



**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL  
ANNUAL PUBLIC PERFORMANCE REPORT 2003 – 2004**

***“Working together for the best quality of life for everyone in  
Aberdeenshire”***



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*Working together for the best quality of life for everyone in Aberdeenshire.*

Welcome to our fourth annual public performance report. This edition covers the period April 2003 – March 2004 and sets out how the Council has performed during the year in relation to the key themes set out in its Community and Strategic Plans.

These themes are:-

- Community Well Being;
- Jobs and the Economy;
- Learning;
- Sustainable Environment, and
- Quality Services.

Working in partnership both within the Council, with neighbouring Authorities, other public agencies and the voluntary and private sectors, these key themes are used to help guide what we do to ensure that we provide a comprehensive and integrated service to meet the needs of our communities.

The report shows that we have made significant progress with some of our key objectives and Council performance in many areas has improved. All this has been achieved within the context of ever increasing needs of our public, particularly for special educational needs and homecare and the ever-increasing requirements of new legislation, such as race relations and disability discrimination.

In addition we have had to respond to the changing economic and social pressures facing the Northeast at the moment. These fall broadly into three categories:

- pressure on children's services in education and social work
- changing demographic patterns
- bringing increasing pressures on social work services, particularly those for the elderly
- economic development in response to the challenges facing industries in the Northeast.

I hope you find this information useful. If you would like to find out more about the Council please go to our web site on [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

*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.

**Joint Futures Initiative**

During the year the Joint Futures Initiative was progressed through the development of a revised Local Partnership Agreement between Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian. The aim of the agreement is to provide integrated health and community care services covering all community care groups for the people of Aberdeenshire and it sets out the resourcing and management arrangements that are to be put in place to achieve this.

The Joint Futures Initiative aims to improve the speed and effectiveness of community care 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) through closer integration of health and social care services in order to deliver more effective care in the community. Progress with the Joint Futures Initiative is assessed on an annual basis by an Evaluation Team.

The overall assessment of the Aberdeenshire Joint Futures Partnership performance for 2003/2004 showed that the work of the partnership was “significantly progressed”. The partnership was highly recommended for the range and depth of the Joint Futures arrangements, which it had implemented. The partners demonstrated an ability to work effectively and proactively together to improve outcomes for people who use their services and their carers.

**Joint Community Care Plan**

The Council, together with its Health partners, is required to produce a community care plan each year indicating what the agencies providing community care services have achieved during the previous year and what is planned for the coming year. The Plan concentrates on new initiatives and new developments rather than the provision of the current service. The joint Community Care Plan is closely related to the Joint Health Improvement Plan, which is developed as part of the community planning process. During the year 2003 – 2004 the following improvement actions were completed:-

- Older people
  - considerable progress was made with the implementation of the Older Persons strategy;
  - A review of Aberdeenshire's Care Home Provision was carried out as part of a project of modernisation and development;
  - A Best Value Review of day services was completed and change groups were established;
  - A direct payments scheme was established;
  - 3 enhanced care projects for older people were developed;
  
- People requiring mental health care
  - Development of the Grampian Joint Implementation Plan in line with the requirements of the new Mental Health Act were completed;
  - Advocacy services for people with mental health problems were commissioned;
  - The Primary Care Mental Health Strategy was produced.
  
- People with sensory impairment
  - Strategy covering the period 2004 – 2009 was developed.
  
- People with learning disabilities
  - Work on a new strategy for people with learning disabilities was completed;
  - A Partnership in Practice was drawn up;
  - A review of day services was completed.
  
- People with physical disabilities
  - The development of the strategy "Challenging Disability" was completed;
  - A review of the Occupational Therapy Services was completed.
  - A central Duty System was developed.
  
- People with substance misuse problems
  - Significant progress was made in implementing the National Drugs Strategy;
  - An integrated drugs service was introduced in North Aberdeenshire;
  - An Advocacy project was started;
  - An Employment Development Officer was appointed;
  
- People Requiring Palliative Care
  - Working closely with their Health partners, Social work made significant progress with the development of a strategy for people requiring palliative care.
  
- Carers
  - Carers assessment forms were developed;
  - Staff involved in undertaking carers assessments received enhanced training.

## Joint Health Improvement Plan

During the year, Aberdeenshire Council, in conjunction with its other Community Planning partners, developed the first joint health improvement plan for Aberdeenshire. This plan covers the period 2003 – 2005 and details the strategic framework and actions that Community Planning partners will take to improve the health of Aberdeenshire's population. It provides the interface between local planning, regional plans (Grampian or the North of Scotland) and Community Planning partners corporate service plans. The Joint Health Improvement Plan is informed by and will inform the Grampian Health Plan.

