



Council Plan 2023 – 2028
Progress Report to 31 March 2026



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1. Introduction

The Council adopted an ambitious plan in 2023 to outline what our priorities were for the five-year period ahead, what we would do to address these priorities, and how we would measure our achievements.

This report details the Council's progress towards meeting the targets in the Council Plan 2023 – 2028, and progress towards completing the actions set out in the Council Delivery Plan 2023 – 2028, which will help us to meet those targets.



The Council Plan 2023 – 2028 was drafted at a time where there was a huge amount of uncertainty due to ongoing events such as the cost-of-living crisis. The priorities in our plan reflect some of that context.

We recognise the need to review the plan and remain flexible so we can adapt it to the changing circumstances over the life of the plan, and we will make changes to the plan in the 2026 mid-term review.

The strategic priorities in our plan have three key themes:

- **Growing our economy**
- **Strengthening our communities**
- **Developing our infrastructure**

The aims and outcomes under those themes are supported by a number of priorities under an overall theme – **Transforming our council** – to provide the foundations for staff to deliver outstanding customer service and performance.

Our Progress Report shows the most recent data available for the Performance Measures listed under each strategic priority in the Council Plan, and our progress towards achieving the projects under each priority in the Delivery Plan.

The detailed Delivery Milestones under each project are shown in the 2023 – 2028 Delivery Plan.

1.1 How we demonstrate progress

We use blue, red, amber and green status to show how we are progressing with the projects in our Council Delivery Plan, and we use red, amber and green status to show our assessment of the most up-to-date data we have relating to the performance measures in our Council Plan.

What each status means is shown below.

Delivery Projects BRAG System



Complete: we have achieved what we set out to achieve.



Progressing well: we expect to achieve what we set out to achieve.



Progress issues: we may not achieve what we expected.



Progress at risk: we are unlikely to achieve what we expected.

Performance Measures RAG System



We are missing our target for this performance measure, and there is a significant risk we will not meet our target without taking further action.



We are missing our target for this performance measure, and there is a low to moderate risk that we will not meet our target without taking further action.



We are likely to meet or exceed our target for this performance measure.

2 Growing our Economy.

2.1 Council Plan Performance Measures

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status		Target 2027/28
101	Claimant count as a percentage of Working Age Population	3%	1.9%		2.5%
The low claimant count is linked to the very high employment rate which is a result of multiple job opportunities and an aging population meaning fewer people in the labour market. Shortage of housing contributes to this as it can be difficult for people to move to Orkney to take up job opportunities.					
102	Employment (16 – 24 Years)	82%	88.3%		90%
Local Employability Partnership (LEP) partners are using local and national data to ensure young people not in employment are identified early and offered one to one or group support to meet their needs. There are a variety of partnership initiatives including Pathway Planning meetings, transition programmes, bespoke employability programmes, and careers fairs.					
103	Percentage of dwellings in Orkney in fuel poverty	31%	31%		19%
Our work in this area continues to be challenging due to ongoing energy costs and wider cost of living pressures. The Council is promoting energy efficiency in new and existing properties, alongside initiatives from the Community Planning Partnership, via the Cost-of-Living Taskforce, to support householders impacted by low incomes and high energy costs. Note – the most recent Orkney-specific data for this measure relates to the 2017–2019 Scottish House Condition Survey Local Authority Analysis, which estimated that 31% of households in Orkney were in fuel poverty. The most recent Scotland-wide data showed fuel poverty increased to 34% during 2023 before reducing to 28.7% in 2024.					
104	Percentage of children living in poverty (after housing costs)	18%	12.2 %		9%
Our progress towards reducing the number of children in poverty is challenging due to the cost-of-living crisis and this is the case across the country. Work is being done across the Community Planning Partnership, via the Cost-of-Living Taskforce, to address this, but increases in food and energy costs in recent years have meant that the number of children living in poverty has increased. This indicator is trending in the right direction although there is a lot of further work to be done. From 2023-24, changes in how the indicator is calculated meant that the percentage is not directly comparable with prior years.					
105	Percentage of procurement spent on local enterprise	38%	39.5%		45%
The Council ensures that support is promoted and made available for local suppliers to access procurement opportunities. On occasions however, the specification of a service					

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status	Target 2027/28
product required by the Council is able only to be met by suppliers based outwith Orkney.				
106	CO ₂ emissions area wide per capita (in tonnes)	5.64	5.43 	9
The Council recently published the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Delivery Plan and the project identified will contribute to reduced energy and use and a move to low carbon heating. The Council is also working with the Islands Centre for Net Zero (ICNZ) to develop projects to minimise emissions of three Island Groups. Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution (SSEPD) works on a new network interconnector will enable more renewable projects in Orkney. On Hoy, three electric minibuses have been acquired as part of the Carbon Neutral Islands Initiative. The statistics for this indicator are reported annually but the data provided is always for an earlier year, the data for this indicator reflects the status of the period 2023/24, this is the most recent data available.				
107	CO ₂ emissions area wide: emissions within scope of local authority area per capita (in tonnes)	4.47	4.24 	4
This year, the Council completed work on the new Kirkwall Care Home, Kirkjuvagr House, and the new Nursery; both projects are new build replacements for oil heated buildings and will result in significant carbon savings. Trials of an electric bin lorry have been undertaken as a demonstration of low carbon HGVs, in addition, the authority is working with partners Artemis Technologies to develop an electric passenger ferry service to serve the North Isles. The statistics for this indicator are reported annually but the data provided is always for an earlier year. The data for this indicator reflects the status for period 2023/24, this is the most recent data available.				

2.2 Council Delivery Plan Projects

E1i_Net-zero and de-carbonisation

Lead: Head of Enterprise and Economic Growth



Progress towards net-zero and the de-carbonisation of operations through:

- Working with partners in the renewable research and innovation community.
- Finalisation, approval and implementation of relevant actions in the Orkney Sustainable Energy Strategy and Action Plan.
- Supporting uptake of renewable energy, smart energy, or energy efficient solutions for homes and businesses.

