two stages. The first stage took place between October 2021 and March 2022, when the Council, Voluntary Action Orkney and the LEADER Local Action Group jointly conducted an extensive consultation exercise under the banner "Orkney Matters". This comprised of a questionnaire, a series of online meetings, and dedicated sessions for schools and community groups which used art to engage with people less likely to respond through regular channels. The second stage was a public consultation on the draft plan itself, which was conducted during December 2022 and January 2023, prior to the finalisation of the plan.

Between these two stages, Council candidates listened to the views of their future constituents during the local election campaign of May 2022. Incoming Elected Members of the Council brought those conversations to the table during the development of this plan, ensuring that the most pressing priorities of the Orkney public were very much to the fore.



Orkney Matters recorded the views of all of Orkney’s communities, including residents of the ferry-linked isles, young people and lesser heard voices. The survey found that the main priorities overall were:

Orkney Matters: your priorities

- Consultation fatigue and communication
- Volunteer fatigue
- Single community-led plan for each community
- Housing
- Digital connectivity
- Climate change
- Transportation
- Sense of community
- Enjoyment of Orkney’s outdoors and the environment
- Equality
- Health
- Economic opportunities

Some of these issues require concerted action by multiple partner agencies and have been selected as strategic priorities by the Orkney Partnership under the headings of Cost of Living, Sustainable Development and Local Equality. The Partnership’s collective plans to address these priorities can be found in the new Community Plan (also called the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) for 2023-30. Other issues are matters primarily for the Council to address, and these have been included in this new Council Plan.

National consultation also played a part in the development of this plan. A total of 790 Orkney residents participated in the first National Islands Plan survey, conducted in October 2020, answering questions on their experience of employment and business opportunities, transport, housing, fuel poverty, digital connectivity, health, social care, the environment, climate change, culture and education. The survey is due to be repeated in 2023 and every two years thereafter for the lifetime of the National Islands Plan. Results are published online with responses from Orkney Mainland and Isles respondents split out, making this a useful resource for measuring future progress. Our plan includes an action to improve our consultation and engagement practice in response to Orkney Matters, taking advantage of new online channels where people prefer to use them, but not forgetting the need for traditional methods. Sometimes, there is no substitute for a proper talk, in person, over a cup of tea.

Our strategic priorities

The strategic priorities in this plan explain how the Council will work to improve the lives of the people of Orkney.

In addition to the flagship projects in the Council Plan, the Council provides a wide range of core services all year round. Some of these are very visible, like schools, roads and waste collection, while others are there in case of need, such as social work services. These are all things which the Council must provide by law, either directly or commissioned from partner providers.

It's important to emphasise that maintaining the critical core services we deliver is always our top priority and we will endeavour to maintain or improve the standards of them throughout the life of this plan. A key element of this is to make our processes as efficient as possible to ensure as much financial resource is targeted to front line services as possible.

There is very little money left over after our essential services have been paid for, but we make savings where we can, and sometimes additional resources can be raised from external sources.

Councillors are committed to spending any extra money on projects and activities which will make the most difference to local communities, in line with the strategic priorities they have chosen. These vital projects are outlined with the accompanying Delivery Plan with the action required to maintain core services captured within Directorate Action Plans.

This Council plan therefore describes our pledges to you over the next five years.

The Council pledges to:

- 
Maintain our existing high standards of service wherever possible.
- 
Improve services and outcomes for the people of Orkney where needed.
- 
Develop and deliver projects for the benefit of our communities.

This pledge will be delivered through a number of aims and outcomes. These have been grouped under three priority themes. The aspirational outcomes outline the positive changes we are working towards for the benefit of our communities. These will be underpinned by a number of priorities under an overall theme of Transforming our Council to provide the foundations for staff to deliver outstanding customer service and performance.



The three priority themes are underpinned by core principles which will guide future decision making across all our aims.

- Protecting our environment and combating climate change.
- Equality, fairness and inclusion.
- Sustainable and accessible services for all.
- Community wellbeing and mental health.
- Community wealth building for future generations.

Growing our Economy

This plan has been written at a time when economic pressures are one of the biggest concerns for our entire population. Whether it is political uncertainty, falling global markets and pension funds, the post-Covid ‘normal’ or the cost of living crisis, the economy, at one level or another, is at the forefront of everyone’s mind. Some of our core industries, such as fishing, farming, food and drink and tourism, have been particularly hit hard by the pandemic and current economic crisis and it’s imperative that the right support is identified.

Despite these challenging market conditions, this plan seeks to deliver inclusive and sustainable growth that creates jobs: tackling poverty through creating opportunities for individual and collective advancement.

