



ANNUAL PUBLIC PERFORMANCE REPORT

2004 - 2005





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1 Introduction

Welcome to Aberdeenshire Council's fifth annual Public Performance Report. In this report we have set out the Council's priorities in 2004-05, its key achievements against each of the five themes detailed in the Strategic Plan and details of service performance.

In most cases performance has been shown using the available Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs). The indicators have been used to show the performance of Aberdeenshire Council and how well this performance compared with the best and worse councils in Scotland. Aberdeenshire Council's ranking out of the 32 Scottish councils is also shown to give an idea of relative performance.

A review of the information contained in the report shows that overall it has been another successful year for the Council with significant progress made against each strategic theme.

Under the theme of **Community Well Being** significant improvements in Community Care are reported. Successful joint working with our strategic partners has resulted in better services for users.

In addition the Council developed its Standard Delivery Plan setting out how its Housing stock will meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 (the national deadline for meeting this standard).

As far as **Jobs and the Economy** is concerned, during 2004/05 the Aberdeenshire economy continued to show a strong performance in many areas although problems with the fishing sector continued. To help address the economic challenges facing coastal communities across North Aberdeenshire the Building Buchan New Beginnings 3 year action programme was launched. During the year a number of successful initiatives were introduced as part of the action programme.

In addition continuing progress was made with the Fraserburgh Master Plan – a £50 million programme to bring new life to the north Fraserburgh area.

Under the theme of **Learning** the Council underwent a successful HMI inspection of its Educational and Recreational services during September/October 2004. Although a number of minor improvements were identified by the Inspectorate, overall the service was able to demonstrate good and improving performance across many aspects of its work.

The success of the inspection was due to the strong commitment and hard work of the staff in the Education and Recreation service. The service is now making progress with the development of action plans to address the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report.

As part of its commitment to a **Sustainable Environment**, in February 2005 the Council launched its revised Sustainability Charter. Replacing the previous charter this new document contained an Action Programme to 2007 which states what the Council will do under the five themes of "reduced use of key resources," "raising

awareness,” “guidelines for buying goods and services,” “reducing our footprint” and “encouraging consultation.”

The Charter also contains a commitment to reduce greenhouse gases. To help meet this commitment the Energy Conservation Unit within the Council introduced a range of measures to reduce energy consumption. As a result significant savings were made in energy costs and usage, resulting in reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Under the theme **Quality Services** a number of improvements were made to the way in which Council services are managed. For example work was begun on the development of asset management plans for schools, other Council properties, roads, bridges and other structures.

To drive forward continuous improvement the Council adopted the Kaizen Blitz approach to making changes. During the year a number of successful improvements resulted from use of this technique. Use of this technique has attracted considerable interest from other Councils across Scotland and from the Scottish Executive.

During the year the Council’s Race Equalities Scheme was also extensively revised. The new scheme sets out how the Council will work towards ensuring equality of opportunity for everyone within Aberdeenshire.

It is accepted that the Council has not been able to report success in all areas. A number of the Statutory Indicators shown in this report show where the Council is performing less well than other authorities. However the Council is well aware of the areas where it has to improve and has already taken a number of actions to improve performance in the future. The success of these actions will be reported in future Public Performance Reports.

To help you make sense of the performance indicators given in this report a “Traffic Light” system of colouring has been used.

Indicators given a red traffic light fall into the lower quartile (i.e. the bottom 25%) when compared to indicators from other councils in Scotland.

Indicators given an amber traffic light fall either side of the median (i.e. are in the middle 50%) when compared to indicators from other councils in Scotland.

Indicators given a green traffic light fall into the upper quartile (i.e. the top 25%) when compared to indicators from other councils in Scotland.

Tables with no traffic lights shown indicate levels of activity not performance.

2 Strategic Planning Framework

Strategic Intention

The purpose of the Strategic Planning Framework is to provide a corporate and dynamic framework that sets a clear direction from the Council for service development and delivery.



2 Strategic Planning Framework

The Council's vision for the future of Aberdeenshire is captured in the simple statement “ *Working together for the best quality of life for everyone in Aberdeenshire.*”

The Council's strategic planning framework is intended to ensure that the strategic vision is achieved through the aims and outcomes of a hierarchy of plans. These plans include:-

- Community plan
- Strategic plan
- Area plans
- Service plans
- Council strategies and action plans.

The Community Plan is the overarching plan for all public agencies in Aberdeenshire. It sets out how the major providers of public and voluntary services within the area will work together and with their communities to deliver better services.

The Strategic Plan sets out the strategic objectives for the Council in relation to the Community Plan. It provides a framework for service delivery for the period 2003 – 2007. Services are then delivered through a range of supporting plans and strategies. More details of these supporting plans and strategies are listed in Section 11 of this report.

The Strategic Plan is divided into the five major themes of Community Well-Being; Jobs and the Economy; Learning; Sustainable Environment and Quality Services. Six principles:- inclusion, accountability, participation, communication, using an evidence base, and encouraging effective partnerships, underpin our way of working and are used to test all that we do. Progress with our strategic objectives is discussed in the following sections of this report.

3 Community Well Being

Strategic Intention

We will work to

Develop a caring community which supports its more vulnerable citizens and promotes community well being. With the active participation of service users and carers and in partnership with local agencies, we will promote socially inclusive policies.



3.1 Community Care

This section describes progress made in developing community care services for a wide range of people in need including older people, people with learning disabilities, people with sensory disabilities, people with mental health issues, children and families, people with alcohol or drug problems and carers.

The aim is to maintain people in their own homes and communities, wherever possible and practicable, through high quality services, whether they are provided by the Council or by another organisation. A key element of Community Care is the planning and delivery of services in partnership with NHS Grampian.

Joint Community Care Plan

The Joint Community Care Plan sets out social work, health and housing contributions to the community well being theme. The Plan details how the major strategic initiatives will be implemented. These include planning and delivery of services through a number of strategies, e.g. Carer's Strategy, Older Peoples Strategy, Physical Disability Strategy and Learning Disability Strategy.

During 2004, a review was carried out of the existing Joint Community Care Plan with the aim of producing a revised format for the period 2005-2008. The new Plan has to take account of the developments in partnership arrangements through the Joint Future initiative, and the implications of the development of the Community Health Partnerships. Community Health Partnerships have been developed covering North, Central and South Aberdeenshire with the focus of integrating primary and specialist services at local level and will play a pivotal role in delivering health improvement for the communities of Aberdeenshire.

Integrated Children's Services Plan

The Integrated Children's Services Plan, between the Council, NHS Grampian and other partners, is the community plan for children in Aberdeenshire and has a crucial role in implementing the well being and learning themes. The Plan follows the vision for children's services that "Every child in Aberdeenshire will be valued and helped to realise their potential." The Scottish Executive identified seven themes to ensure that children are valued. These are that children will be safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected and responsible and included. These themes are used as a basis for the Plan. The Plan covers the period 2005-2008 and is reviewed annually.

Joint Future

One of the Scottish Executive's key policies in Health and Community Care is the Joint Future Initiative. The main aim of the policy is to provide better outcomes for users of community care services by way of greater integration of Health, Social Care and Housing services. The Council is working with the NHS and community care groups through the Joint Future Initiative to improve services for people in all community care groups, primarily: older people and people with dementia, people with physical disability; learning disability; mental health problems and people who misuse substances.

Some of the key targets that the Council is working towards include supporting more people at home as an alternative to a care home, and assisting people to live more

independent lives through reducing inappropriate admissions to hospital and enabling faster discharge.

Achievements for 2004-05 include

- Increasing by 13.6% people receiving 10+ hours of home care and by 7.7% people receiving 20+ hours home care, from a target of 5% increase.
- Reducing by 6% the occupancy of long stay hospital beds, including dementia beds, from a target of 5% reduction.
- Increasing by 25% the number of home care hours provided after 7 pm/overnight during the week, and 16% in the number of hours provided after 7 pm/overnight during the weekend, from a target of 5% increase.

Progress is monitored and evaluated on an annual basis by the Scottish Executive by way of the Joint Performance Information and Assessment Framework (JPIAF). This contains 5 sets of indicators covering the different elements of Joint Futures. These include access to resources, joint resourcing, single shared assessment, outcome indicators and a “whole systems” indicator which attempts to measure performance across a range of service areas such as delayed discharge.

The evaluation for 2004/05 showed that overall the Aberdeenshire local partners were making Good Progress in many areas with many examples of good practice identified. However with regards the “whole system indicator” for hospital discharges Audit Scotland felt that further progress needed to be made on the balance of care to address an over reliance on care home services. A number of additional steps need to be taken to extend joint resourcing and to develop and widen single shared assessment.

How Well Did We Perform?

(1) Children’s Services

(a) **Child Care Placements** – the percentage of children being looked after by the council who are in community placements.

This indicator shows the proportion of those children being looked after by the Council at the end of the reporting year who are being looked after either at home or in other community placements, i.e. with relatives/friends, foster parents, in private lodgings or with prospective adopters. The indicator reflects the extent to which the Council has been successful in finding community, as opposed to residential, placements for children. The performance of Aberdeenshire Council in the period 2004-05 is shown below:-

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	87.6%
Ranking	15th
Performance of Best Council	95.3% (Perth and Kinross)
Performance of Worst	75.8% (East Dunbartonshire)
Scottish Average	87.4%

(b) **Social Background Reports** – percentage of reports requested by the Reporter that were submitted within 20 days. The 20 days is the nationally defined standard for submitting these reports. Aberdeenshire Council’s performance in achieving the target is shown below.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	40.0%
Ranking	16 th
Performance of Best Council	92.1% (East Renfrewshire)
Performance of Worst	15.7% (Eilean Siar)
Scottish Average	43.0%

(c) **Supervision** – the percentage of children made subject to a supervision order that were seen by a supervising officer within 15 days. The National Standard is that “the local authority will give effect to supervision requirements with no condition of residence within 15 days of date of issue by the children’s hearing.” Aberdeenshire Council’s performance in achieving the target is shown below:-

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	98.6%
Ranking	7 th
Performance of Best Council	100% (6 councils inc Aberdeen City).
Performance of Worst	32.4% (North Lanarkshire)
Scottish Average	78.7%

(2) Community Care Assessments people aged 65 or over

Assessment and review are the key activities in social work. Their purpose is to identify the need, if any, that a person has for social care. The Council is responsible for ensuring that assessments are carried out. When a person has been found to have need for a service or services following an assessment or review, the council attempts to provide the services required. The following tables provide information on the number of assessments or reviews undertaken and show the scale of the task facing the Council. It should be noted that the information is contextual rather than performance related information. Not all people aged 65 or over will need an assessment and not all people assessed will need a service.

(a) Assessments

In 2004-05 the total population of Aberdeenshire that was aged 65 or over was 33,904. A further 142,394 were in the age range 18 – 64. In 2004-05 Aberdeenshire Council carried out 6,898 community care assessments or reviews for people aged 65 or over.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	203.5 assessments per 1,000 population.
Ranking	15th
Performance of Best Council	West Dunbartonshire with 392.4 assessments per 1,000 population
Performance of Worst	North Lanarkshire with 141.7 assessments per 1,000 population
Scottish Average	219.3 assessments per 1,000 population

(b) Receiving a Service

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	207.7 people receiving a service per 1,000 population.
Ranking	24th
Performance of Best Council	Falkirk with 385.2 old people receiving a community care service per 1,000 of the population
Performance of Worst	North Ayrshire with only 152.9 old people receiving a community care service per 1,000 of the population.
Scottish Average	254.4 people receiving a service per 1,000 population

(3) Community Care Assessments – all needs

(a) Assessments

During 2004-05 Aberdeenshire carried out a total of 10,539 assessments covering all categories of need.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	59.8 assessments per 1,000 of the population.
Ranking	18th
Performance of Best Council	Inverclyde with 134 assessments being carried out per 1,000 population.
Performance of Worst	Stirling with only 44.4 assessments carried out per 1,000 population
Scottish Average	72.5 assessments per 1,000 population.

(b) Receiving a Service

As a result of these assessments a total of **11,681** people in Aberdeenshire received a community care service in 2004-05.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	66.3 people per 1,000 population
Ranking	25 th
Performance of Best Council	East Ayrshire with 143.2 people receiving a service per 1,000 head of population
Performance of Worst	Aberdeen City with only 46.7 people receiving a service per 1,000 head of population
Scottish Average	81.9 people receiving a service per 1,000 head of population

(4) Levels of Homecare

In 2004-05 within Aberdeenshire there were 1,737 people aged 65 or over who were in receipt of homecare. The total number of homecare hours provided by the Council to these people was **5,484**.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	294.9 hours of homecare per 1,000 population aged 65 or over.
Ranking	28 th
Performance of Best Council	Eilean Siar with 989.7 hours of homecare per 1,000 population aged 65 or over.
Performance of Worst	Perth and Kinross with 241.7 hours of homecare per 1,000 population aged 65 or over.
Scottish Average	503.9 hours of homecare per 1,000 population aged 65 or over.

(5) Levels Of Personal Care

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	82.8% of the home care clients aged 65 or over received personal care.
Ranking	5 th
Performance of Best Council	West Lothian Council with 91% of home care clients aged 65 or over receiving personal care
Performance of Worst	Midlothian Council with 35.1%. of home care clients aged 65 or over receiving personal care
Scottish Average	62.4% of home care clients aged 65 or over receiving personal care.

3.2 Housing

Local Housing Strategy

In 2004 the Local Housing Strategy for Aberdeenshire was formally launched. The Local Housing Strategy is the Council's key strategic housing document. It sets out the major priorities for housing in Aberdeenshire for the next 5 years. It not only deals with Council owned housing but also identifies priorities for housing of all tenures, including Housing Associations, Owner Occupier and the Private Rental Sector.

The Strategy was developed through a framework of partnership working with the purpose of establishing a shared understanding between partners and providers of the issues and priorities within Aberdeenshire and providing an agreed framework within which housing providers and investors can operate, and contribute to the agreed strategy.

A number of actions needed to deliver the strategic objectives of the strategy are set out in the document along with the monitoring and evaluation framework which provides details of measures, targets and timescales. A monitoring report will be produced annually and the success of the Strategy will be reported in subsequent Public Performance Reports.

Achieving National Standards in Housing

As a landlord, the Council is required to show how it can bring its housing stock up to a new national minimum physical quality standard (the Scottish Housing Quality Standard). During 2004 the Council prepared a Standard Delivery Plan setting out how we would do this. All Registered Social Landlords are required to produce this and it involves reviewing information on stock condition, analysing this against the details of the new standard and estimating costs associated with meeting the standard by the deadline of 2015.