Progress

The Islands Centre for Net Zero, funded through the Islands Growth Deal and situated within the European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC), has had its full business case approved and is operational. This is the key group where partners in the renewable, research and innovation community can work together to progress towards net-zero and the de-carbonisation of operations. Additionally, the Council is participating in the UK Government's Net-Zero Living project which is providing additional resource towards de-carbonisation activities. Decarbonisation of the Council's buildings and vehicles is progressing, and trials of electric hydrofoil ferries are now underway.

The Orkney Sustainable Energy Strategy Action Plan was approved by the Stakeholder Group in March 2024 (as a basis for further work) and a working group between public sector and industry is established.

In relation to Council operations, following an independent study, the net zero target has now been approved as 2045, with agreement to pursue a high ambition scenario and establish interim supporting targets. The Orkney Community Planning Partnership has also agreed a vision statement for Orkney.

E1ii_Net-zero and de-carbonisation

Lead: Head of Strategic Housing, Housing Operations and Homelessness



Progress towards net-zero and the de-carbonisation of operations through:

- Progressing delivery plan to meet Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2 by 2032 in line with Scottish Government priorities and availability of funding.
- Supporting uptake of renewable energy, smart energy, or energy efficient solutions for homes and businesses.

Progress

The Scottish Government has recalled their Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2 (ESSH2) guidance and consulted on a new Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS). The consultation closed in March 2024, and revised guidance is awaited.

In the meantime, the Council continues to report on progress against ESSH1. As at 31 March 2026, out of our stock of 1,054 properties, 988 achieved the standard. Of the remaining 66 properties, 29 were exempt and out-of-scope, leaving only 37 properties not achieving compliance – a compliance rate of 96%.

With respect to Council Housing properties, the service operates a fabric first approach to reduce the demand for heating housing. However, in preparation for the new guidance, a range of property types have benefited from insulation works to test solutions to improve energy performance.

E1iii_Net-zero and de-carbonisation

Lead: Head of Property and Asset Management



Progress towards net-zero and the de-carbonisation of operations through:

- Decarbonisation of Council buildings and properties with reference to the Scottish Government Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy.
 - a) Write the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy for Orkney and the Delivery Plan.

Progress

This action is now complete.

The Orkney Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (OLHEES) and the Delivery Plan were presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in February 2025 and thereafter approved by Council and subsequently submitted to Scottish Government.

E1iv_Net-zero and de-carbonisation

Lead: Head of Infrastructure Services



Progress towards net-zero and the de-carbonisation of operations by:

- Decarbonisation of vehicle fleet.

Progress

The team continues to monitor movement in the technology market and will take advantage of any opportunities that arise to bring in zero carbon vehicles: The Service Manager (Fleet), as part of their work to manage the overall fleet, has picked up the specific action around opportunities to decarbonise the vehicle fleet. The project to trial an electric HGV, through grant funding being managed by teams from Enterprise and Resources is now complete and lessons learned have been recorded. This is also being established as a key deliverable within the new Council Climate Strategy action plan.

E1v_Net-zero and de-carbonisation

Lead: Head of Planning and Regulatory Services



Progress towards net-zero and the de-carbonisation of operations by:

- The development and deployment of the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

Progress

The independent transition (net zero) study was completed and reported to Committee in February 2026. The Council has agreed a target of net zero by 2045 and to progress the highest ambition scenario described in the report.

E1vi_Net-zero and de-carbonisation

Lead: Head of Planning and Regulatory Services



Progress towards net-zero and the de-carbonisation of operations by:

- The evaluation of baseline data relating to the Council's carbon emissions in order to provide an accurate and consistent approach to the reporting and management of total corporate emissions.

Progress

This action is now complete.

A consultant has been appointed to undertake the independent study to identify indicative Council transition pathways to Net-Zero.

The first stage outputs from the study were reported to the Policy and Resources Committee in November 2025, and Council agreed recommendations regarding changes to the Council's emissions inventory and baseline.

The independent transition (net zero) study was completed and reported to Committee in February 2026. Work on the Climate Strategy and Action Plan is now proceeding.

E1vii_Net-zero and de-carbonisation

Lead: Head of Planning and Regulatory Services



Progress towards net-zero and the de-carbonisation of operations by:

- Working with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders to ensure that the benefits of the Carbon Neutral Islands project are shared across all other Orkney islands

Progress

An update report was presented to the Climate Change Consultative Group on 6 July 2023. Council Officers visited Hoy on 3 August 2023 to meet with the Carbon Neutral Islands (CNI) Project Officer to discuss projects emerging from the Hoy Climate Change Action Plan.

Scottish Government officials with responsibility for the CNI Project visited Hoy in June 2024 and met with Council Officers. The Hoy project benefits from co-ordination and alignment with wider carbon neutral projects taking place across Scottish islands and to support this. A Local Authority Advisory Group has been established with officer representation from across all relevant local authorities, including the Council. The Scottish Government has also established a 2024/25 Carbon Neutral Islands Capital Fund which is available to the 6 islands making up the CNI project. Whilst it has not been possible to submit any Hoy projects for the 2024 round of funding, work progressed and a successful project submission was made in 2025. This has secured replacement and electric mini-buses for the island.

Additional capital funding (via a developer donation) was provided from the Scottish Government for delivery of projects during 2025/26. This supported and extended the capability of the Council's asset replacement programme to deliver low carbon projects.

Support for local business (E2)



Lead: Head of Enterprise and Economic Growth

Update Supporting and investing in businesses across Orkney and working in partnership with our key industry sectors including:

- Addressing primary producer challenges including farming and fishing.
- Developing the blue / green economies and maximising support for innovation.
- Sustainable development of tourism, hospitality, and destination management.
- Encouraging SME business start-up and development.
- Supporting internationalisation and marketing for our key sectors.
- Developing mechanisms to support business uptake of renewable energy, smart energy, and energy efficiency solutions.
- Enabling Orkney to tap into the opportunities presented by renewable energy developments, particularly offshore wind, by supporting development of the local supply chain including research and development and innovation activity.

This includes supporting the circular economy and community wealth building principles.

Progress

The Enterprise and Resources directorate continues to support local business through advice provided by Business Gateway and with direct support through Development Grants.