## Children's Services Plan

Local Authorities have a duty to prepare a Children's Services Plan under section 19 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and associated direction and guidance. The Aberdeenshire Children Services Plan was produced jointly with NHS Grampian and covered the period 2002 – 2004. The Plan encompasses all major Scottish Executive Children's Initiatives including Changing Children's Services Funding and Youth Justice. A summary of the main achievements for the year 2003 – 2004 is given below:-

- A multi-agency decision making process was established through the setting up of the Joint Strategic Board for Health, Community Care and Children's Services and seven supporting Strategy Groups.
- A multi agency Joint Assessment Team process for individual children was developed.
- The roll out of Community Schools continued.
- The new Children's Hospital in Aberdeen was opened.
- The provision of Social Work and Health staff to deliver services to Children with Disabilities and Children requiring Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services was increased.
- The year 2003/2004 saw the successful establishment of the full range of Youth Justice projects and initiatives including highly successful partnership projects on Restorative Justice and Persistent Offending with Barnardos and the Council's own Bangers and Smash and Kick-start projects.
- It also saw the establishment of Aberdeenshire-wide Family Group Conferencing Service with partners Children 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Youth Justice Services Directory was published.
- The Aberdeenshire Alternative Placement Scheme offering an alternative to secure care for some young people was established.

- Five Aberdeenshire schools took part in “Global Rock” performing arts competition in a collaborative project with Grampian Police and Aberdeen City Council.
- A new Central Buchan, children and families team was established extending services in Central Buchan.
- Supported accommodation units were opened for young people in Peterhead.
- Two dedicated teams for children moving to permanence or independence were established.
- Early Years Fora and Parent Support Groups were set up.
- Three part time development workers to support playgroup management committees were piloted.
- The “Link Worker Scheme” was funded to assist children with additional needs to use childcare provision.
- Additional staff were recruited to support children affected by domestic abuse.
- The Young People’s Charter was developed with Aberdeenshire Youth Forum.

## Criminal Justice

The Strategic Plan for Criminal Justice was jointly developed by the Northern Partnership Joint Committee for Criminal Justice Social Work Services. This is a strategic partnership between Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Highland and The Moray Councils. During the year 2003-2004 work was undertaken to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003. This included:-

- Development of the through care initiative;
- Development of Restriction of Liberty Orders procedures;
- Development of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders procedures;
- Development of a Social Inclusion Pilot for 16 – 21 year olds;
- Securing funding for an Arrest Referral Scheme.

## Local Housing Strategy and Housing

### Local Housing Strategy

In December 2003 the Social Work and Housing Committee of the Council approved the Local Housing Strategy for the Council. Through this strategy the Council aims to work in partnership with other housing providers to ensure every household in Aberdeenshire has access to housing of good quality, which meets a required particular need in a sustainable and inclusive community.

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) replaced the Housing Plan as the Council's key strategic housing document. The Strategy covers not just council housing but housing of all tenures including owner-occupiers, housing associations and private rented sector. Aberdeenshire Council has carried out the assessment of housing needs and conditions in Aberdeenshire. The document has been produced to tackle problems across Aberdeenshire for the period 2004 – 2009.

### Council House Sales

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004 the Council owned 14,316 properties representing a fall of 331 on the previous year. The majority of these homes were sold to sitting tenants under the Right to Buy legislation. It took 30 weeks to complete the sale of a council house in 2003/2004 compared to 31 weeks the previous year. Only 48.1% of council house sales were completed within the target time of 26 weeks. Across Scotland, in those councils with a Housing service about 13,500 council house sales were completed in 2003/04. Only 57% of these sales were completed within the national target time of 26 weeks. The proportion of sales completed within the target time ranges from 3.5% to 94.9%.

### Rent Levels

In the year 2003/2004 Council House tenants in Aberdeenshire had their rents increased by an average of £2 per week in line with the Retention Plus agreement, which resulted from the consultation, which took place with tenants when they decided to keep Aberdeenshire Council as its landlord rather than have a private landlord. As a result of the increase the average weekly rent of £36.10 was increased to £38.13. This increase represents inflation plus 3%.

### Council Housing Income and Expenditure

The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 requires councils to account separately for Local Authority housing provision. The following provides a summary of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2003-2004.

	<b>£,000</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Council House Rents	(28,611)
Sheltered Housing	(1,219)
Other Rents	(1,167)
Government Grants and Other Income	<u>(4,382)</u>
Total Income	(34,212)
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Repairs and Maintenance	9,609
Supervision and Management	5,179
Capital Financing Costs	9,707
Other Expenditure	<u>5,727</u>
Gross Expenditure	30,222
Operating Surplus for the Year	(3,990)

## Rent Arrears

During 2003/2004 the levels of council tenants arrears as a percentage of net rent due rose slightly from 3.3% to 3.8%. This level is significantly below the Scottish Average of 7.9%. The best performing council in Scotland recorded rent arrear levels of 2.8% of net rent due whilst the worst performing council in Scotland recorded rent arrears of 17.7% of net rent due. Aberdeenshire was **ranked 4<sup>th</sup>** in Scotland in terms of rent arrears.

For the year 2003/2004 in Aberdeenshire the percentage of current tenants owing more than 13 weeks rent at the year-end excluding those owing less than £250 dropped slightly to 3.1% compared with 3.2% for the previous year. The best performing council in Scotland had only 0.7% of its tenants with rent arrears of more than 13 weeks. The average for Scotland was 4.9% with the worst performing council reporting that 12.8% of its tenants had arrears of more than 13 weeks.

## Tenancy Changes

During 2003/2004 Aberdeenshire Council lost 1.9% of the total rent due as a result of voids (i.e. properties laying empty awaiting a new tenant). This represents a slight increase on the previous years levels of 1.89% but was still well below the Scottish average of 2.7%. The best performing council in Scotland only lost 0.4% of the total rent due to voids.