We need to create a diverse and thriving economy which helps us retain our young people and attracts new economically active people to our islands, allowing us to be more self-reliant. This will include balancing the protection of Orkney’s unique environment with realistic innovative developments which can generate a return for the communities which support those businesses.

We need to maximise inward investment to counter the impact of public funding cuts and upskill our workforce whilst reducing the environmental footprint we leave behind. We are committed to the principle of Community Wealth Building and to the development of Orkney’s Circular Economy, helping us to retain the value that we generate for the benefit of future generations of Orcadians.

Aim	Outcome
<p>We will reduce poverty and disadvantage and minimise the impact of the cost of living crisis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support is targeted to those at most risk from the cost of living crisis. • We have reduced persistent poverty and socio-economic disadvantage. • The benefits of economic growth are shared.  <p>Poverty</p>
<p>We will create favourable conditions for sustainable economic growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local businesses in key sectors are thriving and generating better employment opportunities. • Inward investment to Orkney is increased across vital growth areas. • Our economy grows in a sustainable way that balances social and environmental priorities. • We have a growing economically active population.  <p>Economic growth</p>
<p>We will drive toward net zero.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orkney is on track for Net Zero by 2030. • The Council has reduced the carbon used through its direct and indirect activities. • We have grown our low carbon green and blue economies. • Everyone in Orkney has reduced their personal carbon footprint.  <p>Carbon usage</p>

Strengthening our Communities

We have a strong sense of community across Orkney and this is one of our key strengths. We want to build on this by giving people a real say in the decisions that matter most to them and we want to work with communities so that they feel in control of this and can influence decisions that affect them.

We will encourage our communities to grow at the pace they choose and help them attract the skills, assets and people they need to ensure their viability and future sustainability. To ensure that inequalities are not widened further, we will direct targeted support, resources and opportunities towards those most in need.

A key element of this theme is developing skills and knowledge and improving the educational offer beyond schools into further and higher education. This covers a wide range of topics that will meet the needs of our local community and businesses whilst preserving our culture and heritage for generations to come. Orkney is unique in having a locally controlled college, Orkney College (UHI), with the flexibility to meet emerging local needs through further education and higher education in partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands.

We recognise that this theme links across to all the other themes in our Council Plan, as well as to the strategic priorities in Orkney’s Community Plan. We will work together with partners and communities to combine existing skills, knowledge and assets in our chosen priority areas.

Aim	Outcome
<p>We will support communities to develop local solutions and deliver what is important to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with communities is effective and clearly influences decisions and drives improvement. Communities feel in control of their priorities and the decisions that affect them.  <p>Community Satisfaction</p>
<p>We will establish the highest standards of public support and protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More people live independently with increased choice over support and services. We invest in proactive measures to prevent harm and improve life chances for those in need. Everyone shares responsibility for public support and protection.  <p>Quality of life</p>
<p>We will widen access to opportunities for better learning, achievement and wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our public spaces and environment promote the wellbeing of our communities. All learners are being actively supported to reach their potential. Access to opportunities will be fairer and more equitable. Our cultural heritage is invested in to preserve and enhance our unique identity.  <p>Attainment</p>

Developing our Infrastructure

Infrastructure is the nuts and bolts that support and hold our communities together: the buildings, transport, road and fibre networks that allow communities to thrive. Our infrastructure underpins everything we do.

Digitalisation, for example, is about more than connectivity: it is about supporting businesses to offer flexible and remote working opportunities; it is about developing our young people and employees with the skills to support businesses; and it is about ensuring all of our households have access to fulfil their work and leisure needs. Digitalisation in the form of TeleCare may enable older people and those with a disability to remain living in their own homes.

In some areas, development of our infrastructure will have an impact on existing core services such as housing and education. Meeting this additional need will be explored when decisions on major developments are being considered. These challenges sit alongside existing housing shortages across different tenures which has been identified as a major concern in our communities. We are already working hard to identify solutions and increase the provision of housing to meet the needs of our current, and future, residents.

We will continue to consider the development of long-term projects with strategic outcomes. The onshore wind projects at the three sites of Quanterness, Faray and Hoy will provide essential income to offset public funding cuts. The Harbours Master Plan identifies several projects bringing significant inward investment opportunities to our Islands. Lastly, the Islands Deal brings investment from both the UK and Scottish Government to the three Islands Authorities (Orkney, Western Isles and Shetland) with an ambitious programme for development. Orkney Islands Council fully supports the implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the National Islands Plan and the Growth Deal for the Islands.