In April 2005 the Council submitted the Standard Delivery Plan to Communities Scotland for approval. They have the responsibility to assess the plans produced by all Registered Social Landlords in Scotland. Once approved the Council will implement the plan.

Homelessness

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires the Council to develop a Homelessness Strategy. The Council's Homelessness Strategy was developed in 2003 covering the period 2003-2006. The strategy sets out 17 main objectives to help tackle homelessness. Progress with some of the main objectives in the strategy is summarised below:-

- The Council has established the Aberdeenshire Homeless Network with partner organizations to provide an improved homelessness service to people within Aberdeenshire. The principle of equal opportunities for homeless applicants is being complied with as homeless applicants have the same choices and receive the same number of offers as other applicants.

- All relevant staff have undertaken accredited training to achieve the Home Point Scottish National Standards for Housing Advice and Information.
- The Council is working with Aberdeen Foyer to help identify and develop training opportunities for homeless people. Aberdeenshire Council is also a member of Scottish Homelessness Employment Network (SHEN) and will seek to use this network to identify and introduce ways to improve the employment opportunities for the homeless.
- Closer links with NHS Grampian have been developed in relation to the provision of services and advice to homeless persons. In addition monies are being used to improve the support services to young vulnerable people who are currently or have been looked after in order to prevent homelessness arising in this group.
- Additional staff have been employed to provide housing support to homeless people and to help households that are in danger of losing their tenancy to maintain their tenancy and thus prevent homelessness arising. Linked to this action a review of the Council's rent arrears policy has been carried out.
- The needs of the homeless have been recognized in the Local Housing Strategy 2004-2009 which plans to ensure a minimum of 350 affordable homes are developed to meet identified needs per year for the period of the strategy. Access to development funding from Communities Scotland is essential to any provision.
- The supply of temporary homeless accommodation has been increased through the purchase of properties and the use of Council stock in order to help enable the Council to meet its legal obligation under the housing legislation. A new supported accommodation project of 10 places for homeless people with substance misuse issues opened in Fraserburgh in August 2004 and has been operating at full capacity.
- An Aberdeenshire refuge for those surviving domestic violence was also opened in Marr providing up to 5 places. In addition the provision of home security devises to allow people surviving domestic violence to remain in their own home continues to be funded from the Scottish Executive homelessness grant. The provision of Children Support workers who provide support to children of people surviving domestic violence is continuing to be part funded by the homelessness grant.
- The Council continues to work closely with NHS Grampian on the implementation of the Health and Homelessness Action Plan. The Council is represented on the NHS Grampian steering group that is overseeing the implementation of the plan and housing staff are represented on the various Public Health Groups that are charged with delivering the plan.

Fuel Poverty

The Council launched the process for developing a Fuel Poverty Strategy for Aberdeenshire at a conference in March 2004, which attracted over 80 delegates from a wide range of organisations. The conference helped raise awareness of fuel poverty in Aberdeenshire and highlighted the key issues. Further to the conference a

core group was set up to drive the development of the strategy. The core group produced a draft strategy and held a consultation seminar in October 2004. Feedback from the event generated some new actions and confirmed the general consensus on the strategic objectives.

Further consultation was then carried out through an Aberdeenshire Council Tenant Event and Road shows, which involved officers and other stakeholders. Elected Members were then consulted through the Area Committees and Social Work & Housing Committee. Following these consultations the draft strategy was finalised and submitted to the Scottish Executive for approval in July 2005.

How Well Did We Perform?

The performance of the Housing service is measured through a number of Statutory Performance Indicators collected by Audit Scotland. These indicators show the following:-

(1) Tenancy Changes – the percentage of rent loss due to voids.

This indicator measures the efficiency with which councils manage changes in tenancy by revealing the level of rent loss due to houses remaining empty when they could be available for letting.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	1.80% of total rental income lost due to voids
Ranking	11 th
Performance of Best Council	Moray with only 0.40% of its rental income lost due to voids.
Performance of Worst	West Dunbartonshire with 7.4% of its rental income lost due to voids.
Scottish Average	2.52% of rental income lost due to voids.

(2) Tenancy Changes – the percentage of empty homes that were let within four weeks.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	44.3% of empty homes relet within four weeks
Ranking	11 th
Performance of Best Council	West Lothian with 93.2% of its empty homes relet within four weeks.
Performance of Worst	Aberdeen City with only 1.7% of its empty homes relet within four weeks.
Scottish Average	38.5% of empty homes relet within four weeks.

(3) Council House Sales.

The government has set a target of 26 weeks for a council to process an application to buy a council house under the “Right To Buy” legislation.

The indicator shows that Aberdeenshire Council were performing below the national average with regards Council House sales. As a result the Law and Administration service of the Council carried out a full review of their processes and introduced a revised procedure for processing applications in October 2005.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance Ranking	68% of council house sales completed within the 26 weeks
Performance of Best Council	18 th
Performance of Worst	Angus with 92.8% of its council house sales completed within 26 weeks.
Scottish Average	East Dunbartonshire with only 17% of council house sales completed within 26 weeks
	72.2% of council house sales completed within 26 weeks

(4) Homeless – Efficiency of the Council in fulfilling its responsibility to those who present themselves as homeless or potentially homeless.

This measures the average time between presentation and completion of assessment as homeless.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance Ranking	13.5 weeks
Performance of Best Council	18 th
Performance of Worst	Falkirk with an average of 2.2 weeks
Scottish Average	Midlothian with an average of 56 weeks.
	14.6 weeks.

(5) Homeless – Effectiveness of the Council in fulfilling its responsibility to those who are assessed as homeless or potentially homeless.

This measures the percentage of cases reassessed as homeless or potentially homeless within 12 months of the previous case being completed.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance Ranking	12.6% of its cases reassessed.
Performance of Best Council	20 th
Performance of Worst	Falkirk with only 2.2% of its cases reassessed.
Scottish Average	Inverclyde with 30.4% of its cases reassessed.
	12.1% of cases reassessed.

3.3 Community Safety

Aberdeenshire Community Safety Partnership

The Aberdeenshire Community Safety Partnership was established in 1998 out of the Community Planning Partnership. A Community Safety Steering Group is responsible for the development of the Community Safety Strategy, which is then implemented through 7 local community safety network groups, which have complete coverage of Aberdeenshire. Each year an Action Plan is drawn up to help deliver the Community Safety Strategy. During the year 2004-05 £133,000 of Scottish Executive funding was secured and distributed to assist with projects, which help to achieve aims in the Action Plan. Another £30,000 was made available for summer initiatives such as the successful “Splash Don’t Trash” campaign.

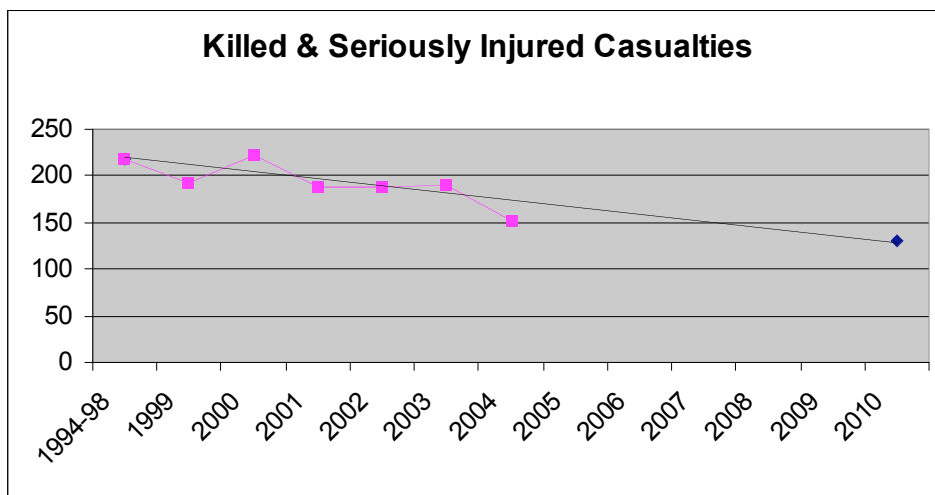
To help deliver the anti-social behaviour agenda, community wardens were employed in Peterhead and Fraserburgh and an Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator post was created. In addition the Partnership was awarded over £100,000 as a Local Action Fund to provide activities for young people to divert them from crime and anti-social behaviour. More information is available in the Partnership’s annual report.

Road Safety

The Aberdeenshire Road Safety Plan was first launched in October 2000 covering the period 2000 – 2005. The Plan sets out the Council’s targets for road casualty reduction. These are based on and are the same as, or more stringent than, national casualty reduction targets for the period to 2010, as specified by Central Government. Progress to 2005 in meeting the national targets in Aberdeenshire is illustrated in the charts below.

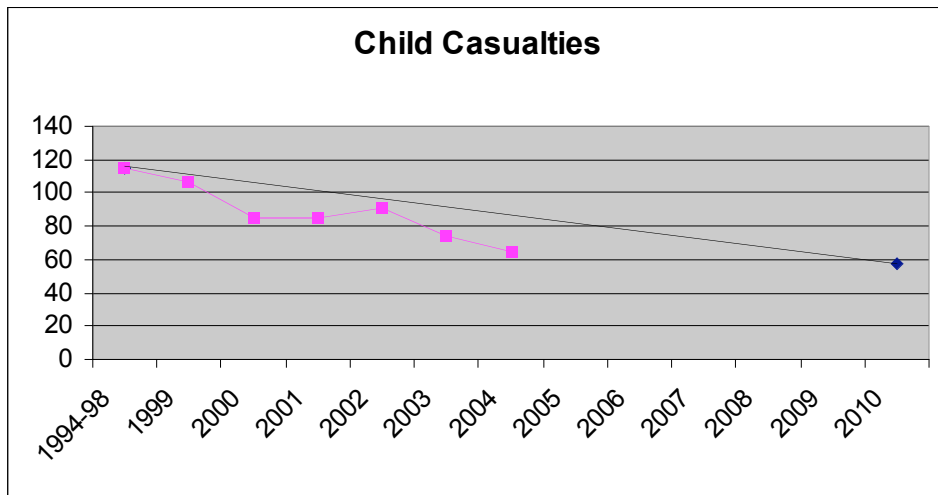
Progress of Aberdeenshire Targets against straight-line graph from 1994-98 baseline to 2010 Target

Target 1: 40% reduction in Killed & Seriously Injured



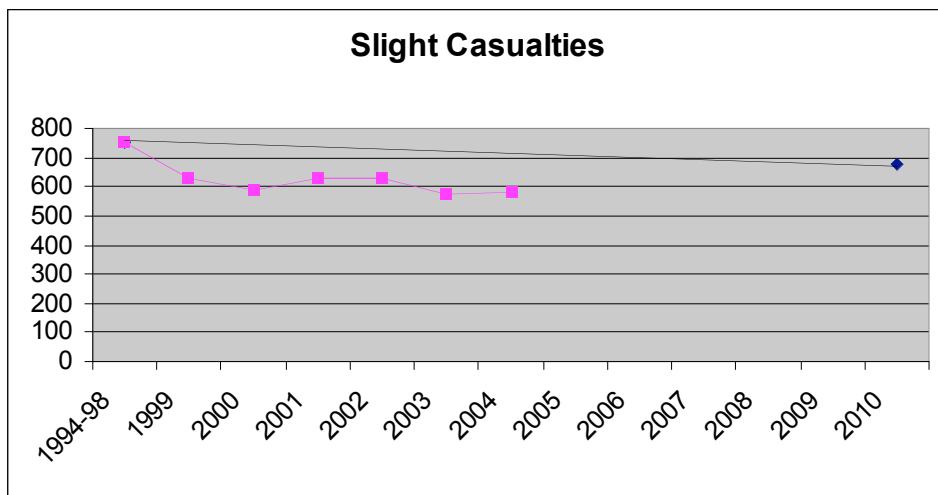
The chart shows that we are generally on track to meet the 2010 target.

Target 2: 50% reduction in child casualties



The chart shows that we are achieving a consistent downward trend and continued progress at this rate will mean we will meet our target earlier than 2010.

Target 3: 10% reduction in slight casualties



This chart shows that a 10% reduction in slight casualties has already been achieved. Although the trend here has generally levelled off, it is still more than twice the final target reduction.

Safer Routes To School

The Safer Routes to School Initiative began as a pilot project in 1998 covering 12 schools (2 in each Area). Following the success of the pilot project the Council agreed that a further 12 schools each year would be covered by the initiative. By 2004 a total of 48 schools had joined the initiative.

In 2003 the Scottish Executive announced the availability of grant funding to create School Travel Co-ordinator posts in each local authority in Scotland. The Council successfully secured the necessary funding for this post whose role has now been expanded to include the development of School Travel Plans for all schools in Aberdeenshire. During 2004 a pilot scheme was agreed for schools in the Portlethen Local education and Recreation network. The outcomes of the pilot to be used as the model for rolling out the School Travel Plan initiative in other areas.

4 Jobs And The Economy

Strategic Intention

We will work to

Create an economy in which sustainable economic activity, steady growth, low unemployment and a broadening and strengthening of the economic base are established.



4.1 The Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum

The Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum (formerly the North East Scotland Economic Forum) was formed in April 2001 to streamline and improve the delivery of local economic development services locally. The Forum also plays a key role in managing strategic economic development issues for the benefit of Aberdeen City and Shire and its people. The Forum is currently chaired by Aberdeenshire Council. Members include representatives from Aberdeen City Council, Scottish Enterprise Grampian, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, Visit Scotland Aberdeen & Grampian, Careers Scotland/Jobcentre Plus, Communities Scotland, the HE/FE, energy and rural sectors.

The Forum has developed an economic growth strategy for Aberdeen City and Shire entitled **Business 2010**, which outlines its shared vision and programme of action to ensure the continued prosperity and growth of the area.

The six strategic objectives set out in the strategy are:-

- To become a city and region of enlightenment
- To attract and develop the best people
- To be a world class strategic location
- To be a unique destination for leisure and business visitors
- To promote sustainable economic growth
- To develop sustainable, competitive and inclusive communities.

During 2004/05 the Forum carried out a range of initiatives in fulfilment of the above objectives. Some of these are described below.