3.0. Strengthening our Communities.

3.1 Council Plan Performance Measures

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status		Target 2027/28
201	Community Council satisfaction with their involvement in community development and engagement	64%	N/A	N/A	90%
In the most recent survey in May 2025, of 22 potential respondents we received 6 responses, all of which indicated satisfaction with their involvement. It has been noted that this measure is not providing a robust and meaningful indication of performance in this area. It has been proposed that the measure is removed as part of the mid-term review of the Council Plan. Other ways of measuring performance are being considered as part of the updated Directorate Delivery Plan.					
202	Percentage of adults supported at home who agree that they had a say in how their help, care or support was provided	62%	68.1%		93%
The most recent data, which relates to 2023/24, shows that 68.1% of adults supported at home agree that they are being supported to live as independently as possible. This is better than the Scottish average of 59.6% and Orkney Islands Council ranked 4th best among Scottish councils on this measure. We always endeavour to involve individuals in their care plan at the point of assessment and at any subsequent review. This data is collected every second year, so the most recent figure relates to 2023/24.					
203	Percentage of adults supported at home who agree that their services and support had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life	81%	79.64%		93%
Although performance is below the target. This is better than the Scottish average of 69.8% and Orkney Islands Council ranks second among Scottish councils in relation to this measure. We work to ensure services are suitable to meet individual needs, and performance against this measure demonstrates that, despite considerable demand, the service is working well. This data is collected every second year, so the most recent figure relates to 2023/24.					
204	Percentage of adult protection referrals made by the public	1%	5.26%		3%
Adult and Learning Disability Social Work continue to raise public awareness including social media and local radio campaigns on key dates such as Adult Support and Protection Day and the distribution of leaflets including easy read leaflets at GP surgeries and other key site throughout Orkney.					
205	Percentage of children being looked after in the community	76%	68.18%		85%

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status	Target 2027/28
The majority of the current children who remain in placements outside of Orkney (foster or residential care) are either there because of needs which cannot safely be met within Orkney or because their care plan has confirmed they are best placed to remain in their current placement, e.g. permanence orders achieved/working towards.				
206	Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5	73%	74%	 80%
The general trend for Orkney school leavers' attainment of at least 5 level 5 awards is positive and attainment is improving year-on-year. There remains significant focus on the tracking and monitoring of achievement within the senior phase with the aim to achieve our 80% target.				
207	Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence level in literacy	68%	81.20%	 85%
We continue to display strong performance against this indicator which has improved year-on-year, and we are working to secure further improvement towards the 2027/28 target.				
208	Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence level in numeracy	75%	87%	 90%
Attainment in the primary sector has risen year on year and we are working to secure further improvement towards the 2027/28 target.				
209	Percentage of young people maintaining a positive destination after 6 months	96.5%	96.7%	 97%
Robust post school monitoring mechanisms are in place with Skills Development Scotland taking the lead to gather this data. Partners continue to work together to monitor and track initial destinations and offer bespoke support if young people are at risk of not sustaining their initial destination.				
210	School attendance rate (looked after children)	88%	82.57%	 90%
The latest information covers attendance in the 2023-24 year. We are working closely with looked after children to ensure their attendance at school whenever possible and this is impacted by a number of factors including placement moves, which can lead to interruptions in attendance and learning. The small number of children included in the reporting means that when one child has a prolonged illness which stops them from attending school, this has a disproportionate impact on the percentage.				
211	Proportion of pupils entering positive destinations	98%	93.6%	 98%
School Leaver statistics are published in February and reflect numbers of school leavers who are in a positive destination 3 months after the end of the school year the previous August.				

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status	Target 2027/28	
Orkney’s positive destination rate was generally above the national rate pre-Covid but has been slightly below for the past 3 years. Whilst still below the national average, Orkney’s 2023/24 rate is 0.9 percentage points up on 2022/23 figures, and the gap between Orkney and national rates has narrowed from 1.5 percentage points in 22/23 to 0.4 in 2023/24. The recent introduction of the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) 16+ Participation Portal will enable school, Community Learning and Development (CLD) and SDS staff to share real-time information on young people’s destinations and work together to target support for those not in a positive destination					
212	Percentage of adults participating in some form of sport or exercise including walking, in previous four weeks	86%	79%		90%
The Council collaborates with a diverse range of local and national partners and stakeholders to enhance physical activity and expand opportunities within our community which contributes to the Orkney Physical Activity and Wellbeing Strategy.					

3.2 Council Delivery Plan Projects

C1_Social care / community led support. Lead: Head of Health and Community Care	
Working with communities and partners to collaboratively design services with a focus on prevention, early intervention and on enabling people to be as independent as possible. This will strengthen integrated health and social care provision, improve mental health and wellbeing support, bolster partnership working and drive further development of community-led support / care in a co-designed approach.	
Progress	
Following the resignation of the long standing Service User on the Integration Joint Board, initial discussions have been held with individuals keen to take up the role. A further meeting is scheduled for May 2026. There was a Learning Disability Session held in April 2026 where professionals across services discussed challenges and opportunities. In February 2026, the Integration Joint Board approved the extension of the Distress Brief Interventions for a further two years. The Senior Management Team continues to meet regularly with the Joint Isles Health and Care group and the Joint Mainland Health and Care group where any arising issues can be discussed. As of April 2026, the position of Carer Lead has been filled. However, the Community Led Support role is still outstanding.	
C2_Living independently. Lead: Head of Health and Community Care	
Redesign services to support people to live in their own homes longer and safely by improving the range of, and access to, supports relating to dementia and frailty and further enhancing support to unpaid carers.	
Delivery of a holistic service, in partnership with people and linked partners.	
Progress	
As previously mentioned the Strategic Plan 2025-2028 and the Strategic Plan Delivery Plan 2025/26 have been approved. Early discussions between OHAC and Housing have taken place with families who jointly share a Council house which does not meet modern day standards. There is also an Older Person/Frailty Workstream which has highlighted a number of actions which are being progressed. As part of that, a Dementia Workshop was held in March 2026 with a further session scheduled for June 2026. There was also a Learning Disability Session held in April 2026.	