This indicator to some extent reflects the efficiency of the Lettings and Allocations process. However the speed of re-letting property can be determined by its location – some properties are hard to let because of their location, and its condition – some properties may require considerable remedial work before they are fit for re-letting.

## Homeless Strategy

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, all Scottish local authorities are required to produce a homelessness strategy. During the year the Council finalised its homeless strategy. This brings all the Council's homeless policies together under one document. The key aims of the strategy are:

- To maximise the prevention of homelessness in Aberdeenshire
- To ensure that people who become homeless are given the help they need to obtain and sustain a home of their own

As part of the development of the homeless strategy for Aberdeenshire the Council developed a streamlined procedure for speeding up the purchasing of properties for use as accommodation for homeless people. Under the new scheme, power to purchase suitable properties was given to Social Work and Housing Director, Colin Mackenzie. He will consult with appropriate committee members and property staff when choosing houses.

The authority also re-categorised some of its mainstream housing stock for let to homeless people. The provision of more suitable properties for use by homeless

persons was intended to reduce the Council's reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation, which was very costly and not really suitable for families.

- During 2003/2004 it took the Council on average 7.1 weeks to determine whether an applicant was homeless or not (measured between the date of presentation and the date the Council completed its assessment).
- During 2003/2004 the percentage of cases reassessed as homeless or potentially homeless within 12 months of their previous case being completed was 12.7%.

## Community Safety Strategy

Aberdeenshire Council has developed a Community Safety Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to work with partners to make Aberdeenshire a safer place for all those living in, working in, or visiting the area. This strategy includes an action plan. During the year 2003/2004 significant progress was made with a number of actions, these included the following:-

- The Community Safety Partnership successfully took on board the challenge of introducing Community Wardens to Aberdeenshire during 2004. The towns of Fraserburgh and Peterhead were chosen to be part of the pilot project with each town getting two full time and one part time warden. Initial evaluation has shown that the wardens are having a major impact in improving community safety and that all the partners are getting the benefit of this valuable resource.
- The Community Safety Partnership funded seminars for over 100 Aberdeenshire licencees, Councillors and other appropriate professionals to address violence associated with alcohol abuse throughout Aberdeenshire. The seminars focused on litigation, risk management and the training of door stewards as well as discussing the implications of the Nicholson Report.
- The Community Safety Partnership funded Domestic Abuse Packs and home security measures (locks, window alarms, personal alarms and door viewers) which were distributed to repeat victims of domestic abuse, the kits were well received and led to a reduction in repeat offending.
- The Community Safety Partnership was responsible for the development of the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy and is currently actively working with all partners to drive this strategy forward.
- The Built Environment sub group of the Community Safety partnership developed a "Safe House" project which involved encouraging a local house builder to provide a show house which could showcase and incorporate a wide variety of home safety and security measures. The show house in Blackburn allows house buyers to choose what safety and security measures they want to have fitted in their own home in an effort to reduce home accidents and crime.

- The seven locally based community safety groups jointly promoted a policy of only selling fireworks to adults over 21 years of age, they provided retailers with posters and worked in partnership with the fire service and police to reduce complaints and accidents.
- The community safety groups also provided water safety warning signs at several coastal locations known to be dangerous to walkers and climbers throughout Aberdeenshire and have also with partners provided water safety training to 30 schools with over 800 pupils benefiting from this initiative.
- The community safety partnership organised fire safety awareness training to staff within the Housing and Social Work services and issued fire safety check lists cards to home care staff. In addition the local community safety groups promoted the installation of smoke alarms for the deaf and have provided over 40 such alarms.

A number of road safety improvements were also made during the year. These included:-

- Introduction of experimental low cost speed limit signs at six schools in Aberdeenshire. These were successful in reducing the speed of cars passing the schools and in reducing the number of accidents.
- Introduction of more sophisticated part time speed limit signs. Two such signs were sited outside schools in Kintore and Westhill and were successful in reducing average traffic speed and accident levels.
- Development of the Safer Routes to Schools Programme. During the year a programme co-ordinator was appointed and school safety zones were introduced in Westhill, Alford and Aboyne. By the end of the year the programme involved 48 schools across Aberdeenshire working together to improve the safety of children travelling to and from school.
- Taking forward actions to reduce motorcycle accidents. During the year areas with a high incidence of motorcycle accidents were targeted with experimental warning signs. The first set of signs were erected on the B974 Cairn o' Mount road in May 2003 following two deaths and 19 injuries there in a three-year period. In the first year since their introduction there have been no injury accidents on that stretch of road. Plans are under way to extend the scheme to the A93.
- In October 2003 the Council participated in the launch of the North-east Safety Camera Partnership. This was a Scottish Executive-supported scheme designed to reduce the number of drivers travelling at excess speed.

# 3

## JOBS AND THE ECONOMY



### *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.

The Councils Economic Development Strategy contains a number of objectives, which support this strategic intent. Some of the Councils achievements in this regard for the year 2003 – 2004 are reported below:-

### Promotion of Community Economic Development Throughout Aberdeenshire

During the year Aberdeenshire Council demonstrated its commitment to Community Economic Development in a number of ways.