- A major city and regional identity and image development exercise to strengthen awareness and knowledge of Aberdeen and the North East to attract visitors, inward investors and other customers that are key to the future economic growth of the region.
- The Forum commissioned Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Enterprise Grampian to carry out a land audit to find out about the supply of available and suitable commercial or industrial land in the North East.
- A Fisheries Conference was held in October 2004 to discuss the recommendations of the Royal Society of Edinburgh inquiry into the Scottish Fishing Industry and the recommendations of the Prime Ministers Strategy Unit inquiry into the UK Fishing Industry and to develop an industry wide response to both the reports.
- Co-operation with telecommunication companies resulted in the majority of Aberdeenshire being made Broad-Band accessible.
- The North East Scotland Economic Review website featuring over 60 socio-economic indicators for the North East of Scotland was set up to support businesses and policy makers.

4.2 Economic Development Strategy

The Council's Economic Development Strategy for the years 2001 – 2007 was first launched in September 2001. The Strategy provides a framework for the economic development activity within the Council and builds on the Council's commitments set out in the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum Economic Growth Strategy, Business 2010.

The mainstay of the Economic Development Strategy is the Vision and Strategic Objectives. The Council's Vision, as set out in the Strategy, was that in 2007 Aberdeenshire would have an economy, "in which sustainable economic activity, steady growth, low unemployment, and a broadening and strengthening of the economic base are established. This in turn will support a high quality of life for all those who live and work in Aberdeenshire."

In September 2004 a mid term review of the strategy was carried out to take account of the changing economic climate and the changing policies of partner agencies. The Review concluded that the Vision and the Strategic Objectives set out in the Strategy in 2001 were still relevant. The new work that has been taken on by the Council in economic development since 2001 is in line with the Vision and Objectives. However, the review recognised that there was a need to amend two of the Objectives to include changes that have happened in the last three years such as the launch of the Building Buchan-New Beginnings initiative and further development of the Councils Sustainable Development Charter.

A review of progress with the strategic objectives in the Economic Development Strategy shows the following main achievements for the period 2001- 2004:-

- European funding was secured from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to match finance from Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Enterprise Grampian. This allowed a four -year programme of support for existing community economic development groups to be put in place. In addition it allowed two new two Community Economic Development facilitators to be employed to provide assistance to new groups.
- Completion of a number of projects to help regenerate the areas of North and west Aberdeenshire, these too assisted by ERDF funding;
- Development of a wood fuels project in partnership with Grampian Woodlands Company;
- Provision of support to different agencies in delivering and promoting the tourist products of Aberdeenshire;
- Delivery of the Farm Business Development Scheme;
- Provision of on-going support to the Fishing industry;
- Provision of advice and support to Aberdeenshire businesses through the Support for Aberdeenshire Business Scheme (SAB). During 2004-05 the Council provided grants worth £201,758 to 36 businesses and loans worth £82,000 to 6 businesses. As well as leveraging £1,619,278 of private finance into business projects the SAB scheme has helped create 61 jobs and safeguard 141 jobs.
- Supporting the food industry in Grampian in various ways including organising the Taste of Grampian event and the Grampian Food Forum Awards;

- Appointment of an officer to promote the North East of Scotland as an area to make films and television programmes;
- Promoting the development of Broad Band within Aberdeenshire – by the end of 2005 all major communities had access to affordable Broad Band.
- Taking a leading role in the creation of the North Sea Regional Advisory Council (NSRAC). The aim of the NSRAC is to work towards integrated and sustainable management of fisheries in the wider context of the sustainability of the marine environment. The principal objective of the NSRAC is to prepare and provide advice on the management of the fisheries of the North Sea on behalf of stakeholders in order to promote the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy. This to be done within the general aim of attaining the sustainable management of fisheries, incorporating an ecosystem based approach and based on the precautionary principle. Aberdeenshire Council took a lead role in the creation of NSRAC and currently provides the secretariat to the Council.

How Well Are We Performing?

There are many statistics that demonstrate the continuing high quality of life in Aberdeenshire, these include the following:-

Average Weekly Earnings 2001- 2004

	2001	2002	2003	2004
North East Scotland	£455.00	£489.60	£501.10	£523.30
Aberdeen	£486.20	£520.10	£532.70	£538.90
Aberdeenshire	£374.70	£418.30	£424.40	£483.00
Scotland	£411.10	£434.60	£447.00	£459.60
GB	£451.70	£474.30	£489.20	£507.00

Source: ONS (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings)

Gross Domestic Product Growth 2001- 2003

	2001	2002	2003
Aberdeen	2.8	1.5	1.2
Aberdeenshire	1.3	1.4	1.2
Scotland	0.9	0.3	1.8
UK	2.3	1.8	2.2

Source: Mackay Consultants, Estimates of Local Economic Output (2003).

These indicators show that the Aberdeenshire economy is in relatively good health. Earnings are above the Scottish average, claimants of key income benefits are low, entry of school leavers into higher and further education is higher than the Scottish average and growth rates have remained stable over 2001 to 2003. In addition the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004) showed that Aberdeenshire is ranked 31 out of 32 authorities in Scotland i.e. least deprived. However, there are nonetheless pockets of deprivation within Aberdeenshire, particularly Peterhead and Fraserburgh, two towns targeted by the Council for regeneration projects.

Unemployment Rates 2001- 2004

	Nov 2001		Nov 2002		Nov 2003		Nov 2004	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Aberdeen	2,299	1.6%	2,353	1.7%	2,600	1.9%	2,310	1.7%
Aberdeenshire	1,647	1.2%	1,715	1.2%	1,848	1.3%	1,814	1.3%
Scotland	101,171	3.2%	96,647	3.1%	95,449	3%	86,053	2.7%
UK	926,187	2.5%	905,569	2.5%	884,646	2.4%	803,029	2.2%

Source: ONS (NOMIS)

The chart above shows that unemployment in Aberdeenshire is below the Scottish average and has remained relatively stable since 2001. Later figures (May 2005) show unemployment standing at 1.2%. This is lower than Aberdeen City (1.7%), Scotland (2.8%) and the UK (2.4%), and the lowest rate of all the Scottish local authorities. However there are areas of high unemployment in Huntly, Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

Despite the low unemployment rate the Gross Domestic Product per head of population in 2001 was just under £8,000 in Aberdeenshire as compared with over £10,000 per head of population for Scotland as a whole. This low GDP reflects the poor state of the rural economy at present where there has been a certain shedding of jobs but also a significant drop in rural incomes.

The Council has also recorded a significant drop in the loss of rural facilities such as post offices and petrol stations in Aberdeenshire. For example the number of rural shops has fallen from 826 to 650 between 1981 and 2003. The indicators show that a concentrated effort is still needed to assist the rural economy to readjust the restructuring of rural industries and services.

4.3 Building Buchan – New Beginnings

"Building Buchan New Beginnings" is a three-year Action Plan to address the economic challenges facing coastal communities across North Aberdeenshire. It is led by three core partners - Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Enterprise Grampian, and Communities Scotland. The aim of the Action Plan is to build on the economic foundations within the area, to create a sustainable growing economy and integrated communities. The European Regional Development Fund through the East of Scotland Objective 2 programme 2000-2006 is supplying substantial elements of the action plan, which has an initial investment of £7 million.

Considerable progress has been made over the past 12 months and include:-

- In the first year twenty-five companies received assistance of up to £10,000 each to develop and implement diversification strategies covering new products, services or markets. Help was also provided to a range of small to medium companies to help them market their business to attract new customers and retain existing ones.

- Actions were taken to encourage people to think about being self-employed. Enterprise Island was launched in November 2004 to encourage people who had thought about business start-up but who had never had the confidence to take the first steps to do just that. Following recruitment days in Banff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead a panel of successful entrepreneurs selected 11 individuals to join the programme. Since completing it in February 2005 four have already gone on to start a business.
- A new ICT Advice Centre was opened in the Burnside Business Centre in Peterhead providing help and support to local businesses keen to adopt broadband and eBusiness applications. The Advice Centre provides a wide range of workshops designed to help businesses better understand the advantages to their business and customers from connecting to the Internet and using broadband.
- During the year a new business centre was completed in Fraserburgh, land was purchased to expand Macduff Industrial Estate, and a major upgrade of Dales Industrial Estate in Peterhead was completed.
- A £50 million Master Plan to bring new life back into the north Fraserburgh area was produced by the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership following widespread consultation with the community. Through Langstane Housing Association the plan is to work with the local community to invest around £10 million to create new modern housing for sale and rent. The intention is also to improve the Marconi Road area by demolishing 95 old council properties and replace them with modern homes, in an attractive environment, that people want. In addition there are proposals to provide new sites for business development and create a more pleasant environment around the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses.
- The Banffshire Coast Tourism Strategy was produced to promote the area's unique coastline, heritage and architecture. A key project in the strategy is the creation of a new marina at Banff Harbour to provide a safe deepwater mooring for yachts but also to bring life back into the historic heart of the town. This will help generate more trade for existing and new businesses.

4.4 Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership

The Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership (ATP) is a formal partnership between three public sector organisations:- Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Communities Scotland. The partnership agreement was first signed in March 1998 with the aim of revitalising the five Aberdeenshire Towns of Ellon, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Peterhead and Stonehaven. In 2003 Banff and Macduff became associate members of the ATP programme and Huntly joined at the end of 2004.

The purpose of the Partnership is to:-

- Provide strategic leadership
- Carry out joint research relating to the town needs
- Intervene, where necessary and feasible, with direct or indirect investment programmes (staff and/or money)
- Create a framework for enabling and assisting community action

Some of the main achievements of the Partnership during 2004-05 are summarised below:-

- In early 2004 Banff and Macduff joined with Fraserburgh and Peterhead and entered the Interreg IIIb RevitHar project, along with Dutch and German Harbour Towns. Part of the project involves the release of around £100k for the towns to use to tackle negative image issues.
- In 2005 Ellon, Stonehaven and Inverurie along with towns from Sweden, Poland and Greece received approval to participate in the Sustaining Small Expanding Towns Project (SusSet), which is an EU Interreg IIIC project. The SusSet Project has been set up to find the best "coping strategies" for small but expanding towns in the EU and is about sharing and learning from experiences elsewhere. The project lasts for 30 months, running until mid-2007.
- In Inverurie a sustainable and affordable housing scheme at Blackhall Road has been completed.
- In Stonehaven promotional support has been provided to Friends of Stonehaven Open Air Pool and a number of improvements have been carried out in the Market Square.

More details of the role of ATP and what has been achieved within each of the participant towns can be found on the ATP website at:-

<http://www.atap.org.uk/home.htm>

4.5 Provision Of Business Centres

As a result of an increasing demand for Business Centres in Aberdeenshire, in 2003 the Council agreed a strategy to identify locations where there is an established demand for business space, which will be lost to other areas unless quality office facilities are provided at that location. The Council, working in partnership with other public sector agencies such as Scottish Enterprise Grampian and with private developers, is striving to meet this demand.

The Fraserburgh Business Centre cost around £800,000 and was funded by Aberdeenshire Council in partnership with Scottish Enterprise Grampian and the East of Scotland Grampian Partnership. It also received a grant of £320,000 from the European Regional Development Fund through the East of Scotland Objective 2 Programme 2000-2006. The centre provides 27 offices for lease.

The new business centre will be managed by Enterprise North East Trust and provides business accommodation to promote start-ups and expanding enterprises in Fraserburgh and the surrounding area.

The Turriff Business Centre was opened in April 2005. It cost around £390,000 and comprises 12 offices with a total area of 204 square metres.

Currently in development is a new business centre at Crichtiebank, Inverurie. This is being developed in partnership with the Enterprise North East Trust Ltd.

4.6 North East Of Scotland Transport Partnership (NESTRANS)

NESTRANS is a public/private partnership made up of the Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. The four partners in NESTRANS are striving to deliver an integrated Modern Transport System for the area over a 16-year period.

The Modern Transport System sets out proposals for a number of initiatives to improve transport to and within the north east of Scotland by 2011. These include improved park and ride schemes, expanded cycle routes, urban traffic control, increased pedestrianisation, trunk road improvements throughout the region and the development of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route. Improved freight rail enhancements and access to areas such as the airport, harbour, industrial areas, city centre and other town centres are also proposed.

During 2004-05 NESTRANS made the following progress with actions detailed in the Modern Transport System:-

- In spring 2005 consultations were carried out on route options for the southern section of the proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR).
- During the year following pressure from NESTRANS the Scottish Executive committed to dualling the existing single-carriageway A90 between Balmedie and Tipperty, north of Aberdeen.
- NESTRANS also developed a range of proposals for improving bus travel in the North East encompassing bus priority measures, better buses and infrastructure and information improvements. Significant investment in bus lanes on the major routes into Aberdeen City have taken place, in conjunction with the development of new Park and Ride facilities
- With funding awarded in June 2004 by the Scottish Executive, improved transport interchanges at Inverurie, Peterhead and Banchory, plus other locations across the area, were developed by Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership.
- To help more people share car journeys, NESTRANS launched a car sharing website for the northeast, this can be found at:- www.nestranscarshare.com.
- NESTRANS supports improved facilities for cyclists and during the year invested in dedicated cycle lanes, advanced stop lines at traffic lights and the provision of cycle racks at railway stations. These improve the safety and convenience of cycling. Pedestrian improvements have included the installation of more pedestrian crossings and footpaths.
- With funding from the Scottish Executive, 20 mph school safety zones are being rolled out across the northeast – reducing traffic speeds around schools. Home zones have also been introduced in some residential areas to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

5 Learning

Strategic Intention

We will work to

Implement a vision of Aberdeenshire as a place where citizens participate in lifelong learning and where everyone is included.



5.1 National Priorities For Education

The National Priorities in Education were established by the Scottish Executive in 2000. They set out a coherent and agreed set of strategic objectives and defined outcomes that reflect the values, principles and aspirations of all who are committed to promoting improvements in Scottish education. The National Priorities are:-

(1) *Achievement and Attainment*: To raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement including examination results;

(2) *Framework for Learning*: To support and develop the skills of teachers, the self-discipline of pupils and to enhance school environments so that they are conducive to teaching and learning;

(3) *Inclusion and Equality*: To promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education, with particular regard paid to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and other lesser used languages;

(4) *Values and Citizenship*: To work with parents to teach pupils respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society and to teach them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society;

(5) *Learning for Life*: To equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society and to encourage creativity and ambition.

Aberdeenshire Council is fully committed to pursuing the National Priorities for education with rigour and determination and recognises that they are the key to individual, local and national well-being and prosperity.

How Well Did We Perform?