Aim	Outcome
<p>We will invest in homes, supporting choice, inclusion and economic growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More quality homes across a range of tenures and locations, providing more choice. • Better energy efficiency of social and private housing. <div style="text-align: right;">  More homes </div>
<p>We will remove barriers to the delivery of critical transport and digital connectivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have the digital connectivity needed to support sustainability and equality across our communities. • Our critical transport infrastructure meets the needs of our communities. <div style="text-align: right;">  Improved Connectivity </div>
<p>We will invest in strategic projects that advance our economic ambitions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have delivered the Orkney Community Windfarms Project. • Vital projects identified within the Harbours Master Plan have been delivered. • We have secured investment funding and delivered 50% of the Islands Deal Programme. <div style="text-align: right;">  Construction completed </div>

Transforming our Council

To deliver the ambitions set out in this Council Plan, we need a workforce which is effective, engaged and adds value to everything that we do. That is why we are including a theme in the Council Plan that focusses on transforming our Council. We are committed to improving the services we provide and the ways that we provide them, as well as future-proofing our ability to meet the needs of our communities for many years to come.

We need to continue to attract, grow and retain the right people. We are working to find new solutions to the national skills and staffing shortage challenges that are impacting us locally. This means that we are looking at different ways to attract people, offering a variety of routes for people to come and work for us, and are supporting our employees to feel valued for the part they play in delivering our services for every member of our community, so that we can all take pride in working together for Orkney.

Our staff are an integral part of our communities and should reflect the diversity of those communities. We are transforming the way in which we work to put people at the heart of everything we do, offering choice and flexibility to meet the changing needs of our customers and service users.

Foundation to enable delivery

Aim	Outcome
<p>We will develop ways of working that put people at the heart of what we do.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our new guiding principles are evident in the way we do things. • Organisational barriers to change are minimised. • Our transparent governance arrangements are dynamic and make delivering the right things easy. • Our operational estate reflects the future needs of our communities and our organisation.
<p>We will establish a culture that motivates staff to do the right things at the right time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our leaders are confident in their role and we have a shared leadership culture. • Our employees feel invested in, valued and recognised. • We have created flexible pathways for talent at every level that help us sustain outstanding performance.
<p>We will develop fit for purpose business approaches and facilitate direct access to services wherever possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We design key services with communities from start to finish. • Our services are digital by design, efficient and automated, giving customers choice and control. • We have improved the quality of our data to support performance improvement. • We have diversified our funding base and have created the conditions for financial sustainability. • We have strengthened our national and international relations to advance the interests of Orkney and its community.

What will success look like?

We strive to be an outcomes-focussed and performance-driven Council, putting our community at the heart of everything we do. To achieve this, we have identified our four strategic priorities which we aim to deliver on over the course of this five-year plan.

To monitor and review progress we have developed performance measures and specified stretch targets for each theme. Some are aligned to measures in the Orkney Partnership’s Community Plan, and some are taken from the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) which allows us to compare our performance against the Scottish average and other similar councils. Furthermore, Council services produce their own information to monitor performance and inform decision making. Working with our services, we have chosen the key measures to evidence progress against our priorities and these will be reported on annually. In addition, our progress on the key projects we aim to deliver, and the targets we have set ourselves, will be regularly scrutinised by our Elected Members.

These measures are designed to stretch the Council as we strive to achieve our ambitions. Despite these uncertain times the Council must be bold in what we aim to achieve and not settle for simply maintaining the status quo.

The measures for success for each theme are:

Growing our Economy		
Measuring our success	Baseline 2020/21	Target 2027/28
Claimant Count as a percentage of Working Age Population LGBF - ECON 12a.	3%	2.5%
Employment Rate (16 to 24 years) LOIP.	82% 2020	90% 2027
Percentage of dwellings in Orkney in Fuel Poverty.	31%	19%
% of children living in poverty (after housing costs) LGBF CHN24.	18%	9%
Percentage of procurement spent on local enterprises LGBF ECON4.	38%	45%
Number of business gateway start-ups per 10,000 population LGBF ECON5.	16	20
CO2 emissions area wide per capita (in tonnes) LGBF CLIM1.	11	9
CO2 emissions area wide: emissions within scope of local authority per capita (in tonnes) LGBF CLIM2.	5	4

Strengthening our Communities

Measuring our success	Baseline 2020/21	Target 2027/28
Community Council satisfaction with their involvement in community development and engagement.	tbc*	tbc*
Percentage of adults supported at home who agree that they had a say in how their help, care or support was provided LGBF SW4d.	86%	93%
The percentage of adults supported at home who agree that their services and support had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life LGBF SW4b.	87%	93%
Percentage of Adult and Child Protection referrals made by the public new indicator.	tbc*	tbc*
Percentage of children being looked after in the community LGBF CHN9.	76%	85%
Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5 LGBF CHN4.	73%	80%
Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence level in literacy LGBF CHN13a.	68%	85%
Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence level in numeracy LGBF CHN13b.	75%	90%
Developing the Young Workforce measure	tbc*	tbc*
School attendance rate (looked after children) LGBF CHN19b.	2018/19 84%	96%
Proportion of pupils entering positive destinations LGBF CHN11.	97%	98%
Percentage of adults participating in some form of sport or exercise, including walking, in previous 4 weeks LOIP.	86%	90%

*Baselines and / or target to be established.