- During the year two specialist facilitators were appointed to promote Community Economic Development. One facilitator was based in Huntly and was given special responsibility for communities in West Aberdeenshire; the other was based in Fraserburgh to provide support to communities in North Aberdeenshire. Both assist local organisations and groups with specialist advice on how to develop a range of community projects and initiatives. The facilitators also help promote the Micro Finance Scheme, which offers grants from £500 to £2,000 for eligible projects, such as feasibility studies; business and marketing plans; architectural drawings, and funding strategies to assist groups to advance their projects.
- In October 2003 Aberdeenshire Council in partnership with Scottish Enterprise Grampian also demonstrated its commitment to the promotion of community economic development through the re-launch of the support to local rural partnerships fund. Together, the two organisations agreed to make £125,000 available from the fund over the next two years for supporting core costs and project development. To qualify for support, local rural partnerships and community economic development organisations are required to prove that they are promoting economic development in their communities by helping additional groups in their area and by encouraging collaboration between local groups to develop sustainable projects.

### Building Buchan New Beginnings Action Plan

A number of actions were taken to address the economic challenges facing coastal communities in North Aberdeenshire.

- In October 2003 the Building Buchan New Beginnings 3 year Action Plan was launched. The Action Plan was led by three core partners – Scottish Enterprise Grampian, Aberdeenshire Council and Communities Scotland. The aim of the

plan was to develop secure and sustainable communities in the area through economic regeneration and revitalisation of the economy. The Plan was developed following extensive consultation with local businesses and community groups and was effectively an Economic Development Plan for the Objective 2 area of North Aberdeenshire.

- A full-time team of four staff were appointed to deliver the Plan over the three-year period. The Plan was developed to maximise opportunities to lever additional funding from Scottish Enterprise, the European Union and the private sector. Early projects were able to secure funding from partners and the European Regional Development Fund through the East of Scotland Objective 2 Programme 2000 – 2006.
- During the year 2003 – 2004 work was also commenced on delivery of a series of support schemes to grow and diversify businesses across the area, to provide incubation space in Fraserburgh, improve land quality in Peterhead and audit training requirements of companies in the area.

### Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership

During the year the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership (ATP), a joint working arrangement between Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Communities Scotland continued its work to promote and develop the area's main towns by improving services and infrastructure, assisting community development and catalysing community involvement in the social, economic and environmental well-being of their towns.

- One of the key actions for the year was the launch of the Fraserburgh Master Plan Exercise for future development, especially for the northern part of the town. The production of the Master plan was seen as another step towards recovery for the town following several years of economic setback. The idea emerged when ATP and Fraserburgh Futures Partnership (FFP) realised, not only that a plethora of ongoing activities required co-ordination, but also a clearer and brighter vision for the area was necessary in order to attract new private and public investment.
- The partnership was successful in securing funding from an INTERREG funding application. This type of application involves working with partners within Europe and in the case of ATP, their partners were from Germany and Holland. The funding received was in relation to the revitalisation of the 4 harbour towns in the North of Aberdeenshire:- Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Banff and Macduff, and is now being used to improve town image, perception and promote citizenship over a three year period. Part of the funding has been used to employ a Project Manager to monitor and progress the tasks involved.

The success of the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership was recognised by the Scottish Executive and The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in the 2003 Scottish Quality Planning awards. The awards are given out on an annual basis to projects and initiatives across Scotland, which demonstrate innovation and

excellence in planning and development. ATP received a Commendation Award for the category 'Quality in Development Planning'. Judges selected ATP for the award because of its "outstanding approach to sustaining Aberdeenshire's towns and its ability to engage and involve the communities at both the local and strategic level". ATP was viewed as an outstanding example of delivering 'Community Planning' in Aberdeenshire involving several partner agencies, Housing Associations, the private sector and community representatives.

### Development of E-Business Centres

During 2003 the Council agreed a programme to expand the provision of industrial land in Aberdeenshire and to provide a number of e-business centres across the authority. In December 2003, one of the first business centres to be approved by the Council in line with this programme was the £390,000 Turriff Business Centre. The Centre will provide 12 individual offices for short-term lease. Funding for the centre will come from Aberdeenshire Council's capital expenditure programme – within the guidelines of the new Prudential Code – and from uncommitted balances remaining from funds received from the liquidation of the former Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

### European Funding

In recent years Aberdeenshire Council has achieved considerable success in securing much needed external support for the area. For example:-

- The Council has secured EU funding under domestic programmes, which has enabled 25 projects at a cost of over £8.5m to be carried out in Aberdeenshire. These programmes aim to revitalise areas facing structural difficulties in fields such as industrial, rural or urban sectors or where an area is overly dependent on fisheries. They also promote active labour market policies to combat unemployment, promote social inclusion and equality of opportunity for men and women.
- The Council has also been very successful in securing assistance from the EU's Interreg IIIb North Sea Region Programme in that it has secured approval to participate in large-scale projects around the North Sea basin at a total cost of 29.4 million Euros.