On an annual basis the Council produces its "Standards & Quality Report for Education." The focus of this report is on our progress and achievements in delivering the National Priorities for Education. It provides information about our progress in areas which are the bedrock of education e.g. numeracy and literacy, as well as areas of development which are new challenges for us e.g. education for citizenship and Integrated Children's Services. Some of the progress covered by the report includes the following:-

National Priority 1 Achievement and Attainment

- *5-14 Reading, Writing and Mathematics*. (See table below). Use of the 5 –14 tests for reading, writing and mathematics show that there has been a slight improvement in Primary reading and writing during 2004-05, however there is a need to continue to focus upon 5 –14 reading in order to raise Aberdeenshire's Primaries above the national average. Mathematics, which was a target for improvement, has improved by 3 percentage points.

Percentage Of Primary Pupils Attaining Appropriate 5 – 14 Levels

Reading Primary Levels	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5
Aberdeenshire	81.8%	80.7%	80.8%
Comparator Local Authorities	82.3%	82.1%	
National	81.4%	81.4%	
Written Primary Levels	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5
Aberdeenshire	75.7%	74.1%	74.9%
Comparator Local Authorities	74.1%	74.0%	
National	73.5%	73.6%	
Maths Primary Levels	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5
Aberdeenshire	80.5%	79.5%	82.4%
Comparator Local Authorities	80.7%	82.7%	
National	80.0%	81.8%	

Note in 2004 the national collection of 5 – 14 data ceased so comparison with our comparator family and national data is not currently available.

- In Secondary 5-14 attainment continues to improve significantly in reading and mathematics. Even though above the national average, writing is a focus for improvement. (See table below).

Percentage Of Secondary Pupils Attaining Level E By The End Of S2

Reading S2	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5
Aberdeenshire	66.2%	67.1%	67.9%
Comparator Local Authorities	64.8%	67.2%	
National	60.5%	64.5%	
Writing S2	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5
Aberdeenshire	57.2%	55.5%	55.0%
Comparator Local Authorities	55.4%	56.7%	
National	51.2%	52.1%	
Mathematics S2	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5
Aberdeenshire	60.7%	66.2%	67.5%
Comparator Local Authorities	59.7%	64.3%	
National	54.2%	59.4%	

- *SQA Exam Results*. Results show increasing attainment in SQA examinations and progress being made towards the National Priority attainment measures set for 2005. Overall Aberdeenshire schools' performance in SQA exams is very good. (See Table Below).

Percentage Of Pupils Gaining 5+ Standard Grade Credit Awards (Level 5 Or Better)
By End Of S4

	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5
Aberdeenshire	43.1%	42.8%	43.9%
Comparator Local Authorities	37.6%	37.7%	37.4%
National	34.0%	34.6%	33.8%

Aberdeenshire Council was ranked 3rd out of the 32 Scottish local authorities in terms of the performance of its pupils in Standard Grade in 2004-05. The best performing council was East Renfrewshire with nearly 60% of its pupils 5 or more Standard Grade Credit Awards, the worst performing council was Glasgow City where the level was around 20%.

Percentage Of Pupils Gaining 5+ Highers In S5 (Level 6 Or Better)

	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5
Aberdeenshire	12.3%	12.1%	13.0%
Comparator Local Authorities	10.9%	10.1%	10.7%
National	9.6%	9.4%	9.4%

Aberdeenshire Council was ranked 4th out of the 32 Scottish local authorities in terms of the performance of its pupils in the Highers. The best performing council was East Renfrewshire with around 23% of its pupils gaining 5 or more Highers in S5. The worst performing council was Glasgow City with less than 5% of their pupils gaining 5 or more Highers.

- *How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) Quality Indicators.* Average scores arising from school audits of achievement and attainment based on 'How Good is Our School?' quality indicators continued to rise during the year. Overall attainment is good and continues to improve. Achievement and attainment can be summarised as follows:-
 - Literacy in Aberdeenshire is good and steady.
 - Numeracy in Aberdeenshire is good and improving.
 - The overall quality of attainment in Aberdeenshire is good and in some areas it is very good.
 - Examination results in Aberdeenshire are improving steadily.

National Priority 2 Framework For Learning

- *Flexibility in the Curriculum.* Aberdeenshire continues to encourage and support all schools to apply curriculum flexibility to better meet the needs of their learners and communities. This is an area of major and diverse change. Our progress is good. Aberdeenshire's implementation of curriculum flexibility is regarded as an example of good practice in Scotland.
- *Curriculum Guidelines.* 3-14 Curriculum Guidelines were agreed in 2005. These guidelines have been well received in schools and have been endorsed by the National Co-ordinator of the Curriculum for excellence task group. Education also

now provides subject-focused curriculum development through Curriculum Support Groups.

- *New School Builds.* A number of new builds were underway during 2005, these included Kintore (opened January 2006), Hill of Banchory (opened January 2006), Longside (opened October 2005), Rothienorman (opened 12th December 2005) and Rosehearty (opened October 2005) primary schools. A new replacement academy with increased capacity at Portlethen was also under construction during 2005. This should open in June 2006. These new schools will contain community facilities as appropriate to the locality, including public libraries at Rosehearty, Kintore and Portlethen, Social Work Family Centres at Hill of Banchory, Kintore and Portlethen. Portlethen Academy will also include facilities for the Community Dental Service.

National Priority 3 Inclusion and Equality

- *Inclusion and Additional Support for Pupils.* Good progress has been made in this area. A multi-agency steering group was set up to take this initiative forward. During the year they held multi-agency awareness raising sessions for senior managers, rolled out a training pack for establishments and established arrangements for Curriculum Support Plans and mediation.
- *Integrated Community Schooling (ICS).* To ensure integrated service delivery a multi-agency review group undertook a review of the rollout arrangements for Integrated Community Schooling across Aberdeenshire. The review looked at issues such as management structure, roles and responsibilities, nomenclature and perceptions, staffing and allocation of budgets. Recommendations from this review were approved by the Council during 2005 and a revised roll out programme is underway.
- *Inclusion and Equality.* A range of actions were taken during the year to support inclusive education and promote equality of opportunity for all pupils. These include the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act (2004). Awareness raising has taken place on a multi-agency basis for all managers who will share information with staff. Arrangements for mediation, where this is required, have also been established.
- *Accessibility Strategy.* This is about improving access to education for pupils with disabilities. There are three strands: improved physical access to buildings, including transport; improved access to the curriculum; and improved communication of information. Work on implementing the strategy was completed during the year. All schools were audited for disability access and primary secondary and special school curriculum were audited and areas for improvement identified. Arrangements have been put in place to ensure pupils and parents are able to access information in their preferred language and format. A new strategy is now being developed for the period 2005-2008.
- *Race Equality.* A revised and improved race equality policy was put in place for the education service during the year. It contains a number of strands including

attainment, attendance, exclusion of pupils, recruitment and training of staff, monitoring of racist incidents.

National Priority 4 Values and Citizenship.

- *Aberdeenshire Pupil Forum.* This met on a regular basis throughout the year and was consulted on a range of policy initiatives as well as commenting on individual plans for new schools.
- *Education or Citizenship.* Aberdeenshire Council has developed an Authority Citizen Curriculum Support Group. During the year this group completed an audit of Education for Citizenship delivery in Aberdeenshire to help influence the Councils approach to citizenship education.
- *Provision of Guidance and Pupil Support.* The provision of pastoral care has been maintained at a very high level in schools. The Pupil Support Review Group has explored structures for Pupil Support and is continuing to work towards a model for pupil support, which will both maintain the best of current provision and respond to the challenge of these initiatives. Very good links have been formed between the Director of Education and Recreation and the Scottish School Boards Association and individual school boards.

National Priority 5 Learning for Life

- *Education for Enterprise Curriculum.* Good progress is being made in this area. The Council has produced an 'Enterprise in Education Plan' to give direction to education for enterprise and entrepreneurship and a Support Team has been formed to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the plan.
- *Sports and Physical Activity.* The Education Service works in partnership with the Recreation Service to deliver the National Priorities for Sports and Physical Activity. During the year good progress was made delivering these objectives. Part-time Active Schools Co-ordinators were appointed in each secondary school, and work with the Sports and Active Lifestyle Team to develop and promote opportunities for young people to take part in sport and physical activity. In addition two full-time Active Schools Co-ordinators have been appointed to work with primary school networks, developing opportunities for physical activity.
- *Libraries Service.* Aberdeenshire is one of the few councils in Scotland to have an integrated school and public library service. The success of this model was highlighted in the recent HMle report. It enables better support to be given by libraries to the curriculum and gives children and young people access to a wider range of materials in many locations. It has achieved economies of scale and the opportunity to fund new library facilities through the PPP programme for schools. It also provides a more efficient approach to staffing.
- *Arts.* The Council is committed to ensuring that schools in Aberdeenshire have access to the best possible arts and culture experiences available. During the year the Arts Education Team orchestrated over 262 projects for over 9,500 pupils, brought in more than £136,000 of external funding into the arts for the

benefit of the Council's schools and created at least 230 new opportunities for artists' employment.

Inspection Of The Education Function Of Aberdeenshire Council

The education functions of Aberdeenshire Council were inspected during the period September to October 2004 as part of a five-year national inspection programme of all local authorities in Scotland. The report, by HM Inspectors of Schools, was published in January 2005.

HM Inspectors found much to commend in the education functions of the Council and identified seven key strengths.

- The commitment to improvement among elected members, the Director and senior officers
- The steps taken to address budget difficulties
- The consistently high performance of pupils in secondary schools in national assessments and SQA examinations
- Examples of consultation with pupils and young people and, specifically, with the community in respect of PPP proposals
- Support for curriculum initiatives such as writing and science in the primary school
- The programme for the continuing professional development of teachers
- The contribution made by the Psychological Service, the Finance Team and the Integrated Library Service.

However the HM Inspectors made the following recommendations for improvement:-

- Ensure that key priorities, notably those relating to inclusion and integrated community schools, are well planned, founded on well-understood policies and clearly costed and fully implemented.
- Take steps to ensure that Educational and Recreational Services' visions, aims, values and key policies are fully understood and shared by staff, parents and partners.
- Ensure that the contributions to school education by staff from within Lifelong Learning and Recreation are further developed, understood and supported.
- Improve security in schools.
- Take forward plans to ensure that the new management structures being introduced achieve the objectives of improving pupil's learning, teaching and achievement.

Despite these recommendations the final paragraph of the report makes the following statement:- "Overall, Aberdeenshire demonstrated good and improving performance across many aspects of its work".

5.2 Culture, Community Learning and Sports Development

Aberdeenshire Information and Library Service (ALIS)

Aberdeenshire Council operates a network of 36 libraries supported by 6 mobile libraries. In addition to its core business of providing books and other materials for a loan the library service now offers opportunities for learning, particularly through the

use of Information Technology. All our libraries are now equipped with computers which have Internet access. During the year more than 700 people enrolled in the Tutor project to acquire IT skills while partnerships with Robert Gordon's University and Aberdeen College enabled more people to access learning materials. Improving adult literacy has been a particular priority and new literacy collections were introduced at several libraries. More online databases have been added including Encyclopaedia Britannica to enable people to access material from home. Books can be ordered and loans renewed on line.

In partnership with the Arts Development Team a writer in residence was appointed and writers' workshops to support over 200 pupils with work on Standard and Higher Grade exams were organised. A summer reading programme for children achieved a 73% increase compared with the previous year.

Community Learning And Development

Community Learning and Development is learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods. It is about empowering people and enabling them to tackle the real issues and influence the factors that affect their lives. It is concerned with providing people with the skills and information they need to participate in community life, as well as promoting personal development through learning. Different methods are used to meet individuals and communities learning needs. These can range from classes and courses to less formal methods of acquiring personal skills and becoming involved in social action. Key features are that community learning & development can be tailored to what suits people best, and that programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants.

In early 2004 new guidance entitled "*Working and learning together to build stronger communities.*" was issued by the Scottish Executive on the issue of community learning and development. As a result Aberdeenshire Council and its strategic partners in community learning produced a revised Community Learning and Development Strategy. This revised strategy is the overarching community learning and development plan for Aberdeenshire. It is supported by six Area Action Plans as well as the Youth Strategy and the Adult Literacy Plan.

A lot of work went into delivering the strategy in 2004-05. A survey revealed that some 5400 adults took part in adult learning programmes in the first three months of 2005. One adult learner from Kemnay received a national award for his achievements. A number of adult learners in Peterhead took part in a successful international exchange funded by a European grant.

An inspection of community learning by HMIE in November and December 2004 praised the Council for its approach to adult learning and work with young people. New youth facilities were opened in Laurencekirk, Kemnay and Banff. 3500 young people attended the Young Live youth event in Inverurie in March. Twelve young people were involved in the national Young Scot Quality awards.

The Arts

During 2002 Aberdeenshire Council and its partners in the independent and voluntary sector worked together to develop the **Arts Strategy** for Aberdeenshire. This Strategy was formally launched in July 2003.

The purpose of the Arts Strategy was to promote the development of arts across Aberdeenshire and to create rich and stimulating art experiences for all people and communities, young and old. The Strategy covers, but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance, mime, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and crafts arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, tape, and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms, and the study and application of the arts to the human environment.

During 2004-05, work continued on the implementation of the Arts Strategy. Particular areas of development during the year have included:-

- The further development of Arts Education Programmes delivered by the Council's team of 5 part-time Cultural Co-ordinators, which involved over 6,000 young people
- The launch in November 2003 of the dynamic new website;- www.aberdeenshirearts.org.uk. The site includes funding information, arts contacts, a What's On and a directory of artists and arts organisations. The site is interactive and steadily growing in content.
- From the Mountains to the Sea was an ambitious film-making project with 10 Aberdeenshire schools, where 250 pupils worked with film industry professionals on all aspects of contemporary filmmaking - from scriptwriting to set making, score composition to acting and film techniques, to produce their own individual films. The project, led by the Media Unit, has been screened in venues across Aberdeenshire and at the Belmont Cinema in Aberdeen, and has received widespread national press coverage.
- A new programme of training and skills development opportunities for artists and arts groups was launched in March 04 looking at organisational development for voluntary organisations, legal & marketing issues for visual artists and publication and marketing support for writers.

Sports And Active Lifestyle

Aberdeenshire Council provides 16 swimming and leisure centres that offer a wide range of activities for people of all ages and abilities. As well as swimming pools a number of our facilities include well-equipped fitness suites, saunas, squash courts, sports halls and climbing walls.

The Council's objectives for promoting sport and an active lifestyle are set out in its Sports and Active Lifestyles Strategy which was developed in 2002 following a detailed consultation exercise with the Aberdeenshire Sports Council and other partnership organisations. The Strategy was produced in response to the national

strategy for sport set out in the document “Sport 21” and takes account of recommendations made by the National Physical Activity Taskforce. The Strategy promotes an integrated approach to sport and active lifestyles and provides a focus and framework to encourage participation in line with the national aim of making more people, more active, more often.