C3_Development of learning provision and pathways



Lead: Head of Education

Develop and promote sustainable learning provision and pathways, considering improvement based on local needs and skills gaps. Providing all age holistic, bespoke, and person-centred support and opportunities to increase confidence, skills, and knowledge to ensure individuals progress into positive destinations. Orkney College functions as a core part of this learning provision.

Progress

This action is central to the work of the Community Learning, Development and Employability Service (CLDE), who are focused on providing effective learning opportunities and expanding learning pathways for all. The CLDE Service provides all-age, holistic, bespoke and person-centred support and opportunities to increase confidence and skills, supporting individuals and groups to progress and achieve positive outcomes. This is reported annually to members through the CLDE Annual Report which details the range and impact of the work of CLDE.

Partnership approaches are central to the development of learning provision and pathways, and this is also demonstrated through the CLD Partnership Annual Report and the Local Employability Partnership Report, both of which are presented annually to elected members.

C4_Improve education standards (Scottish attainment challenge)



Lead: Head of Education

Excellence through raising attainment and improving outcomes: ensuring that every child and young person achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to shape their future as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.

Achieving equity: ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Progress

Good progress has been made towards our targets. An Attainment Report was submitted to the Education, Communities and Housing Committee on 1 April 2026. New stretch aims will be created in July 2026.

We continue to require work within the S3 level to develop consistency in achievement of Fourth Level. Work has begun on a Broad General Education (BGE) Attainment Tracker to be deployed in August 2026.

C5_Childcare

Lead: Head of Education



Provide childcare in an affordable way in locations that are convenient including:

- Continuing to develop a new 50-place 0-5 nursery in Kirkwall.
- Continuing to offer free non-eligible 2-year-old places in island settings with capacity (staffing and registered number).
- Supporting individuals to take up child-minding; supporting practising child-minders to develop practice as well as meet and maintain the National Standard; recruiting and supporting child-minders working in partnership with the local authority to provide statutory childcare (including qualifications).
- Establishing a 'grant and subsidy' approach for child-minders in hard to sustain locations (for example where numbers are very small making the business non-viable).
- Extending local authority (statutory) provision in-line with Scottish Government policy directives (as funding and workforce permits).
- Piloting provision for school-aged childcare and childcare for children aged 1 and 2, including childcare for children with additional support needs, in order to test demand, availability of workforce and model.

Progress

The new nursery has completed and handed over to the Council. Elected Members agreed that the Council should run the new nursery. To facilitate this, the Strynd Nursery will relocate to the new building and expand provision to include children aged 0-2 and also offer an extended day and year. All staff currently working at Willow Tree will move to the Strynd once it moves and the temporary provision will be closed. The Care Inspectorate is currently processing the Variation Application to move the Strynd Nursery and the anticipated moving date is at the start of July 2026.

C6_Embed the vision and outcomes of the Promise.

Lead: Head of Children, Families and Justice Services & CSWO



Delivery of The Promise* to support children and young people who are care experienced.

- Establish a Promise Board.
- Develop workforce capacity and support.
- Strengthen Family Support.

**[About the promise - The Promise](#) exists so that children and young people in Scotland can grow up loved, safe, and respected.*

Progress

Children's Services continue to progress and embed Scotland's Promise to all children and young people.

The Promise Board meets on a minimum of a quarterly basis, and is currently finalising Orkney's Parenting Plan 2026-31. The Board has full multi-agency representation across statutory and voluntary sector services. The Chief Social

Work Officer chairs the Board. The Board took the decision that support would be offered to all care experienced individuals if need presents, even if they are beyond the age of 26 (statutory age limit for after care support). Young people, who are in our local residential care, are afforded the opportunity to remain in their care placement beyond the age of 18, in line with the Scottish Promise. This provides them with consistency of care and support and continuation of a place of belonging.

The Promise Board also considers Orkney Islands Council's compliance with the UNCRC (Incorporation)(Scotland) Act 2024. Notable progress has been made in this area.

Children's advocacy work continues to be a priority area, with advocacy being tracked closely and regular reports submitted to the Orkney Public Protection Committee to ensure decision making and service delivery is informed by the voice, choice and participation of children and young people. Advocacy uptake rates in Orkney continue to be excellent (the service is opt out rather than opt in), across child protection and our care and experienced population. For those children who do not wish to engage with advocacy, their attendance at meetings and other forms of feedback i.e. feedback forms are encouraged and utilised.

OHAC's child friendly complaints protocol has been recently reviewed by key stakeholders and is at the point of final ratification. This will ensure children who feel the need to complain understand the process and are supported appropriately with a trauma informed approach.

Children who have required independent legal advice are provided with it, when required.

The updated Good Parenting Plan 2026-31 will outline the key priorities, and what support care experienced children and young people should be afforded by all multi-agency partners. The priorities and support provided will be monitored and reviewed within the Promise Board, to ensure compliance and consistency of care, support and protection for children and young people in Orkney.

Children and young people have been actively engaged in the production of the new Good Parenting Plan.

4.0 Developing our Infrastructure.

4.1 Council Plan Performance Measures

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status		Target 2027/28
301	Percentage of Council homes that meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard	82% (2021/22)	93.85%		90%
The percentage of our Council homes meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard has remained steady and is now 93.85%, exceeding the target of 90%. Following previous compliance issues identified around electrical safety certification and interlinked smoke alarms, targeted investment and improvement programmes have resulted in sustained performance improvements across our housing stock. The Council will continue to invest in maintaining and improving the quality, safety and energy efficiency of our homes.					
302	Percentage of Council dwellings that are energy efficient	88%	95%		90%
Of the Council's housing stock of 1,045 properties, 989 met the Energy Efficiency Standard on 31 March 2026. Of the remaining 56, 28 were exempt or out of scope due to factors such as disproportionate cost or those because the tenant does not want or feel able to cope with any works.					
303	Houses built in Orkney (all sectors). Target and geographical breakdown to be identified as part of the housing needs analysis	82	61		2027 – 125
Sixty-one houses were built in Orkney during the 2025 calendar year. The Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2025/26 to 2030/31 and Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2023 outline plans for building houses in the coming period. <i>Note: we intend to review the target of 125 properties in 2027 to bring this figure in line with the targets in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.</i>					
304	Percentage of Orkney residents whose internet connection is fast enough to do what they want online – Orkney Mainland	70%	70%		91%
The ongoing Scottish Government Reaching 100% (R100) Programme has brought full fibre services to 1864 premises on mainland Orkney. 421 premises scheduled for build in the East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray ward by end of June 2028. 146 premises are planned in the West Mainland ward. The UK Government's Project Gigabit is currently in procurement and targets premises not included in R100 – the procurement scope includes 8739 properties across Orkney.					