*We will work to*

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

Educational Achievements

On an annual basis Aberdeenshire Council produces its Standards and Quality report which sets out the progress the Council has made in pursuing the 5 National Priorities for education and in implementing the National Cultural Strategy, the National Sport Strategy and Scottish Executive guidance on community learning and development. The report relies upon evidence gathered by the Education and Recreation Service through its Quality Assurance processes. During 2003/2004 the Council was judged to be good, or very good in:-

- increasing attainment in 5-14, in SQA examinations and in making progress towards the National Priority attainment measures set for 2005
- raising average scores arising from school audits of attainment and achievement based on “How Good Is Our School” quality indicators. The average score has risen from 2.9 to 3.2 (Source: report on Standards and Quality 2002 –2003).
- a start being made to providing schools with a curriculum action plan to guide the development planning process over a three-year period.
- encouraging and supporting all schools to apply curriculum flexibility to better meet the needs of their learners and communities.
- providing subject focused curriculum development and support through Curriculum Support Groups (CSGs).
- developing a strategy and structure to take forward education for enterprise and entrepreneurship
- further extending the number and range of specialist teachers working in primary schools.
- developing science education in primary schools
- providing a policy, framework and resources to promote modern foreign languages 5 – 14.
- developing and implementing processes and structures for identifying and addressing the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs of our teachers.
- developing and taking forward the recommendations of the Discipline Task Group.
- promoting positive ethos in Aberdeenshire schools with school self evaluation data being consistently in excess of 3 (Source: *Report on Standards and Quality 2002- 2003*).
- refining and implementing the strategy for the rollout of Community Schools across the Authority.

- “closing the gap” for the lowest attaining 20% of our learners in relation to national figures and our comparator local authorities.
- relation to early years, race equality, lesser-used languages and supporting looked after children.
- relation to learners with additional support needs and promoting inclusion and accessibility.
- developing and reinforcing the knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with good citizenship.
- providing pastoral support for learners and promoting parental involvement. Very good links have been formed between the Director of Education and Recreation and the Scottish School Boards Association and individual school boards.
- developing and implementing a new Community Learning Strategy.
- developing a new Quality Assurance Framework for Community Learning and Development.
- implementing the Youth Work Strategy and taking forward the Aberdeenshire Youth Forum and the Dialogue Youth Project.
- developing and implementing policies and practices to further develop links with further and higher education partners.
- establishing a Pupil Forum for secondary pupils and making connections with the Scottish Youth Parliament, the Aberdeenshire Youth Forum and the Dialogue Youth Project.
- establishing and implementing an Arts Strategy for Aberdeenshire.
- attracting over £400,000 of new investment to support music making opportunities for children in Aberdeenshire schools, through an Arts Development led application for Youth Music Initiative funding from the Scottish Executive.
- launching a dynamic new website [www.aberdeenshirearts.org.uk](http://www.aberdeenshirearts.org.uk), including information on funding; arts contacts; a What’s On and a directory of artists and arts organisations, which to date has had around 20,000 hits.
- producing an “Audience Atlas” for the arts in Aberdeenshire, giving statistical data on the current levels of attendances at arts events and potential demand, which will act as an important advocacy and fundraising tool for developing the arts throughout Aberdeenshire.
- recruiting five Cultural Co-ordinators and an Arts Education Officer to deliver a wide range of arts activities for school children across Aberdeenshire, (with approximately 3,000 children participating in the first six months), as well as developing CPD programmes for teaching staff, in conjunction with local arts Organisations.
- leveraging in £831,500 of external funding towards Council led arts development projects, and supporting bids from independent arts groups totalling £84,700, with further bids pending to the value of £92,000.
- expanding sports provision and opportunity in line with the Sports and Active Lifestyles Strategy developed in partnership with Aberdeenshire Sports Council, with approximately 127,000 attendees on Sports and Active lifestyles programmes.
- providing training for approximately 1,300 sports coaches, volunteers and teachers in service or CPD programme.

- completing School Sports Co-ordinator infrastructure, with 17 part-time secondees, and approximately 18,500 service users, and further funding secured to roll out more extensive Active Schools programme from 2004/05.
- securing £210,000 worth of training and equipment resources for the TOPs youth sport programme.
- introducing Service Agreements for all organisations in receipt of annual grants from the Education and Recreation Grants Scheme.

### Upgrading of School Buildings

The Council is committed to continuously improving schools, community learning and recreation facilities by upgrading buildings and resources, including increasing access to information technology. During 2003 a number of actions were taken forward including improvements to existing schools and other learning facilities to make them more accessible to those with disabilities and additional support needs, agreement to build 6 new schools as part of the next phase of the Public Private Partnership (PPP), and the development of new information systems to provide up to date information on school closures due to bad weather. In addition a new school was opened in Cruden Bay.

- In September 2003 the new £3 Million Port Erroll Primary School, Cruden Bay was officially opened. The new £3 million building replaced the old one, which was destroyed by fire more than three years ago. The single storey school can cater for 205 pupils and includes eight classrooms, three general-purpose rooms, a computer room and nursery classroom. A general-purpose hall, dining area, gym and disabled facilities are also part of the complex. The building was designed by architects in Aberdeenshire Council's property section and there is emphasis on energy saving through high efficiency heating, the maximising of natural ventilation and through the use of motion detector lighting. Storage Tanks have also been installed in the school grounds to collect rainwater, which is then used for flushing the toilets – saving energy and money by reducing water rates.
- During the opening ceremony the school was awarded with a Secured by Design Award - making Port Erroll the first school in the North of Scotland to achieve this. Secured by Design supports one of the Government's key planning objectives - the creation of secure, quality places where people wish to live and work. The new Port Erroll School has attained the award with a building that has been designed to be a safe environment for everyone to use.