Good progress is being made towards achieving the targets set out in the strategy. During the summer a successful holiday activity programme was offered by the Sports and Active Lifestyles team, and Community Recreation. Of particular note, was the increase in attendances by young people at Council Swimming Pools during Summer 2004 to nearly 19,000, as part of the subsidised Summer Splash initiative.

New sporting opportunities have now been provided thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Fund, which allowed the completion of new All Weather pitches at Fraserburgh and Turriff, and a major upgrade and development of facilities at the Huntly Nordic Ski and Outdoor Centre, and specifically for young people, the Council has supported the development of 13 new skate parks, serving local communities throughout Aberdeenshire.

How well Did We Perform?

(1) Libraries

Statutory Performance Indicators for the libraries show the following:-

Number of borrowers as a percentage of the resident population

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	22.3% of the population.
Ranking	22 nd
Performance of Best Council	Orkney Islands 37.7%
Performance of Worst	Inverclyde 16%
Scottish Average	24%

Processing time – the average time (days) taken to satisfy book requests

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	20 days to satisfy requests
Ranking	22 nd
Performance of Best Council	North Lanarkshire who took 9 days to satisfy requests.
Performance of Worst	Clackmannanshire who took 28 days to satisfy requests.
Scottish Average	17 days to satisfy requests

The Aberdeenshire Library Service is one of only 3 in Scotland which provides a free request service and consequently the use of the service is much higher than average at 6% of all items issued.

Stock Turnover – the percentage of the national target met for replenishing lending stock.

The national target for annual additions of adult material is 280 items per 1,000 of the population. For children it is 100 items per 1,000 of the population.

(a) Adult Stock

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	37.3% of the national target
Ranking	30 th
Performance of Best Council	Renfrewshire which achieved 93.6% of the national target
Performance of Worst	Inverclyde which achieved only 17.3% of the national target
Scottish Average	65.9% of national target.

(b) Children's Stock

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	74.6% of the national target
Ranking	11 th
Performance of Best Council	Shetland Islands which achieved 244% of the national target.
Performance of Worst	Inverclyde with only 11.7% of national target.
Scottish Average	66.3% of national target.

The reduction by 50% of the media fund 9 years ago is reflected in these figures. Better use of stock and the integration of the school and public library service resources plus new reading initiatives all seek to foster and encourage a reading habit and develop literacy standards.

Learning centre and learning access points

The introduction of the People's Network has allowed the development of libraries as learning centres providing free access to the web.

(a) Percentage of population using electronic information service

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	6.1% of the resident population
Ranking	24 th
Performance of Best Council	Moray with 16.1% of the resident population
Performance of Worst	West Lothian with only 4.3% of the resident population
Scottish Average	9.5% of the resident population.

(b) Number of occasions that terminals are accessed per year per 1,000 population.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	427 per 1,000 population
Ranking	26 th
Performance of Best Council	Eilean Siar - 1552.6 per 1,000 of the population.
Performance of Worst	North Lanarkshire - 378.1 per 1,000 of the population.
Scottish Average	927.9 per 1,000 of the population.

Access to computers and the web has transformed the range of services and the means of delivering services. As a consequence the book issue statistics only reflect part of the overall services and performance of the Aberdeenshire Library service.

(2) Sports

Two statutory performance indicators can be used to measure the effectiveness of the leisure service.

(a) Number of attendances per 1,000 population for all pools.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	3,708 attendances at all pools per 1,000 of the population
Ranking	13 th
Performance of Best Council	Shetland Islands with 15,901 attendances per 1,000 population
Performance of Worst	East Ayrshire with 2,179 attendances per 1,000 population.
Scottish Average	3,684 attendances per 1,000 population.

(b) The number of attendances per 1,000 population for purpose built indoor sports and recreational facilities other than pools.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	542 attendances per 1,000 population
Ranking	30 th
Performance of Best Council	Shetland Islands with 17,126 attendances per 1,000 population
Performance of Worst	Stirling with 96 attendances per 1,000 population
Scottish Average	3,889 attendances per 1,000 population.

6 A Sustainable Environment

Strategic Intention

We will work to

Ensure that all our actions are as sustainable as possible and meet the needs of the current generations of Aberdeenshire's people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



6.1 Sustainability Charter

Aberdeenshire Council's Strategic Plan contains the commitment that 'We will work to ensure that all our actions are sustainable and meet the needs of the current generation of Aberdeenshire's people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. To help the Council meet this objective In February 2005 the Sustainability Charter was launched. The Charter sets out what Aberdeenshire Council will do to improve its own environmental performance. The Sustainability Charter features an Action Programme to 2007 to guide achievement.

During the course of 2005 the Council made significant progress with some of the main actions listed in the Charter. A summary of progress with the key actions is given below:-

- In early 2005 the Council approved an energy policy that commits Aberdeenshire to the efficient use of energy and water. In line with this policy, during 2005 Aberdeenshire Council's Energy Conservation Unit progressed a wide range of projects that will reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency. For example, in schools and offices old inefficient tungsten lighting was replaced with new more efficient lighting systems, In addition, old inefficient electric boilers, pneumatic controls and electric motors were also replaced with condensing gas-boilers, electronic controls and variable speed drive motors which will reduce energy consumption further. In swimming pools covers were fitted over pools to conserve energy and reduce heat loss.
- In all it is estimated that annual energy consumption will be reduced by over 2.8 million KWh and carbon dioxide reduced by 877 tonnes. The financial savings through these projects will be worth approximately £85,000 per year.
- Renewable Energy projects were also taken forward during the year. For example a contract was awarded and arrangements are now being made to install a wood-burning boiler at Aboyne Academy. The new boiler will replace one of the existing inefficient oil-fired boilers and provide renewable energy to the Academy, Primary, Community Centre and Swimming Pool.
- Aberdeenshire Council now sources 30 percent of its electricity from small-scale hydro electricity sources, and 70 percent of its electricity from large-scale hydro electricity.
- During the year a number of actions were taken to reduce water consumption, including the development of a Monitoring and Targeting system to measure water and energy consumption and identify inefficiencies .The system provides opportunities to make savings across Aberdeenshire's properties.
- The Sustainability Charter has a core aim to analyse the types of waste produced by the Council and improve recycling and waste reduction measures. In spring 2005 the Council's Waste Section were successful in securing funding from the Scottish Executive to appoint two Waste Auditors to audit the waste arisings of all Council properties. With over 500 centres of employment it is important to

establish a baseline so that waste reduction measures can be effectively targeted.

- A Statutory Performance Indicator is used to measure the **proportion of household, commercial and industrial waste that is recycled**. For 2004-05 this shows:-

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	12.7% of its waste recycled.
Ranking	22 nd
Performance of Best Council	Clackmannanshire with 37.9% of its waste recycled.
Performance of Worst	Midlothian with only 4.7% of its waste recycled.
Scottish Average	17.6% of waste recycled.

It is a European target to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste that a council sends to landfill to three-quarters of the 1995 level. Aberdeenshire Council's performance in 2004-05 suggested that a lot more work was needed to meet this target, hence the introduction of the new kerbside collections.

- During the year Aberdeenshire Council was involved in a number of new builds and retrofits. As far as was practical sustainable construction principles were incorporated into these projects. These include grey water recycling, use of locally sourced materials, increased recycling and waste prevention, life-cycle costings, improved thermal efficiency, use of solar and geothermal energy, use of materials with low embodied energy and reduced maintenance. Currently, two pilot projects under development in Kemnay and Turriff have been designed to maximise sustainable features. The ongoing refurbishment works at Woodhill House also include sustainable initiatives relating to carpet recycling, recycled materials and efficient ventilation/lighting designs.
- Aside from efforts to control our own waste flows the Council also deals with residents' waste and during 2005 a major roll out of new kerbside recycling collections began.
- A number of projects were also taken forward to help meet the Council's sustainable travel targets. These include the launching of the Aberdeenshire Car Share Scheme (www.carshareaberdeenshire.com) consists of a public scheme open to all Aberdeenshire residents and a private scheme open to all employees.
- As well as car sharing a range of alternatives to the motorcar were promoted by the Council. For instance, a free buffet lunch was offered to cyclists during National Bike Week and Green Transport Week was marked with a display and information stall featuring leaflets on cycling, walking, public transport and car sharing.
- 2005 saw a number of key developments in sustainable purchasing. A key achievement was the publication of Aberdeenshire Council's Sustainable

Purchasing Policy. The policy seeks to balance the Council's commitment to Best Value with the need to consider the 'whole life costs' of goods and services.

- Aberdeenshire Council is a key partner in an innovative project called the North East Global Footprint Project. Our footprint is a measurement of how much land and sea we use to provide us with the water, energy, food and materials we need to support our lifestyle, as well as absorb our waste. It helps us judge how sustainable our lives are and what changes we need to make to improve our quality of life. Already the footprint of Aberdeenshire has been calculated, and it stands at 5.18 global hectares per person, slightly higher than the Scottish average (5.1 global hectares per person). The estimated 'ecological capacity' (area available for each member of the planet's population to live within environmental limits) is 1.8 hectares per person. That means that we would need an estimated three planets to supply all the resources we require, and deal with all of our wastes, if everyone on Earth lived like we do in Aberdeenshire.

6.2 INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ABERDEEN RENEWABLE ENERGY GROUP (AREG)

Aberdeenshire is a member of the Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group (AREG). This group has nearly 100 members, all firmly committed to working together to build on Aberdeen's world-leading energy expertise and increase the speed, scale and viability of renewable energy development in the UK. AREG is an innovative private-public partnership set up in 2001 to help identify and promote new energy opportunities for North East Scotland. AREG is an incorporated company with an independent board, and its wide-ranging projects and activities are supported by Aberdeen's City Growth Fund. This fund is administered by Aberdeen City Council and represents a £22.25 million investment in the future of Aberdeen over five years by the Scottish Executive.

AREG members include energy businesses, research institutes, oil service companies, professional consultants and economic development agencies. Their remarkable collective diversity extends into every source of renewable energy – onshore and offshore wind, wave, tidal, biomass, fuel cell, photovoltaic and geothermal.

AREG is delivering an imaginative portfolio of renewable energy activities and projects, including:

- Spearheading Aberdeen's drive into new energy markets and expanding global connections
- Assessing the feasibility of an Aberdeen offshore wind farm
- Accelerating the transfer of oil and gas technology and expertise to renewables
- Developing an iconic and high tech Energy Futures Centre
- Developing a new Renewables Research Centre and Professorship in Energy Futures supported by the University of Aberdeen, The Robert Gordon University and Aberdeen City Council
- Leading the development of a biomass strategy
- Assisting in the development of the All-Energy Exhibition and Conference in Aberdeen

7 Quality Services

Strategic Intention

We will work to

Maintain and improve the quality of life for everyone in Aberdeenshire by delivering first class public services.



7.1 Asset Management

Asset Management is about making effective use of the Council's buildings and other assets to deliver its key policies and strategies. Asset Management within the Council is being driven forward in response to a number of national initiatives. The Asset Management process in Education is driven by the Scottish Executive's strategy document "Building Our Future - Scotland's School Estate" The prime objective of the strategy is to raise and then maintain the quality of the school estate across Scotland.

Asset Management for the rest of the Council's buildings is being driven forward by the introduction of the Prudential code. As a result of the code and the effect that it has on the way the Council borrows money to finance capital projects, all services within the Council have begun a review of their current assets to determine the level of capital investment required.

The Council approved the School Estate Management Strategy in 2004. In addition "Core Fact" information was compiled as well as "fit for purpose" reports for all Aberdeenshire schools. Following this 25 projects were identified as priority projects for the School Improvement Programme. It was also decided to close Braeside and Cairnorrie Schools. After an option appraisal exercise was carried out it was agreed that 24 of the identified projects would be taken forward for formal consultation. This consultation exercise began in January 2005 and the outcomes were presented to the Education & Recreation Committee in December 2005.

The Council has approved a similar approach to the development of asset management plans for the non-educational Council properties. Key fact information is still being collected about these assets.

In parallel with the work on the Council's property assets the Road's service is currently developing asset management plans for the physical assets that they maintain (i.e. roads, bridges, coast protection structures, harbours etc). Asset management plans for both non-educational properties and roads and other structures will not be ready until the end of 2006 at the earliest. Once completed they will be used to identify priorities for future investment.

7.2 Continuous Improvement

The Local Government of Scotland Act 2003 places on local authorities the statutory duty of Best Value. One key element of Best Value is for councils to put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvements in performance. Aberdeenshire Council is committed to continually improving the services that it delivers to the citizens of Aberdeenshire. As a result, during 2004-05 it implemented a number of initiatives to drive forward continuous improvement.

Kaizen

One of the key actions taken by the Council was the adoption of the Kaizen Blitz approach to making improvements. Kaizen is a Japanese word and roughly translated means "Making something as good as it can be" It is a set of tried and

tested techniques with the purpose of bringing about real and sustainable improvement in processes.

Kaizen originated in the manufacturing industry and has been adapted over time to be effective in other sectors. Aberdeenshire Council is the first local authority in Scotland to really embrace this way of working to bring about change. Kaizen is not just another corporate initiative, it is a tool to maximise resources so that the services we deliver and the initiatives we must respond to can be managed more effectively. Kaizen uses the knowledge, expertise and creative ideas of those connected to the process to strip out waste and achieve targets to produce benefits for customers, frontline staff and the Council.

A number of service facilitators have been trained in the technique and it is intended that each service will carry out at least four Kaizen events each year. Issues looked at in 2004-05 include:-

- Methods used for registration of planning applications – project significantly reduced time taken to register applications.
- Stock control of housing repairs – monitoring and stock control procedures were dramatically improved.
- Response time to road defects – new systems were introduced to improve how the Council manages road defect repairs, resulted in major improvements being made to response times.
- Violent incident reporting in Education – new hotline system was introduced. This has attracted national attention.
- Building control inspection and completion certification process – time taken to issue completion certificates following end of the construction work was reduced and the workload of the Building Inspectors was balanced out.
- Delivery of new computer hardware and software to new employees of the Council – process was massively improved to ensure that IT equipment and software are delivered to new starts on day one.

The use of Kaizen has been recognised as an example of best practice by the Scottish Executive and last year the Executive commissioned consultants to review how the technique was being used in Aberdeenshire with the aim of recommending its adoption by all other councils in Scotland.