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status		Target 2027/28
305	Percentage of Orkney residents whose internet connection is fast enough to do what they want online – Ferry-linked isles	45%	45%		84%
The ongoing Scottish Government Reaching 100% (R100) Programme has brought full fibre services to 1046 premises across Rousay, Shapinsay, Westray, Sanday and Eday (as of 29/07/25). Works on Stronsay have begun, with 197 premises within build plans. North Ronaldsay is not part of R100 plans but is within the procurement scope for the UK Government's Project Gigabit, this process is still underway. In Papa Westray, nearly every business and resident can now receive speeds comparable to less rural areas of Scotland through using funding from the Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme, part of the Reaching 100% (R100) programme. Hoy and Flotta are expected to have R100 works completed by June 2028, 378 premises are included in R100 build plans for Hoy and Flotta. <i>Note: the baseline and current figures relate to the same survey data, as the survey has not been repeated since 2020. We intend to review the data collection for this performance measure.</i>					
306	Percentage of Orkney residents who agree "When I make journeys to or from my home, it is easy connecting between different forms of transport" – Orkney Mainland	46%	46%		60%
All inter-island ferry services are linked by subsidised public bus services and where possible, external ferry routes are met by services which are operated on a commercial basis. A frequent half hourly service also operates to and from Kirkwall Airport to provide connectivity for internal and external air services (with the exception of school transport times in the afternoon during term time). Additional resources and hence budget, would be required to improve connectivity further. <i>Note: the baseline and current figures relate to the same survey data, as the survey has not been repeated since 2020. We intend to review the data collection for this performance measure.</i>					

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status		Target 2027/28
307	Percentage of Orkney residents who agree “When I make journeys to or from my home, it is easy connecting between different forms of transport” – Ferry-linked isles	29%	29%		45%
All inter-island ferry services are linked by subsidised public bus services and where possible, external ferry routes are met by services which are operated on a commercial basis. A frequent half hourly service also operates to and from Kirkwall Airport to provide connectivity for internal and external air services (with the exception of school transport times in the afternoon during term time). Additional resources and hence budget, would be required to improve connectivity further. <i>Note: the baseline and current figures relate to the same survey data, as the survey has not been repeated since 2020. We intend to review the data collection for this performance measure.</i>					
308	Percentage of Islands Deal Programme Delivered	0%	30%		50%
All three of the joint Islands Growth Deal Programmes have had their Full Business Cases at Programme level approved and are now delivering. Of the four Orkney specific projects, one is close to getting their Full Business Case approved subject to planning permission in 2025/early 2026, with an updated programme Outline Business Case expected for another in 2025/26. A refresh of the Islands Growth Deal has been undertaken with one project proposed for removal and another being reconsidered.					

4.2 Council Delivery Plan Projects

I1i_ Improve Isles transport links.

Lead: Head of Marine Services, Transportation and Harbour Master



Developing integrated, effective, sustainable, and reliable inter-islands connectivity through the development and maintenance of transport infrastructure and links. This modernisation will be considered through the lens of 'net zero.' Areas to be considered include:

- Review level of service and options.
- Consider options like 'fixed links' and 'Sustainable Aviation Test Environment' (SATE).
- Isles Transport Solutions e.g. Ferry replacement or alternative solutions.
- Lobbying for funding.
- Smaller piers and harbours improvements across Orkney as outlined and agreed in the Harbours Master Plan.
- Aircraft.

Progress

Aircraft

Following a competitive tender exercise, the purchase of an additional Britten Norman Islander aircraft to the Inter-Island Air Services network is progressing. It is anticipated that the additional aircraft will be brought into service towards the end of the summer 2026 timetable following modifications and checks by operator Loganair Ltd. A further period of consultation with communities and relevant Elected Members is scheduled for late Spring 2026 to discuss the enhanced air services timetable.

Ferry Replacement Programme – Phase 1

In December 2025, stage 1 of the tender process commenced to invite interested shipyards to tender for the Final Design and Build of the three replacement Outer North Isles vessels with the option to commission a fourth vessel if suitable for the South Isles. The tender evaluation process was completed during January to March 2026, thereby shortlisting the number of shipyards to stage 2 of the process. During this period, the tender specification has been finalised which will be supplied to the shortlisted shipyards. Tender submissions for the Final Design and Build must be completed by 31 July 2026. An Award Recommendation and Stage 2 Capital Project Appraisal will be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in September 2026 before Contract Award in October 2026.

Ferry Replacement Programme and Harbours Masterplan Phase 2

The Ferry Replacement Programme Phase 2 and Harbours Masterplan Phase 2 was awarded as a joint Contract to Arch Henderson (Haskoning) in April 2025, with vessel design support from Leadship Design and Consulting. The consultants appointed Caintech during winter 2025/26 to carry out an assessment of the existing piers and harbours. This work was delayed significantly due to adverse weather at the beginning of 2026 which has resulted in a delay to the overall project. Initial discussions have been held with communities in Papa Westray,

North Ronaldsay and Graemsay with further public consultation for all islands scheduled during August 2026.

I1ii_ Improve Isles transport links.

Lead: Head of Infrastructure Services



Developing integrated, effective, sustainable, and reliable inter-islands connectivity through the development and maintenance of transport infrastructure and links. Areas to be considered include:

- Carry out reconstruction of pavement surface on Barrier No 1.