Developing our Infrastructure

Measuring our success		Baseline 2020/21	Target 2027/28
Percentage of Council dwellings meeting Scottish Housing Standards LGBF HSN3.		94%	tbc*
Percentage of Council dwellings that are energy efficient LGBF HSN5.		88%	90%
House build completions in Orkney, all sectors LOIP. Target and geographical breakdown to be identified as part of the housing needs analysis.		92	tbc*
Percentage of Orkney residents whose internet connection at home is fast enough to do what they want online LOIP.	Orkney Mainland	70%	90%
	Ferry-linked Isles	45%	65%
Percentage of Orkney residents who agree "When I make journeys to or from my home, it is easy connecting between different forms of transport" LOIP.	Orkney Mainland	46%	60%
	Ferry-linked Isles	29%	45%
Orkney Community Windfarm construction		n/a	tbc#
Harbours Master Plan vital projects		n/a	tbc#
Islands Deal Programme delivery %		0%	50%

*Baselines and / or target to be established.

#Target subject to relevant decisions and approvals.

Transforming our Council

Measuring our success	Baseline 2020/21	Target 2027/28
Level of Customer Satisfaction.	tbc*	tbc
OIC recognised as an Investors in People (IIP) Platinum Organisation	n/a	IIP achieved
Overall staff satisfaction with working at Orkney Islands Council.	tbc#	>80%
Staff satisfaction with our leadership style and culture.	tbc#	>80%
Percentage of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use LGBF CORP-ASSET1.	88%	90%
Actual outturn as a percentage of budgeted expenditure LGBF FINSUS5.	103%	100%
Recruitment and retention, staff turnover CCG 06	2021/22 5.14%	4%
Level of agency staff used in permanent posts as a % of staff time. New indicator	tbc	tbc
Sickness absence days per teacher LGBF CORP6a.	2021/22 8.2	6
Sickness absence days per employee (non-teacher) LGBF CORP6b.	2021/22 12.6	9

*Baseline to be established through Customer Service Survey

#Baselines to be established through Investors in People survey.

Impact assessment

UK and Scottish legislation requires public sector bodies to assess new plans and policies for their impact in three specific areas: equalities, the environment, and their effect on island communities. These statutory assessments must be developed in parallel with the plan and are works in progress until its publication. Impact assessment helps to identify any unintended consequences or differential effects of a proposed plan on particular stakeholder groups, and determine any mitigation which should be included in the plan to counter these effects. Impact assessment is particularly effective in revealing gaps in knowledge which can then be filled by consultation with the groups likely to be affected.

The purpose of Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the impact of a proposed plan or policy on groups of people with protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Protected characteristics include age, sex, race, disability and sexual orientation. Scottish councils must also comply with the Fairer Scotland Duty to consider the impact of a plan or policy on those who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The Council Plan is expected to improve outcomes for people of all age groups, with younger people benefiting from increased opportunities for families to stay in Orkney, and older people receiving more choice in support and services. Specific measures in the plan are proposed to benefit carers, people who are care experienced, those with disabilities and those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is designed to evaluate the environmental implications of plans and programmes. In Scotland, a strategic plan which sets priorities for future development, such as the Council Plan, should be submitted to the SEA Gateway for preliminary screening to determine whether a full SEA is required. The SEA process is advised by three statutory consultation authorities which in Scotland are NatureScot, Historic Environment Scotland and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). The Council has drafted an SEA Screening Report which indicates that the Council Plan would not benefit from full SEA because it is solely an outline strategic plan. Any project which is progressed further will be subject to SEA individually, and in much greater detail than is possible at this stage. The Screening Report will be submitted for consideration as soon as the draft plan is approved for consultation.

Island Communities Impact Assessment is unique to Scotland and was introduced in the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. Its purpose is to determine whether a plan or policy impacts differently on, or has unintended consequences for, any particular island community, compared with other island or mainland communities. Island residents must be consulted to establish their views on any perceived disadvantages to their communities, and any mitigation measures which they would like to be put in place. In Orkney, the Council routinely considers the impact of new policy on the ferry-linked isles, since these communities are the most likely to be disadvantaged. Our draft ICIA considers evidence from a range of sources, including Orkney Matters and the National Islands Plan survey, and notes some of the measures already in the draft Council Plan which are designed to improve equality of outcomes for isles communities. The plan also contains proposals which will improve outcomes for Orkney in general compared with Scottish mainland communities. We welcome further feedback during the consultation period to help improve the plan.