Business Excellence Model

The Council has long used the Business Excellence Model as a self-assessment tool for identifying best practice and areas for improvement. However in 2004 the use of the Model was extensively revised in conjunction with Quality Scotland. The revised model now being used by the Council has been branded the “Aberdeenshire Improvement Model “ (AIM) and it is used within all services to drive forward continuous improvement.

7.3 Performance Management

In 2004 the Council developed a comprehensive performance management system and a set of performance indicators covering all services for the first time. The new system will help services to monitor performance and identify areas for improvement.

Because the new system has only recently been introduced it is not possible to report on outcomes of the measures used in this report. However the overall performance of the Council's services can be gauged using some of the Statutory Performance Indicators. These are reported below.

How Well Did We Perform?

(1) Corporate Management

The percentage of working days lost through sickness absences

	Chief Officers and Other Employees	Craft Employees	Teachers
Aberdeenshire Council	4.5%	3.0%	3.6%
Aberdeenshire Councils ranking	3 rd	1 st	15 th
Best Performing council	2.8% (Eilean Siar)	3.0% (Aberdeenshire)	2.9% (Edinburgh)
Worst Performing council	7.1% (North Lanarkshire)	10.7% (Midlothian)	6.0% (Clackmannanshire)
Scottish Average	5.5%	5.9%	3.7%

The table shows that sickness rates amongst Aberdeenshire Council employees is lower than the Scottish average for all three categories of employees and we have the lowest rates of absences for Craft employees. The overall absence rate for all Aberdeenshire employees was 4.3% which compares with a Scottish average of 5.2%.

(2) Development Services

(a) Percentage of requests for a building warrant responded to within 15 days.

The national target for responding to building warrant requests is 80% of applications to be responded to within 15 days.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	53.2% of requests
Ranking	19th
Performance of Best Council	Dundee City with 91.9% of requests
Performance of Worst	East Ayrshire only 25.3% of requests
Scottish Average	63.1% of requests responded to within 15 days.

(b) Percentage of building warrants applications determined within 6 days.

The national target for determining building warrants is that 80% should be issued within 6 days.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	78.8% of applications within 6 days
Ranking	19 th
Performance of Best Council	Falkirk 100% of its applications within 6 days
Performance of Worst	Perth and Kinross 52.4% of applications within 6 days.
Scottish Average	82.1% of applications within 6 days.

(c) Percentage of planning applications dealt with within two months.

(i) Household

Targets identified by the Scottish Executive for dealing with household planning applications are for 90% to be dealt with within 2 months and 95% within 3 months. Overall, 80% of all applications should be dealt with within 2 months, 85% within 3 months.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	84.6% of household planning applications are dealt with within 2 months.*
Ranking	13 th
Performance of Best Council	Clackmannanshire - 96.4% of household planning applications dealt with within two months.
Performance of Worst	Dundee City Council only 17.5% of household planning applications dealt with within two months.
Scottish Average	78.3% of household planning applications dealt with within two months

*This figure was based on 1,932 household application in Aberdeenshire during 2004-05.

(ii) Non-household

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	46.9% of non-household applications dealt with within 2 months**
Ranking	15 th
Performance of Best Council	West Lothian with 75.3% of non-household applications dealt with within 2 months.
Performance of Worst	Dundee City with only 10.3% dealt with within 2 months
Scottish Average	46.3% dealt with within 2 months.

**For the year 2004-05 Aberdeenshire Council had to deal with 1,979 such applications.

(iii) **All Types**

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	65.5% dealt with within 2 months***
Ranking	15 th
Performance of Best Council	West Lothian with 85.4% of all planning applications dealt with within 2 months
Performance of Worst	Dundee City with only 13.8% of all planning applications dealt with within two months.
Scottish Average	62.2% of all planning applications dealt with within two months.

***For the year 2004-05 Aberdeenshire dealt with a total of 3,911 planning applications. Of these 3,911 planning applications 63 went to appeal and 18 of these appeals were successful. This equates to 28.6% of appeals being successful.

(3) Roads and Lighting

(a) **Percentage of the road network that should be considered for maintenance treatment.**

These statistics are based on information collected from road condition surveys.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	31.0% of the road network should be considered for maintenance treatment.
Ranking	3 rd
Performance of Best Council	Orkney Islands – only 21.1% of their road network should be considered for maintenance treatment.
Performance of Worst	East Renfrewshire - 62.7% of their roads should be considered for maintenance treatment.
Scottish Average	41.9% of roads to be considered for maintenance treatment.

(b) **Street Lighting Repairs – percentage of repairs completed within seven days.**

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	93.9% of all street light repairs completed within seven days.
Ranking	16 th
Performance of Best Council	South Lanarkshire - 99.3% of all street lighting repairs completed within seven days
Performance of Worst	Shetland Islands only 57.5% of all street lighting repairs completed within seven days.
Scottish Average	94.0% of all street lighting repairs completed within seven days.

(c) Bridges – percentage of council and private bridges assessed that failed to meet the European standard of 40 tonnes.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	9.2% of bridges failed to meet European standards
Ranking	14 th
Performance of Best Council	Orkney - all bridges met the standard
Performance of Worst	Stirling -33.7% of their bridges failed to comply with the European standard
Scottish Average	10.2% of bridges failed to meet European standards.

(d) Bridges – percentage of council and private bridges assessed that have a weight or width restriction placed on them.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	0.60% of bridges have a weight or width restriction placed on them.
Ranking	6 th
Performance of Best Council	No bridges in Orkney have a restriction placed on them.
Performance of Worst	Inverclyde - 17.2% of their bridges having a weight or width restriction placed on them.
Scottish Average	2.5% of bridges with a weight or width restriction.

(4) Protective Services

(a) Food Hygiene Inspections

Food hygiene regulations specify the frequency of the inspections that should be carried out by type of premises.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	96.9% of those premises with a minimum inspection frequency of 12 months or less.
Ranking	17 th
Performance of Best Council	South Ayrshire, Dundee City and East Renfrewshire with 100% of all inspections carried out on time.
Performance of Worst	Shetland Islands with only 20.0% of inspections carried out on time.
Scottish Average	95.6% of all inspections carried out on time.

(b) Noise Complaints

(i) Percentage of noise complaints settled on first point of contact that were dealt with on day of receipt.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	81.5% of noise complaints settled on first contact were dealt with on day of receipt.
Ranking	17 th
Performance of Best Council	East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Eilean Siar, Midlothian, Highland, North Ayrshire and Scottish Borders - 100% of cases settled on first contact were dealt with on day of receipt.
Performance of Worst	South Ayrshire - only 24.3% of noise complaints settled on day of receipt.
Scottish Average	67.7% of noise complaints settled on first contact were dealt with on day of receipt.

(ii) Percentage of noise complaints requiring further action that were settled within 14 days.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	96.5% within 14 days.
Ranking	1st
Performance of Best Council	Aberdeenshire Council – 96.5%.
Performance of Worst	Eilean Siar - only 12.5% of cases settled within 14 days.
Scottish Average	70.5% within 14 days.

(c) Consumer Complaints

This measures rate of response of the Council to investigate the activities of traders following a complaint from a member of the public.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	74.3% of all complaints received within 14 days
Ranking	22 nd
Performance of Best Council	East Lothian - 96.1% of complaints processed within 14 days
Performance of Worst	Scottish Borders - only 60.3% processed within 14 days
Scottish Average	77.4% of complaints processed within 14 days.

(d) Trading Standards Business Advice

This measures the rate of response to requests for advice from individual businesses. The advice given covers aspects of consumer law, issues of unfair trading practices, etc.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	91.6% of requests received with 14 days of receipt dealt with.
Ranking	25 th
Performance of Best Council	Several councils dealt with all requests within 14 days.
Performance of Worst	East Dunbartonshire only 82.0% of requests for advice dealt with within 14 days.
Scottish Average	94.4% requests for advice dealt with within 14 days.

The Council includes in this PI figures for complaints made by businesses and not just requests for advice, which is not the case with all Councils. Complaints take longer to investigate and resolve and hence reduce the percentage figures shown in the PI.

(e) Inspection of Trading Premises

The Council has a duty to inspect trading premises such as shops, market stalls and vehicles to confirm whether they are trading in accordance with consumer law, and to maintain standards for these premises in relation to fair-trading, quantity, quality and safety.

Councils categorise all premises which must be inspected into one of three bands – high, medium and low risk. These bands reflect the priority for inspecting them and the frequency of inspection. The highest risk premises are inspected the most frequently. For those premises that should be expected every **two years or less**, the performance of the Council is shown below:-

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	52.0% inspection rate.
Ranking	26 th
Performance of Best Council	Renfrewshire - 100% inspection rate
Performance of Worst	Orkney Islands were only able to achieve a 7.7% inspection rate.
Scottish Average	78.1% inspection rate.

For a significant part of the year there were a number of vacancies in the service which led to an inevitable reduction in performance. The staffing situation has since improved and a range of steps taken to improve performance in this area.

(5) Waste Management

(a) **Refuse Collection- net cost per property of the refuse collection service**

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	£28.89 per premise*
Ranking	2nd
Performance of Best Council	Inverclyde with an average cost of £26.67 per premise.
Performance of Worst	East Ayrshire at an average cost of £74.48 per premise.
Scottish Average	£49.20 per premise.

* In 2004-05 Aberdeenshire Council spent £3,101,000 on refuse collection. When you compare the costs of the 9 rural councils refuse collection services Aberdeenshire was by far the cheapest. The average cost for rural councils was £49.01 with Argyll and Bute being the most expensive at £68.76 per premise.

(b) **Cost of disposing of refuse collected.**

Refuse disposal includes sorting, compacting bailing, shredding, composting and recycling waste as well as transportation costs and the costs associated with providing civic amenity sites or skips. In Aberdeenshire in 2004-05 £7,395,000 was spent on disposing of the waste that was collected. The table below compares performance.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	Average cost of £68.89 per premise.
Ranking	26 th
Performance of Best Council	Scottish Borders - average of £31.98 per premise.
Performance of Worst	Argyll and Bute at £115.38 per premise
Scottish Average	£55.08 per premise for disposal.

When you compare the costs of disposal in rural councils Aberdeenshire still had one of the highest costs. Only Highland and Argyll & Bute had higher costs. The average cost of disposal for the 9 rural councils was £75.40 per premise.

The relatively high cost of the Council's waste disposal service arises from good coverage of household waste and recycling centres and the extent to which our waste is disposed of to private landfill which is a higher cost per tonne than Council owned sites. Waste disposal costs are high and are expected to increase each year for all local authorities given the escalating landfill tax, stringent environmental controls, further development of civic amenity facilities and increasing reliance on private sector disposal sites. Diversion of waste from landfill will reduce some of the associated costs but additional costs may be incurred depending on travel distance for recycling to the relevant markets.

7.5 Equal Opportunities

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. In support of this commitment the Council has adopted the equality vision statement “working together to ensure there is equality of opportunity for everyone in Aberdeenshire”. How we will achieve this vision is set out in the Council’s Race Equality Scheme. This scheme was extensively revised in 2005.

The council ensures that consideration of equal opportunities is central to all its activities in a number of ways. For employees there is a comprehensive range of personnel policies that cover all of the statutory requirements relating to sex, race and disability discrimination. For example we have an Equalities Policy and Dignity of the Individual Policy. All employees have also undergone diversity awareness training to ensure that they perform to the standards expected of them. All new employees receive the same training as part of the induction process.

The work of the corporate equalities group drives much of the work to mainstream equalities activity in the council. The Councils racist incident monitoring, reporting and investigation process is designed to protect the public and employees from the effects of racial harassment. The Grampian Race Equality Council monitors arrangements locally. Agreed procedures are in place to direct investigations, which are carried out by the service concerned to the satisfaction of the victim.

Aberdeenshire Council supports the annual ethnic careers fair to promote itself as an equal opportunities employer. It is both a provider of employment support for people with disabilities, using various schemes in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, and an employer under the terms of the schemes.

In recognition of the specialist needs of many of the minority groups of people, the Council has agency or service level agreements with organisations such as Deaf Blind Scotland, Grampian Association for the Blind and the Aberdeen and North East Society for the Deaf. Considerable support for the minority ethnic service infrastructure is also provided, sometimes in partnership with neighbouring authorities. These services include Grampian Racial Equality Council, the International Centre, and Multi Ethnic Aberdeen Ltd. The Ethnic Minority Forum includes officers and partner agency representatives and interested individuals from Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. The primary role of this group is to ensure that the voices of ethnic minority communities are heard and their views are taken into account on matters of concern to them. A “Welcome to Aberdeenshire” booklet has also been designed primarily for people coming to live and work in Aberdeenshire from outwith the UK.

How Well Did We Perform?

There are a number of Statutory Performance Indicators that can be used to assess the Council’s performance in relation to equalities issues. These show the following:-

(1) Percentage of highest paid earners of the Council that are women.

(i) Women in top 2% of Council earners

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	31.8% of top earners are women
Ranking	9 th
Performance of Best Council	Stirling- 51.5% of the top 2% of earners are women
Performance of Worst	Orkney Islands with only 12.5% of top earners are women.
Scottish Average	29.6% of top earners are women.

(ii) Women in top 5% of Council earners

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	42.5% of top 5% of jobs are held by women.
Ranking	2 nd
Performance of Best Council	Stirling - 43.3% of the top 5% of jobs are held by women.
Performance of Worst	Orkney only 18.3% of the top 5% of jobs are held by women.
Scottish Average	36.6% of the top 5% of jobs are held by women.

(2) Percentage of public service buildings that are suitable and accessible to disabled people.

This indicator covers leisure centres, libraries, museums, public halls and local offices but excludes educational establishments.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	28.3% of public service buildings had disabled access.
Ranking	18 th
Performance of Best Council	South Lanarkshire - 79.2% of public service buildings accessible to disabled people.
Performance of Worst	Dumfries and Galloway - only 1.5% of their buildings accessible to disabled people.
Scottish Average	37.4% of public service buildings accessible to disabled people.

The Council recognises that more of its public buildings should be accessible to disabled people. A detailed survey of all buildings has been carried out to identify the works required to make each building comply with accessibility legislation. A programme of works has now been implemented with the aim of improving accessibility on a prioritised basis over the next few years.

8 Finance

Strategic Intention

The purpose of the Finance Function of the Council is to ensure the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and to help ensure that the Council complies with the law and with other external rules, regulations and best practice as far as financial matters are concerned.