Progress

The pavement surface of Churchill Barrier No 1 was resurfaced and lined in June 2023 and as a result there are no ongoing concerns regarding the pavement. The consultant's report confirmed that there are no structural issues with this barrier. As a result, it is intended to do no further work in the meantime, although the road surface will continue to be inspected and monitored. This action has been completed and has moved to business as usual.

I2_ Free ferry travel for island young people

Lead: Head of Marine Services, Transportation and Harbour Master



Introduce free ferry travel for island young people to allow them to access sport and entertainment opportunities already available to mainland young people. The ferry is the equivalent of the bus to islanders. This will involve exploring how this can be funded, including potential lobbying of Government if required.

Progress

Free Ferry travel now approved by the Scottish Government and funded – this action is now complete.

I3_Work towards integrating our transport networks.

Lead: Head of Marine Services, Transportation and Harbour Master



Integrate our transport networks to improved operational connectivity and reduce vulnerabilities.

Progress

A report was presented to the Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee on 3 February 2026 to recommend continuation of the trial community transport services operated in South Ronaldsay and filling the timetable afternoon gap to Kirkwall Airport. Support was also given to continue funding to community transport small grant schemes thereby supporting the roll out of additional door to door transport schemes across island communities. Work is also continuing to support the brand 'Orkney Community Connect' to Dial a Bus services operated by Orkney Disability Forum, which are also funded by the Council.

Further consultation with the relevant island communities will be held to consider an enhanced timetable for the inter-island air service as work progresses to bring in an additional aircraft to the network. The emphasis is to reduce the number of shared flights with islands to increase capacity to each island as opposed to a significant increase in frequency, with the exception of Eday.

I4_Supporting Economic Growth through Harbours Infrastructure

Lead: Head of Marine Services, Transportation and Harbour Master



Ensuring major harbours infrastructure is designed and developed to support economic growth and community benefits across Orkney with a focus on projects as set out and agreed in the Harbours Master Plan. This includes the following proposed developments:

- Deep Water Quay within Scapa Flow: New multi-user deep-water pier and quayside facility with laydown area.
- Hatston Pier: New pier and quayside infrastructure, ship lift, fuel facility, and land for harbour operations.
- Kirkwall: New quayside infrastructure, marina expansion, and waterfront development area.
- Stromness: Marina expansion and dedicated cruise tender pontoon.

Progress

The Scapa Deep Water Quay project continues to progress following the award of a Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA) in April 2025. This phase includes detailed design work, ground and marine investigations and site surveys. Critically, the PCSA will also deliver a firm budget estimate and a clear build-out strategy, both of which are essential to informing the fundraising phase of the project.

In parallel, the planning process is advancing, with Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI) submitted to NatureScot as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment. Planning consent will be required from the local authority for terrestrial elements of the development, alongside marine licensing from the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate.

I5_Digital connectivity

Lead: Head of Enterprise and Economic Growth



Support and enable the delivery of digital connectivity across Orkney including;

- Implement relevant actions in the Orkney Islands Council Digital Strategy (2022-2026), and input into digital Strategy Delivery Plan as appropriate.
- Facilitate commercial telecoms infrastructure investment and stimulate market demand.
- Raise awareness of available schemes, including the provision of advice and support to individuals, community groups, and telecom providers, to support the development of gigabit capable telecom networks for all of Orkney.
- Milestones will need to adapt to complex funding landscape.

Progress

The Enterprise Service is taking forward a number of initiatives that are aiming to deliver on the Council's digital connectivity aims. This includes significant lobbying activity and a local advisory service.

I6_Social housing

Lead: Head of Strategic Housing, Housing Operations and Homelessness



Invest in social housing to endeavour to address waiting lists and improve temporary housing availability, including:

- Developing social housing across Orkney in line with housing need and demand.
- Ensuring all future housing is energy efficient in line with Scottish Government requirements.

Progress

The Local Housing Strategy 2024-2029, as underpinned by a robust and credible Housing Need and Demand Assessment, was approved in June 2024. The Strategic Housing Investment Plan was approved in November 2025. Plans to develop affordable housing are progressing through the Housing Market Partnership with relevant partners and subject to Scottish Government grant being available.

The Scottish Government has recalled their Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2 (EESHS2) guidance and consulted on a new Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS). The consultation closed in March 2024, and revised guidance is awaited.

In the meantime, the Council continues to report on progress against EESHS1. As at 31 March 2026, out of our stock of 1,054 properties, 988 achieved the standard. Of the remaining 66 properties 29 were exempt and out-of-scope, leaving only 37 properties not achieving compliance – a compliance rate of 96%.

17_Mid-market rental properties

Lead: Head of Strategic Housing, Housing Operations and Homelessness



To investigate the potential for the development of an affordable programme of mid-market rent (MMR) properties across Orkney;

- To ensure this additional form of housing is available in the market.
- Provide accommodation for inward migration and to support provision of housing for existing workforce.
- Provision of housing for those employed on Orkney including essential workers.
- Building out with Kirkwall in line with housing need and demand.
- Through our Local Housing Strategy we will continue to support vulnerable and island communities to access the Scottish Government's Rural and Island Housing Fund to seek to address their own housing aspirations / demand for private sector accommodation.
- This includes an enhanced analysis of housing need and demand across all tenures to focus on areas such as key worker needs and link to the Local Housing Strategy.

Progress

The Essential Workers Housing Strategy was recommended for approval by the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee in March 2024, with the funding requirements to be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee. The Housing Need and Demand Assessment was signed off by the Scottish Government as robust and credible in October 2023.

The Local Housing Strategy was approved by the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee in June 2024. A strategic co-operation agreement was signed with Places for People Scotland in late 2025. Places for People Scotland will develop 500 houses in Orkney across a ten-year period and these will include some mid-market rent properties.

This action is now complete.

I8_Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project

Lead: Head of Enterprise and Economic Growth



Deliver Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project, maximising community benefit and securing a transmission connection for Orkney. Delivery subject to relevant approvals.