### Development of the Libraries Service

In addition to the work undertaken in the schools a number of improvements have been implemented in Library service, these include the following:-

- During 2003 free Internet access was made available to people using Aberdeenshire Council's 37 libraries as part of the national scheme called the "People's Network." The People's Network provides access to information,

mainly through the Internet, by providing computers, but at the same time providing informal learning opportunities to all Aberdeenshire residents. The intention is to complement and work in partnership with the colleges, community learning, Grampian careers and others to provide learning opportunities for all. All libraries now have computers, access to the Internet, access to the library catalogue, a variety of software, scanners and printing facilities. For users who need them, there are large keyboards and large mice. There is also speech recognition software in some libraries. Video conferencing facilities are available in Fraserburgh and Stonehaven to provide enhanced opportunities for linking to outside training providers.

- In November 2003 the Tallis automated library system and Talking Tech, telephone renewals hotline was introduced. This allows users to renew items over the phone by calling 01224 661511. They can also check what they have on loan, be informed when reserved items are ready for them and also be reminded of any overdue items they may have.
- As part of this system users also have electronic access to the Library Catalogue. This service can be accessed from the Library pages on the Council's web site on [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/alis](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/alis). Users can search for items, place reservations, and through the Borrower information be able to renew items.
- During the year homework clubs were established in 18 libraries.
- Funding was also obtained to develop literacies programmes in Westhill and Peterhead libraries.

# 5

## A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT



### *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.

Some of the Council's achievements with regards sustainability are summarised below:-

### Involvement In The Global Footprint Project

In November 2003 it was announced that Aberdeenshire Council had been successful in its joint bid with Aberdeen City Council to take part in the "Scotland's Global Footprint Project". This was a project that aimed to establish how the area's environmental resources could be used more wisely. The project, run by WWF Scotland, sought to assess how much land and water was needed to provide the area with the water, energy and food required to support the lifestyle currently enjoyed by its residents. This was termed the Council's "environmental footprint" and it represented the impact the community was having on the natural world. The Council agreed to allocate up to £5,000 from its Environment Fund towards the cost of establishing the footprint and the appointment of a project officer to coordinate the project. Once a footprint was calculated, it was used to inform people about the measures they can take to reduce it, on the basis that everyone has a role to play in reducing their impact on the local and global environment.

### Development Of Wood Fuel as a Sustainable Energy Source.

Aberdeenshire's Sustainable Charter commits the Council to exploring the use of alternative fuels and renewable energy sources to help conserve scarce resources. In line with the Charter, during 2003/2004 Aberdeenshire Council led a campaign to see wood fuel used more widely as a sustainable energy source. Timber is a carbon neutral fuel and unlike some other forms of energy generation, timber-fired heat and power are available as required. Even after taking into account energy used in harvesting and transporting timber, carbon dioxide emissions from wood are typically less than a third of those produced by oil. Wood heating schemes would also help free-up capacity on the existing electricity grid. The wider adoption of wood fuel for heat and power generation would also contribute significantly to achieving the Government's own targets for energy generation from renewable sources.

- As part of this campaign the Council helped fund a feasibility study for Braemar Community Council that was researching the practicalities of a wood-fired district-heating scheme in the village and discussions were also held on the use of wood heat in schools and other public buildings.

- It also agreed to support a pilot project in Huntly set up to trial the manufacture of wood pellets for fuel.

### Promoting The Use of Low Energy Light Bulbs in Council Housing

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to helping people reduce their domestic running costs and to make their homes more energy efficient. As a result, in February 2004 Aberdeenshire Council in partnership with British Gas agreed to supply all 15,000 council houses with low energy light bulbs free of charge. This would not only save money for tenants but also help the environment as part of the Council's energy efficiency commitment. It is confirmed that during the six-week promotional period almost 40% of tenants were supplied with the bulbs.

### Development of a Travel Plan for Aberdeenshire

In December 2003 the Council approved plans to develop the Aberdeenshire Travel Plan. One of the aims of this Plan was to reduce "drive alone car commuting" by up to 10% by 2005. As part of the Plan employees of Aberdeenshire Council were encouraged to car-share and a database was set up to give details of people willing to do so. This database was launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2004. Staff can access the car share scheme from home or from work at [www.carshareABERDEENSHIRE.com](http://www.carshareABERDEENSHIRE.com) and register their journey details for free. The system will then tell them if anyone else is going in the same direction, leaving it up to them to make contact through a secure email connection, and arrange to share both the journey and the costs of travel. As well as reducing travel costs, the scheme will encourage more efficient use of the car as well as reducing congestion and pollution in the local area. It was shown that if staff who normally travel solo by car, car-shared for just one day a week, there would be 15% less car journeys to Aberdeenshire centres of employment.