8.1 Income And Expenditure

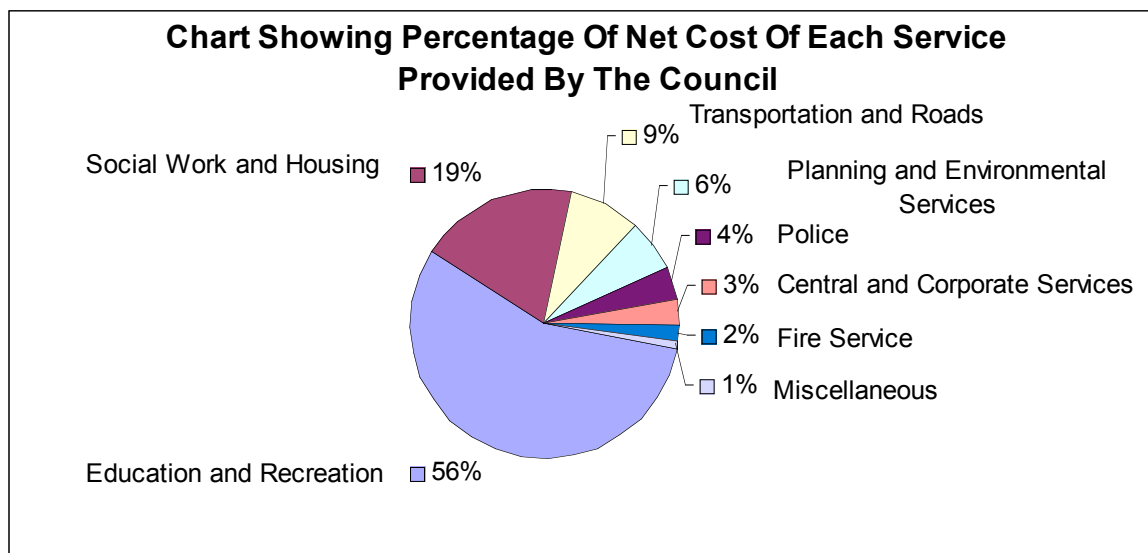
On the 12th February 2004 Aberdeenshire Council approved the revenue budget for 2004-05. To finance their spending plans the Council set a Band D council tax rate of £1,014. Out of the 32 councils in Scotland, in 2004-05 Aberdeenshire had the 13th lowest Council Tax rate. However the average household bill of £1,035 was the 11th highest in Scotland.

What Did We Spend Your Money On?

The net cost of Council services in 2004-05 was just over £387 million, an increase of just over £24 million on the previous year. The net cost of each service provided by the Council was as follows:-

	<u>£'000</u>
Education and Recreation	217,398
Social Work and Housing	74,478
Transportation and Roads	33,169
Planning and Environmental Services	23,858
Contribution to Police Service	15,470
Central and Corporate Services	11,879
Contribution to Fire Service	7,558
Miscellaneous	3,409
Total Costs	£387,219

The distribution of costs is illustrated in the chart below:-



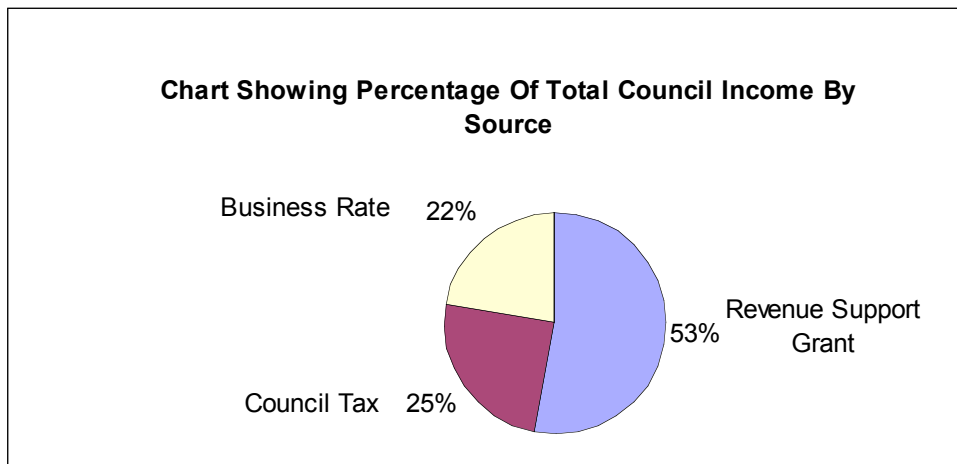
Taking into account the surplus from Trading Accounts, Pensions costs, interests on revenue balances, contributions to reserves, etc the net amount to be met from Government Grants and the local taxpayer was **£377,195,000**.

Where Did The Money Come From?

The money that we spent came from the following sources:-

	<u>£'000</u>
Revenue Support Grant	(203,192)
Council Tax (including Community Charges)	(94,161)
Business Rates	(85,023)
Total Income:-	(£382,376)

The source of the Council's income is illustrated in the chart below:-



The chart shows that only 25% of the Council's income is collected directly by the Council from local Council Tax payers. The rest is provided by the Government through the Revenue Support Grant and Business Rate. Thus if the Council wishes to increase expenditure by 1% above the levels calculated by Government it must increase Council Tax by 4% overall.

Overall the Council achieved a surplus of **£5,181,000** for the year. This under spend arose through a number of one-off savings, including a surplus on trading activities, higher than anticipated income from building control, lower than anticipated take up of the Concessionary Travel Scheme and the transfer of Devolved Education Management balances to fund the cost of teachers.

How Well Did We Perform?

(1) Council Tax Collection

In the year 2004-05 Aberdeenshire Council collected over £94 million in council tax from a total of 102,233 dwellings. The total cost of collection was £1,106,000. The performance of the Council in collecting council tax is shown over:-

(i) Average Collection Cost Per Dwelling

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	£10.82 per dwelling
Ranking	7 th
Performance of Best Council	Falkirk Council - £4.75 per dwelling.
Performance of Worst	Dundee City - £28.22 per dwelling.
Scottish Average	£13.23 per dwelling.

(ii) Percentage Of Council Tax Collected By end of Year

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	95.3% of the council tax income due.
Ranking	11 th
Performance of Best Council	Orkney Islands - 97.3% of council tax income due.
Performance of Worst	Glasgow Council - 85.6% of council tax income due.
Scottish Average	92.7% of council tax income due.

(2) Invoice Payments

The Late Payments of Commercial Debts (Interests) Act 1998 recognises a general payment period for invoices from suppliers of 30 days unless other terms are mutually agreed. The performance of the Council in paying invoices in 2004-05 is shown below:-

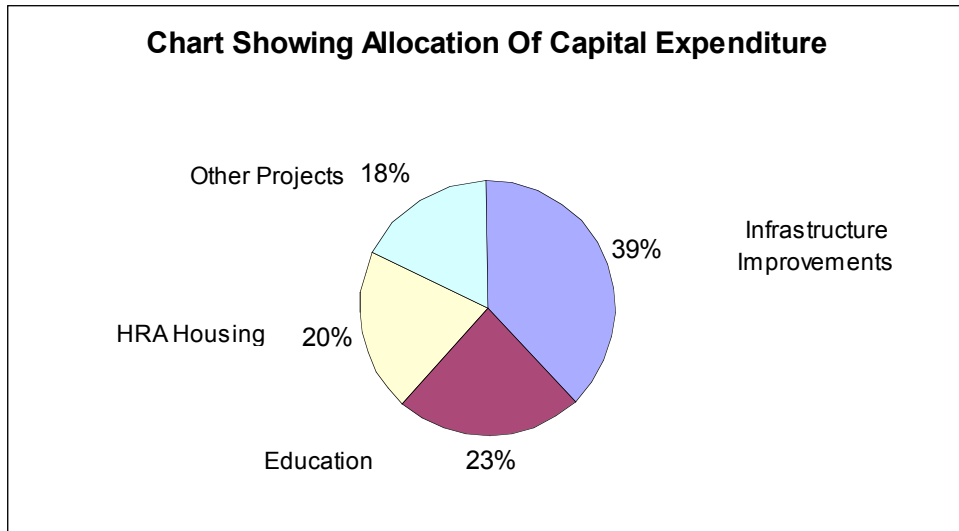
Aberdeenshire Council Performance	87.8% of invoices within 30 days
Ranking	9 th
Performance of Best Council	Dundee City paid 93.7% of its invoices within 30 days.
Performance of Worst	Inverclyde only paid 59.7% of its invoices within 30 days.
Scottish Average	83.7% of invoices paid within 30 days.

8.2 Capital Expenditure

Total capital expenditure in 2004-05 was £31,327,000 which was spent as follows:-

	<u>£'000</u>
Infrastructure Improvements	11,916
Education	7,316
HRA Housing	6,401
Other projects (Social Work, Environmental Health, etc)	5,694
Total Capital Expenditure	31,327

The distribution of capital expenditure is illustrated in the chart below:-



Of the total capital expenditure of just over £31 million, £11,971,000 was financed through borrowing with the remainder being funded from a combination of the proceeds from the sale of assets, grants and a contribution from the revenue account. To meet capital expenditure, the Council at 31st March 2005 had a total borrowing of £408, 116,000, the majority of which was borrowed from the Public Works Loan Board.

8.3 Trading Services

Statutory trading accounts have to be maintained for “significant trading operations.” Statutory trading accounts must break even over a three-year rolling period. The Council has established three trading services that have to balance their budget by generating income from other parts of the authority and/or other organisations. Details of these services are as follows:

	<u>Housing Repairs</u>	<u>Catering</u>	<u>Roads Operations</u>
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Turnover	(8,164)	(7,920)	(20,259)
Expenditure	7,815	7,900	18,910
(Surplus)/Deficit	(349)	(20)	(1,349)
Council Target	Break Even	(12)	(341)

Between them the three services returned a net surplus of £1,718,000 in 2004-05. All three broke even in 2004-05 and are expected to achieve their statutory requirement to break even over the three-year period 2003-04 to 2005-06. In 2004-05 all three services also exceeded the target surpluses set by the Council.

8.4 Housing Revenue Account

It is a legal requirement for councils to account separately for its expenditure on housing. As a result the Housing budget is set separately to the rest of the Council’s budget. For 2004-05 the Housing budget was set on the 29th January 2004. As part

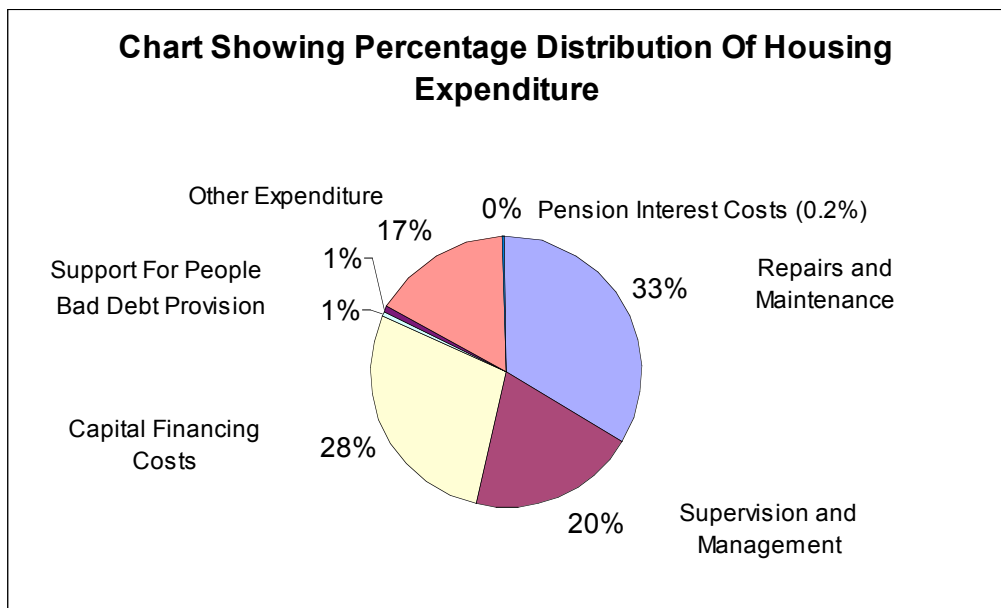
of the budget setting process the Council agreed a 6% increase in council house rents raising the average rent for a council house to £40.33 per week. The total housing revenue expenditure approved by the Council was in the region of £32 million.

What The Money Was Spent On

Total expenditure for housing for 2004-05 is summarised below:-

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Cost (£'000)</u>
Repairs and Maintenance	10,657
Supervision and Management	6,255
Capital Financing Costs	9,023
Increase in Bad Debt Provision	171
Support For People	289
Other Expenditure	5,285
Pension Interest Costs	74
Gross Expenditure	31,754

The chart below illustrates how expenditure was distributed.



Where The Money Came From

A summary of Housing income is given below:-

<u>Source</u>	<u>Value</u> (£'000)	<u>%age Total</u> <u>Income</u>
Council House Rents	(29,720)	82.7
Sheltered Housing	(1,287)	3.6
Other Rents	(1,146)	3.2
Government Grants	(332)	0.9
Recharges	(930)	2.6
Interest On Revenue Balances	(869)	2.4
Supporting People Contract Income	(1,337)	3.7
Other Income	(327)	0.9
Total Income	(35,948)	100%

Overall Housing made an operating surplus for the year of £4,194,000. The majority of this was transferred to the HRA given an overall balance at the end of the year of (£21,071,000).

How Well Did We Perform?

(1) Rent Collection

(i) Levels of Rent Arrears

Aberdeenshire Council Performance Ranking	4.2% of the total rental due. 6 th
Performance of Best Council	Argyll and Bute- 2.2% of the total rental due
Performance of Worst	Inverclyde - 17.9% of the total rental due.
Scottish Average	7.4% of total rental due.

(ii) Number of Current Tenants Owing More than 13 Weeks Rent

This excludes tenants owing less than £250 in arrears.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance Ranking	3.7% of all Council tenants* 13 th
Performance of Best Council	Argyll and Bute where only 0.5% owed more than 13 weeks
Performance of Worst	Renfrewshire – 9.3% of tenants owe more than 13 weeks.
Scottish Average	4.5% of tenants owe more than 13 weeks rent.

*During the year **506** tenants owed more than 13 weeks rent.