Progress

The Council's wind farm sites all have planning permission and grid connection agreements in place. A decision on project progression was taken to the Council in February 2025. The Council approved an investment decision for Quanterness, but requested reappraisal of the Hoy project, with options to be taken back to the Council. Faray remains under development. Council formally approved the investment of the Quanterness wind farm in early 2025, with loan funding being provided by National Wealth Fund. Nordex have been appointed as the turbine supplier and will also deliver long-term operations and maintenance services. Construction is expected to begin in early 2027 and generation in summer 2028. The turbines will be operational for a minimum of 25 years.

In early 2025, primarily due to the grid connection costs, Council requested that the Hoy wind farm be placed on pause and an options reappraisal to be undertaken. The reappraisal report will be presented to Council in Q4 2026 and will include updated cost assumptions, market conditions and alternative connection and design considerations, with a recommendation on how best to proceed with the project.

The Faray wind farm remains at an earlier stage of development due to its later grid connection date. The preparation of the business case will continue throughout 2026/27, with a view of seeking to secure a Contracts for Difference prior to investment decision, anticipated to be made by Council in 2027/28. If approved, construction could begin 2028, with the wind farm becoming operational in 2031.

I9_Islands Growth Deal projects

Lead: Head of Enterprise and Economic Growth



Ten-year package of investment with suite of projects that will seek to drive economic growth and the creation of sustainable jobs across Shetland, Orkney, and the Outer Hebrides. Key objectives – job creation, leveraging investment and net zero.

Progress

The Islands Growth Deal is in its third year since the Full Deal was entered into in 2023 with UK and Scottish Governments and the tripartite agreement signed with Comhairle nan Eilian Siar and Shetland Islands Council.

During 2025/26 a refresh of the Islands Growth Deal has been undertaken working with Governments to maximise opportunities for delivery in what has been and continues to be a challenging economic environment. This is anticipated to be complete for the beginning of the 2026/27 financial year.

There are three joint islands programmes:

1. The Islands Centre for Net Zero Full Business Case was approved in 2023 and is delivering across the three islands, led through the European Marine Energy Centre with Heriot-Watt University, Community Energy Scotland and Aquatera as key partners along with the three local authorities. It aims to support the decarbonisation of the islands.
2. The Creative Islands and Wellbeing Programme Full Business Case was approved in 2024 with the Pier Arts Centre a key capital project within this. This project has submitted a draft Full Business Case and working on the finalisation of this.
3. TalEntEd is led by UHI in a partnership with Robert Gordon University and Heriot Watt University. Their Full Business Case was approved in 2025 and is delivering programmes focused on skills development, entrepreneurship and commercialisation.

In addition to the three joint programmes there are Orkney-specific projects. These include:

1. The Orkney World Heritage Site Programme which is led by the Council, in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland. It has recently changed from a project to a programme consisting of a number of elements that will be used to attract and draw down funding to safeguard the sites, improve access to the Orkney World Heritage Site, Heart of Neolithic Orkney and the wider experience.
2. Orkney Research and Innovation Campus led by Highlands and Islands Enterprise which is expected to submit their Full Business Case shortly subject to planning decisions.
3. Scapa Flow Future Fuels Hub and the Vertical Farm Project which have been proposed to be withdrawn from the Islands Growth Deal as part of the refresh process and progressed through other funding channels where opportunities exist.

I10_Integrated waste facility

Lead: Head of Infrastructure Services



Construction of a new waste and recycling facility to improve the range of recyclable materials that can be collected, enable compliance with regulatory requirements and support development of circular economy. Associated improved collection methods will widen coverage of recycling collections across the whole of Orkney.

Progress

The Council was unsuccessful with a funding bid to develop the Integrated Waste Facility (IWF). Staff re-evaluated this project and presented a report to committee. The recommendation was not to proceed with the development due to cost, but rather to develop an integrated waste strategy. This action is now closed.

I11_Capital Strategy – Review and Prioritisation

Lead: Head of Property and Asset Management



Review and prioritisation of the capital programme. This will result in the list of capital projects, including new build and building refurbishment projects, being considered and prioritised for delivery. The programme covers a diverse range of projects, for example the construction of new buildings, the refurbishment of leisure facilities and the development of critical infrastructure across Orkney, including the ferry linked isles.

- Deliver the new Capital Investment Strategy.

Progress

This action is now complete.

The existing capital programme continues to be delivered, the title for this programme has been changed to Capital Strategy which is part of the ongoing review of the process and was agreed by the Corporate Leadership Team on 29 April 2024. An update on capital slippage and a revised Capital Project Appraisal process has been developed through working with the Finance team in partnership with whom a review of the programme has been done, with projects which could not be progressed at present being removed from the programme (following consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee in June 2024), which reduces artificial items of slippage. The updated Capital Strategy and updated Capital Project Appraisal process were presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in November 2024 and subsequently approved.

The Capital Project Appraisal process and engagement with the Capital Projects Board ensures that any new projects go through the proper process before they can be approved.

5.0. Transforming our Council

5.1 Council Plan Performance Measures

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status		Target 2027/28
401	Level of customer satisfaction experienced by the public with queries handled by the customer service	87%	95.8%		95%
A customer services pulse survey was carried out over a two-week period from 20 April to 1 May 2026. The survey consisted of one question “considering your experience with us today, on a scale of 1 – 5, how satisfied are you with the way that the customer services advisor handled your enquiry today”? A total of 214 responses were received and those with a rating of 4 (satisfied) and 5 (very satisfied) were combined to get 95.8%.					
402	Orkney Islands Council recognised as an Investors in People (IiP) Platinum Organisation	N/A	Standard Achieved		Platinum Achieved
The Investors in People (IiP) assessment process only takes place every 3 years, so no change will take place on this until that takes place, and if the IiP programme continues.					
403	Overall staff satisfaction with working at Orkney Islands Council	58%	76%		80%
The data shown is for the reporting period 2023/2024, the process of how we measure staff satisfaction is under review so there is no new data for this reporting period.					
404	Staff satisfaction with our leadership style and culture	58%	66%		80%
The data shown is for the reporting period 2023/2024, the process of we measure staff satisfaction is under review so there is no new data for this reporting period.					
405	Percentage of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use	88%	92.83%		90%
There is an improvement in this indicator since the last reporting period. Granular assessment of property has resulted in an increase in numbers and areas, many of which are new builds or relatively new, which come with good ratings. The statistics for this indicator are reported annually but the data provided is always for the previous year, the data for this indicator reflects the status for the period 2024/25.					
406	Actual outturn as a percentage of budget	100%	100.29%		100%
The above indicator reflects the 2024/25 final figure per the statutory accounts. The 2025/26 figure is not available as both accounting and budget transactions are still to be processed as part of year end processes.					