### Waste Management:- Introduction Of Kerbside Recycling Collections

As part of the Council's commitment to increasing recycling rates, in April 2003 kerbside recycling collections of waste paper were introduced on a trial basis in six towns across Aberdeenshire (Peterhead, Inverurie, Banchory, Fraserburgh, Ellon and Stonehaven). The aim of the scheme was to double paper recycling rates in Aberdeenshire. This would make an immediate contribution to reducing the amount of waste going to landfill. Paper currently accounts for 16% of household waste.

The kerbside collection service was made possible by the agreement of a contract with a new reprocessor - Shotton Paper, near Chester. Each year, they produce nearly half a million tonnes of newsprint from recycled paper. This contract allows Aberdeenshire to recycle a much wider range of paper than was previously possible. The contract guarantees to take every tonne of paper Aberdeenshire Council collects for recycling for the next 10 years. It also provides the Council with a guaranteed minimum income per tonne instead of a cost. This income will be used to support the cost of providing facilities to allow more people to recycle more types, and larger amounts, of paper.

# 6

## QUALITY SERVICES



### *We will work to*

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

Some of the Councils achievements in this regard for the year 2003 – 2004 are summarised over the page:-

### Customer Consultation

The Council is committed to continually seek and take account of the views of the people of Aberdeenshire on the quality and type of services provided. As a result it carries out on an annual basis a survey of its residents in order to identify levels of satisfaction with the services provided and to obtain feedback on how services could be improved. During 2003 the Council commissioned research on how residents prefer to contact the Council. The information gained from this research will be used to help the Council develop a multi-channel communications strategy. The research was carried out using Focus Groups to identify the key issues, followed by a telephone survey of a random sample of residents.

- It was clear from the research that residents currently communicate with the Council in a variety of ways, including telephone, face-to-face, Internet and letter. The reason for choosing one communication method over another is largely a matter of personal preference combined with the nature of the interaction with the Council. The commonest form of contact was telephone, with 73% of respondents stating that this was their preferred method. 11% of respondents stated that they preferred to communicate face to face whilst only 3% stated that they would use the Internet.
- The research shows that the main concern of residents when communicating with the Council was that the overall experience should be a positive one. When contacting the Council by telephone for example, residents expect to be dealt with by someone at first point of contact. They do not wish to be transferred. The person dealing with the call should be friendly, helpful and knowledgeable and be able and willing to take responsibility for dealing with the enquiry. No queuing system should be used, nor should people be put on hold.
- It was clear from the research that many people did not know the right number to call when trying to contact the Council. There was a call for the Council to publicise its main contact numbers better.
- A number of residents who took part in the research (17% of the total number surveyed) indicated that they or their family had complained to the Council in the previous 12 months. The most common types of complaints made were those connected with reporting road or street lighting defects and housing

repairs. Complaints were also made about poor quality of service and failure to provide a service.

- Compared with the 2002 survey the research identified improved satisfaction with the way in which the complaint was handled and with the outcome of the complaint. However a majority of the residents surveyed were still unhappy with the complaints process, in particular the speed of response and the explanation given.
- The research also revealed that residents had issues with the way in which the Council communicates with its residents, particularly when providing information on what new services are available, what it is doing, what its key priorities are, how decisions were arrived at etc. A total of 88% of residents taking part in the survey stated that they would like to have better information on what the Council is doing, whilst 87% would like more information.
- The research concluded that any multi-channel communication strategy developed by the Council would need to focus on the following areas:-
  - The need to improve telephone-handling procedures and publish an A-Z list of Council services;
  - The need to develop further the Council's web site, raise the awareness of the web site and use it to communicate a range of information about services;
  - The need to provide more information on Council services and performance;
  - The need to improve complaint-handling procedures.
- As a result of the survey Aberdeenshire Council carried out a detailed review of its contact management procedures with the aim of developing new customer relationship management systems (CRM).
- Improvements have also been made to the Council web site. A major redesign of the site was carried out to make the site more interesting and easier to navigate. More information than ever before can now be obtained via the web site. In addition a number of activities can now be done on-line.
- The Council has also improved its complaint handling procedures. In addition new systems are currently being introduced for the reporting and management of road and lighting faults.

### Development Of The Community Planning Partnership

It is a Council commitment to develop the way it works with partnership organisations and to review the Community Plan in 2004/2005. As part of this process the following actions took place:-

- In June 2003 the eight partners in the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership signed a landmark agreement to reaffirm their commitment to working in partnership to provide the best quality of life to all who live in, work in and visit Aberdeenshire. The agreement set out the basis upon which the partners will collaborate to develop, agree and achieve the objectives of the community planning process in Aberdeenshire. Community engagement is at the heart of effective community planning and the agreement set out the partnership's commitment to involving Aberdeenshire's communities in the process of securing a high quality of life for everyone.

The eight partners are: Aberdeenshire Council; [NHS Grampian](#); [Grampian Fire Brigade](#); [Scottish Enterprise Grampian](#); Grampian Police; [Scottish Natural Heritage](#); [Communities Scotland](#), and [Scottish Water](#)

- As part of the Community Planning Process, in November 2003 the Partners invited people to join a new citizens' panel for Aberdeenshire. As a first stage in forming the panel questionnaires were sent out to 14,000 households across Aberdeenshire asking people their views on the neighbourhood they live in, about vandalism and crime as well as the condition of pavements and roads. They were also being asked if they think policing is better now than it was five years ago and whether schools are worse than they were five years ago. Questions about the management of the natural environment and support for local businesses also featured.