(2) Benefits Administration Costs

Aberdeenshire Council is responsible for processing claims for Housing Benefit (from claimants in both public rented sector and the private rented sector) and Council Tax Benefit. During the year 2004-05 the Council had an average Housing Benefit caseload of 10,818 made up of 6,892 council tenants and 3,926 private rented tenants. The Council also had a Council Tax Benefit caseload of 12,776. The gross cost of providing the benefits service was £1,865,220.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	Average cost of £66.08 per claimant.
Ranking	25 th
Performance of Best Council	South Lanarkshire – average cost of £17.42 per claimant.
Performance of Worst	Eilean Siar – average cost of £90.45 per claimant.
Scottish Average	£48.22 per claimant.

(3) Benefits Administration Time To Process Claims

(i) Average Time Taken To Process New Claims

During 2004-05 Aberdeenshire Council dealt with 11,635 new claims for benefit. The Department of Works and Pensions has set a target for councils to process all new claims within 36 days. The table below shows that Aberdeenshire still has some work to do to meet this target.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	Average time taken to process new claims was 53.6 days.
Ranking	26 th
Performance of Best Council	South Lanarkshire - 15.4 days
Performance of Worst	City of Edinburgh - 74.5 days
Scottish Average	41.9 days

(ii) Accuracy of Processing Claim

Apart from measuring the cost of administration and the time to process claims the Council is also required to monitor the accuracy and security of processing. This is done by going through a sample of completed cases to determine the accuracy with which they are calculated.

Aberdeenshire Council Performance	93.4% of the benefit calculations carried out were accurate.
Ranking	26 th
Performance of Best Council	Shetland Islands and Argyll and Bute - accuracy levels of 99.8%,
Performance of Worst	Scottish Borders - accuracy levels of 87.5%.
Scottish Average	Accuracy levels of 96.6%.

9 Consultations Carried Out During The Year

Strategic Intention

We will involve our many communities by consulting and working together.



Three main programmes of consultations were carried out during the year. These are summarised below:-

9.1 Residents Survey 2004

In 2004 the Council carried out its third full-scale survey of residents views. The key objectives of the survey were to:-

- Determine the Council's performance as perceived by residents.
- Determine the Council's performance relative to residents' priorities.
- Benchmark the Council's performance against other Councils/organisations.
- Identify priorities for improvement, so that goals can be set for future improvement.
- Provide a measurement of public satisfaction

The main findings of the survey were as follows:-

- A considerable improvement in residents' perceived satisfaction with the Council (as measured by its net satisfaction rating) and an improved perception of the Council compared to other Local Authorities.
- A closing of the gap in perceived satisfaction between those areas closest to Aberdeen and those areas furthest away.
- Modest improvement in relation to contact management but continued concerns over complaint handling.
- Improved perceptions of the environment of towns and villages whilst concerns remain over a perceived lack of community facilities especially for young people.
- Concerns regarding the implementation of Council Planning policies and, in particular, worries over a lack of affordable housing.
- Support in principle for traffic calming measures but concerns over consultation prior to implementation.
- Continued high level of satisfaction with key services such as schools, libraries, parks and open spaces and leisure facilities.
- Many other services perceived to be improving, including refuse collection, street lighting and street cleaning.
- Generally improved perceptions of roads and transportation. Roads maintenance and winter gritting/snow clearing continue to be rated negatively but improvements in perception are apparent.
- Internet access is now 60%, but there is a lack of awareness and understanding of the potential role of the Council web site.

- Improved perceptions of the Council in relation to issues of environmental and social responsibility accompanied by signs of improved environmental awareness and social responsibility among the general population.
- Continued concern regarding the quality of Council communications and public engagement generally.

As a result of the survey a number of improvement actions were agreed by the Council. These covered the following issues:-

- Developing local affinity with the Council.
- Complaint handling.
- A review of community facilities.
- Investigation of reasons for concern on Planning issues.
- Affordable housing.
- Prioritisation of resources towards road maintenance.
- Encouragement of traffic calming schemes.
- Encouraging environmental awareness and social responsibility.
- The Council's corporate communications strategy.

9.2 Community Planning Partnership Surveys.

In 2004-05 the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership carried out a number of surveys using the Aberdeenshire Citizen's Panel. In summary the research carried out was as follows:-

(1) Community Well-Being.

The first survey that was carried out in July 2004 covered the issue of Community Well-Being. The survey had three main objectives. These were to look at people's views and attitudes towards aspects of:

- Community safety and policing;
- Transport;
- Health.

(2) Learning Survey

The second survey, carried out in August 2004 looked at a number of aspects of learning. The main objectives of the research was to look at people's views and attitudes towards aspects of:

- Schooling;
- Policing in Schools;
- Community-based Adult Learning;
- Library & Information Services;
- Information Communication Technology (ICT) Learning; and
- Community Participation.

(3) Consulting The Public

The third survey took place over the period from Mid November 2004 to Mid January 2005. The survey addressed the 2 key themes of:

- Views on public consultation by public agencies;
- Anti social behaviour.

(4) Sustainable Environment

The fourth survey took place in early 2005 looking at the issue of Sustainable Environment. The survey's objective was to look at people's activities, views and attitudes on:

- Waste service provided by the Council;
- Visits to the Aberdeenshire countryside;
- Countryside activities in Aberdeenshire (including the Countryside Ranger Service and National Nature Reserves);
- Human impact on the environment; and
- Policy options to reduce the impact of transport on the environment.

9.3 School Estate Management Plan Public Consultation

The third major public consultation exercise carried out by the Council during 2004-05 concerned the development of the School Estate Management Plan.

Following the development of the School Estate Management Strategy in early 2004 25 projects were identified as priority projects for the School Improvement Programme. Option appraisal was carried out on these 25 projects and based on this the Education and Recreation Committee on the 28th October 2004 agreed that 24 of the projects would be taken forward to public consultation. The School Estate Plan Public Consultation exercise was then launched on the 17th January 2005.

Progress with the consultation exercise was reported on a regular basis to the Education and Recreation Committee. In September outcomes were reported to the Area Committees of the Council and their views were brought back to the Education and Recreation Committee on the 8th December 2005.

The Committee considered in detail the responses to the consultation exercise and agreed which options should be removed from the School Estate Management Plan at this stage. The end result is a forward-thinking set of options on how the schools estate should be developed over the course of the next 10-15 years.

10 Some Key Facts About Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire covers an area of 6,313 sq km (2,437 square miles). Geographically, it is the fourth largest local authority in Scotland, representing 8% of Scotland's overall territory.

Aberdeenshire has a population of 232,850 (2004). This represents 4.5% of Scotland's total. By population, it is the 6th largest local authority in Scotland.

Aberdeenshire Council is responsible for the Education of nearly 41,000 pupils. These are educated in a total of 309 nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.

Recreation facilities provided by Aberdeenshire Council include:- 7 Leisure Centres; 14 Swimming Pools; 2 Ski Facilities; 11 Museums; 3 Heritage Centres and 36 Libraries.

The Council cleans 3,420 miles of streets and collects refuse from 104,475 homes.

Each year around 4,176 Planning applications and 4,261 Building Warrants are dealt with by the Council.

The Council runs 3 Children's Homes; 30 Day Centres; 11 Care Homes and 4 Family Centres providing over 3,792 person places per week.

Aberdeenshire Council also provides 13992 council houses. 1380 of these are sheltered accommodation.

The Council maintains 3,329 miles of Council Roads; 1,536 Bridges; 101 Car Parks; 37,907 Street Lights and 7 Harbours.

The Council is also responsible for 210 Burial grounds and cemeteries; 417 Play Areas and 4 Country Parks.

Aberdeenshire Council supports 147 bus services (Aberdeenshire local) and provides 34,000 Bus concession cards to Aberdeenshire residents and 1,115 Taxi Cards.

11 Other Publications

Summary Of The Main Council Plans And Strategies

Accessibility Strategy Plan

This is a plan to improve the accessibility for Aberdeenshire schools for everyone with disabilities.

Arts Strategy

Aberdeenshire Council and its partners in the independent and voluntary sector have worked together to develop the **Arts Strategy** for Aberdeenshire. The purpose of the Arts Strategy was to promote the development of arts across Aberdeenshire and to create rich and stimulating art experiences for all people and communities, young and old.

Building Buchan – New Beginnings

Building Buchan New Beginnings" is a three-year Action Plan to address the economic challenges facing coastal communities across North Aberdeenshire. It is led by three core partners - Scottish Enterprise Grampian, Aberdeenshire Council and Communities Scotland. The aim of the Action Plan is to build on the economic foundations within the area, to create a sustainable growing economy and integrated communities.

Business 2010

The Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum (formerly the North East Scotland Economic Forum). Forum has developed an economic growth strategy for Aberdeen City and Shire entitled **Business 2010**, which outlines its shared vision and programme of action to ensure the continued prosperity and growth of the area.

Community Plan

The Community Plan is the overarching plan for all public agencies in Aberdeenshire. It sets out how the major providers of public and voluntary services within the area will work together and with their communities to deliver better services. The Community Plan is divided up into four major themes of Community Well-being, Jobs and the Economy, Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Environment. It is also supported by a fifth theme of Developing our Partnership.

Community Learning and Development Strategy.

Produced by Aberdeenshire Council and its strategic partners in community learning. The strategy is the overarching community learning and development plan for Aberdeenshire. It is supported by six Area Action Plans as well as the Youth Strategy and the Adult Literacy Plan.

Community Safety Strategy

A Community Safety Steering Group is responsible for the development of the Community Safety Strategy which is then implemented through 7 local community safety network groups which have complete coverage of Aberdeenshire. Each year an Action Plan is drawn up to help deliver the Community Safety Strategy. The Action Plan for 2004-05 was based on the results of the Safety Audit 2003 and set out a range of tasks to be carried forward under the main headings of Personal

Safety, Safety of Property, Safety in the Neighbourhood and Environment, Safety while Travelling and Developing Links.

Economic Development Strategy

The Council's Economic Development Strategy for the years 2001 – 2007 was first launched in September 2001. The Strategy provides a framework for the economic development activity within the Council and builds on the Council's commitments set out in the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum Economic Growth Strategy, Business 2010.

Homelessness Strategy

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires the Council to develop a Homelessness Strategy. The Council's Homelessness Strategy was developed in 2003 covering the period 2003-2005. The strategy sets out 17 main objectives to help tackle homelessness.

Joint Community Care Plan

Production of the Joint Community Care Plan is a statutory requirement. The Plan sets out the intentions of Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian for the provision of community care services over a three-year period.

The Council has to implement major strategic initiatives in conjunction with planning partners in health and other key stakeholders. These include the Carer's Strategy, Children's Services Plan, Older People's Strategy, Physical Disability Strategy, Criminal Justice Annual Plan and the Alcohol and Drugs Action Strategy. It does this under the umbrella of the Joint Community Care Plan.

Joint Health Improvement Plan

This closely links to the Joint Community Care Plan and has been developed as part of the Community Planning process. It is a government requirement that Community Planning partners develop these plans to set out the objectives, strategies and actions for each partner to improve health and reduce inequalities within their local population. The Joint Health Improvement Plan for Aberdeenshire covers the period 2003-2005 and provides a framework for the delivery of a range of health improvement actions.

Local Housing Strategy

The Local Housing Strategy is the Council's key strategic housing document. It sets out the major priorities for housing in Aberdeenshire for the next 5 years. It not only deals with Council owned housing but also identifies priorities for housing of all tenures, including Housing Associations, Owner Occupier and the Private Rental Sector.

Local Transport Strategy

The Local Transport Strategy sets out Aberdeenshire Council's plans and priorities for maintaining and improving the transport system. It includes all forms of transport – cars, walking, cycling, public transport, and freight transport. It considers transport wholly within Aberdeenshire, between Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, and also links to the rest of the UK and Europe. The strategy provides the opportunity for Aberdeenshire Council to set out its case for local and regional transport

improvements in the context of national objectives. The overall aim is to promote economic growth, social inclusion, health and protection of our environment through a safe, integrated, effective and efficient transport system.

Modern Transport System

The Modern Transport System was developed by NESTRANS and sets out proposals for a number of initiatives to improve transport to and within the north east of Scotland by 2011. These include improved park and ride schemes, expanded cycle routes, urban traffic control, increased pedestrianisation, trunk road improvements throughout the region and the development of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route. Improved freight rail enhancements and access to areas such as the airport, harbour, industrial areas, city centre and other town centres are also proposed.

Race Equality Scheme

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. In support of this commitment the Council has adopted the equality vision statement “working together to ensure there is equality of opportunity for everyone in Aberdeenshire”. How we will achieve this vision is set out in the Council’s Race Equality Scheme. This scheme was extensively revised in 2005.

Road Safety Plan

The Aberdeenshire Road Safety Plan was first launched in October 2000 covering the period 2000 – 2005. The third Road Safety Plan has just been launched. It sets out a range of actions that will be undertaken by the Council to meet Government road safety targets. Progress with the plan will be reviewed annually.

Sports and Active Lifestyle Strategy

The Strategy was produced in response to the national strategy for sport set out in the document “Sport 21” and takes account of recommendations made by the National Physical Activity Taskforce. The Strategy promotes an integrated approach to sport and active lifestyles and provides a focus and framework to encourage participation in line with the national aim of making more people, more active, more often.

Standards and Quality Report For Education

The focus of this report is on the Council’s progress and achievements in delivering the National Priorities for Education.

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan sets out the strategic objectives for the Council in relation to the Community Plan. It provides a framework for service delivery for the period 2003 – 2007. The Strategic Plan is divided into the five major themes of Community Well-Being; Jobs and the Economy; Learning; Sustainable Environment and Quality Services. The six principles of inclusion, accountability, participation, communication, using an evidence base, and encouraging effective partnerships underpin the Council’s way of working and are used to test all that the Council does.

Sustainability Charter

The Charter sets out what Aberdeenshire Council will do to improve its own environmental performance. The Sustainability Charter features an Action Programme to 2007 to guide achievement.

Waste Management Strategy

This sets out the Council's policies and priorities for dealing with waste arisings and will guide waste management in Aberdeenshire for the next 15 – 20 years. The Strategy emphasises the need to reduce the amount of waste arising and to encourage recycling.

12 CONTACTS

Aberdeenshire Council aims to maintain and improve the quality of life for everyone in Aberdeenshire by delivering first class public services. As users of these services we respect your opinions on the quality and way in which we provide services. You can contact us to comment on our services in three ways:-

Firstly our offices can be contacted using the **New General Enquiry telephone number Monday – Friday 9am – 5 pm on 08456 08 12 07.**

Alternatively you can write to the Chief Executive at the following address:-

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Alan G Campbell
Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB (Tel **01224 665400**)

Thirdly you can e-mail us Through The Council's Web Site

Aberdeenshire Council www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk
Website

General Enquiries:- enquiries@aberdeenshire.gov.uk



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