ID	Description	Baseline 2020/21	Current Status		Target 2027/28
407	Recruitment and retention, staff turnover	5.14%	1.25%		4%
Turnover of staff, i.e. those who left the Council's employment but not including retirements and redundancies, remains very low.					
408	Cost of agency worker as a percentage of our staff budget	3.7%	6.73%		4%
The spend on agency workers relative to overall staff budget has remained similar in 2025/26 compared to the previous financial year. Note, there can be late accruals post financial year end that could increase the final figure slightly.					
409	Sickness absence days per teacher	4.2	11.94		6
Sickness absence has increased since pre-Covid levels, which is consistent with the picture elsewhere in the country. Whilst overall absence levels in the Council have reduced during 2025-26, the absence rate expressed as average days lost amongst teaching staff has increased. The predominant factor in this increase can be attributed to an increase in the number of long-term absence cases with Teaching staff who are experiencing significant ill health.					
410	Sickness absence days per employee (non-teacher)	10.3	12.5		9
Sickness absence has increased since pre-Covid levels, which is consistent with the picture elsewhere in the country. Absence levels have reduced in 2025-26 compared to previous years which is positive but remains above the target rate.					

5.2 Council Delivery Plan Projects

T1_Staff recognition and retention Lead: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development	
Improve staff recognition and engagement so staff feel more valued. Improve openness and transparency so it is a safe place to raise concerns. Provide a suite of work options and terms and conditions that meet the needs of the organisation, our customers and service users, providing the flexibility, wellbeing support, and recognition that our employees desire.	
Progress	
The suite of flexible working related policies is currently under consultation including input from the Equally Safe at Work working group as part of the Council's accreditation process under that scheme.	
T2_Reduce bureaucracy. Lead: Head of Corporate Governance, Head of Performance and Business Support	
Reduce bureaucracy within and between agencies wherever possible improving working between partners. Consideration of Public Sector Reform is included as part of this work.	
Reduce bureaucracy and improve ways of working through the implementation of corporate administration and the delivery of the corporate administration improvement agenda.	
Progress	
The Business Support teams are working together to streamline processes and reduce bureaucracy.	
The Council is in active dialogue with NHS Orkney, the Integration Joint Board and Scottish Government on taking forward Public Service Reform in Orkney.	
T3_Invest in staff development opportunities. Lead: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development	
Create a programme for equal access to growth and learning opportunities for employees to develop their full capability aligning with our organisational goals, workforce planning, and talent management priorities, with a particular focus on areas where there are skills gaps.	
Progress	
A co-ordinated approach to our Learning and Development approach has been agreed and is now being implemented. This will be reflected in the revised workforce strategy. Work has also been undertaken on reviewing the Council's Values. The Council's Corporate Learning Programme for 2026 has been launched.	

T4_Recruitment including trainee programme. Lead: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development	
Consideration of recruitment approaches to attract potential candidates to Council posts. Development and delivery of specific pathways into OIC for trainees including comprehensive induction, orientation, skills, and leadership programmes for effective integration into teams with a focus on alignment with organisational values, promotion of core skills, attitudes and behaviours underpinning sustainable employment.	
Progress	
The remaining actions from the recruitment taskforce are close to being completed.	

T5_Staff working locations, operational property and estates assets review and development. Lead: Head of Property and Asset Management	
Review Council estate, disposing of unwanted assets and transforming required assets so they are fit for purpose. This will include School Place and Hatston depot and garage. Diversify spread of Council working locations across rural and isles communities. • Complete the Strategic Asset Review of Council Property	
Progress	
The Property Asset Management Plan was recommended for approval by the Asset Management Sub-committee in September 2024. The Corporate Asset Management Plan was recommended for approval by the Asset Management Sub-Committee in November 2025. A Capital Project Appraisal process is being worked through to determine the best property strategy for the Council's main offices.	

T6_ Improving our processes through the development of our systems.

Lead: Head of Performance and Business Support



Improve processes and service delivery through the development of corporate and service digital systems.

Corporate systems such as:

- Digital service delivery (the Customer Service Platform / Microsoft 365 tools).
- Electronic Document and Records Management System Implementation.
- Finance (Integra Centros).
- HR and Payroll (Resource Link / MyView).
- Service systems such as:
 - Health and Social Care (Paris).
 - Housing (Northgate Housing).
 - Infrastructure Services (New Horizons replacement).
 - Planning system (IDOX).
 - Property Assets Management (Concerto).
 - Revenue and Benefits (NEC Revenue and Benefits).
 - Schools Education System (SEEMiS).

Full details with specifics for each system will be provided in the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan which will support the delivery of the Council Plan. Tier systems to be defined in the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan.

Progress

Significant progress made in identifying systems development gap in the Council and development support is now in place for our most critical business systems, including Paris (Health and Social Care), NEC Housing (Housing and Homelessness), Concerto (Property and Asset Management) SEEMiS (Education Management) and the Customer Service Platform, known to the public as MyOrkney.

Additional development support is being delivered to digitise some of our key business processes, with the Change in Establishment being the key process currently under development.

Besides the system development work, the current stage in the transformation programme includes a piece of work to bring clearer oversight and governance around our key business systems, and the Systems Development Working Group is progressing this work. This piece of work will build on the corporate software inventory and will include a meaningful health assessment of our key systems which will be best used to inform decision making around resource, procurement processes and data risk.

The programme's next priorities include taking the first steps in addressing the organisation's data quality issues, through designing initial data cataloguing, and carrying out further work with each Directorate to ensure priorities for digital development are captured and articulated.