At the end of the questionnaire people were then asked if they wished to join the Citizens' Panel. Those who responded "yes" were then invited to join the panel. Membership of the panel gives people of all age groups an opportunity to give their opinions and make comments on the developing services – both locally and across the whole area. The panel will operate initially for 18 months and panel members would be expected to contribute to a range of survey exercises during that time. The plan is to conduct three or four surveys each year and there may also be local discussion and focus groups.

### Promotion of Race Equality

During 2003 – 2004 Aberdeenshire Council made impressive progress with regards to actions listed its Race Equality Scheme. In November 2003 a review of the three-year plan showed that of 90 actions identified to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people of different racial groups, 23 were completed and 20 more progressed in the first year. Satisfactory progress was also made on a further 20 actions during the year.

Many actions completed in year one dealt with policies, including establishing an implementation group; reviewing existing and proposed service and corporate policies, and ensuring staff were aware of changes in policies and developments. Other tasks completed included drawing up a service agreement with Grampian Racial Equality Council and developing relationships with a range of other organisations.

## Improvements To The Planning Control Service

The development control service within Planning is committed to a regime of continuous service improvements and has received national recognition for its work in customer care and advice to developers on drainage impact and sustainable drainage systems. In November 2003 a number of new innovations in the enforcement of planning control were introduced, these were as follows:-

- Introduction of a new Enforcement Standards Charter. Customer feedback had showed that the public found enforcement to be time consuming, complex and confusing. The new Enforcement Standards Charter set out in plain language the standard of service which customers can expect to receive, what can be done to remedy complaints about breaches of planning control and information about how to access the service in their area.
- Planning Inspectors were introduced to reflect the true nature of the role of the enforcement staff and the approach they take to resolving complaints about development. Planning Inspectors monitor development to ensure that it complies with the permission and that conditions are fulfilled. They resolve most complaints by mediation and only resort to Enforcement Action where it is necessary.
- Along with the new Charter and Planning Inspectors, the service re-launched an information leaflet on planning enforcement, which had been updated to reflect these and other previous changes. The information leaflet explained in detail the steps that will be taken to resolve an enforcement complaint. The leaflet was also written in plain language. These new initiatives by the development control service spell out clearly the steps that can be taken to resolve complaints and detail the level of service that will be provided.

# 7

## COUNCIL FINANCES



The resources required to carry out the Council's activities are detailed below:-

### Council Tax Levels

For the year 2003 – 2004 Aberdeenshire Council set the Band D council tax level at **£966**, an increase of **£47** a year (just under **5%**) on the 2002/03 level of £919. Despite the increase Aberdeenshire Council still has the 9<sup>th</sup> lowest council tax levels in mainland Scotland.

Aberdeenshire Council spends **8% less on services** than most other councils and has **7% less staff** than the Scottish average. This affects services to our public and is due to the low level of government grant we get – for 2003/2004 we got a level of grant that was 9% below the Scottish mainland average. If we had received a grant level equivalent to the Scottish average we would have received an additional £33.5 million in grant.

The Council is fighting for a better deal and its "**FairShare**" Campaign, supported by all local MPs and MSPs is aimed at persuading the Scottish Executive to give us a bigger share of the revenue grant cake.

### Income and Expenditure

For the year 2003/2004 the total income for the Council was **£358,715,000**. The following table shows the main sources of the Council's income:-

Source	Income £'000	Percentage Of Total
Revenue Support Grant	192,201	53.5%
Council Tax (including Community Charges)	85,821	24%
Business Rates	80,693	22.5%

Thus it can be seen that the Revenue Support Grant, payable by the Scottish Executive, is the main source of income. The council tax only amounts to 24% of the Council's income.

During the year Aberdeenshire Council spent around **£359,156,000** on service delivery. A summary of the expenditure for the year 2003-2004 broken down by service is given over:-

	<b>£'000</b>
Education & Recreation	199,198
Transportation & Infrastructure	57,109
Policy and Resources	6,629
Social Work and Non-HRA Housing	69,954
Joint Board Requisitions	23,444
Housing Revenue Account	(4,186)
Corporate & Democratic Core	5,605
Non Distributed Costs	1,403
 Net Cost of Services	 <b>359,156</b>

Taking account of income from trading activities, interest on revenue balances and other adjustments the Net Expenditure to be met from Government Grants and the Local Taxpayer was £356,670,000. This level of expenditure shows an increase of £24,888,000 on the previous year. Comparing income to expenditure Aberdeenshire Council achieved a surplus of **£2,045,000**.



We are continually striving to improve Council performance. Some useful measures of our efficiency and effectiveness are listed below.

### Council Tax Collection Rates

We aim to collect as much Council Tax as we can as those who fail to pay put an unfair burden on those who do pay. During the year 2003/2004 Aberdeenshire Council collected 94% of the council tax due. This rate was unchanged on the previous year. The average collection rate for Scotland was 91.7%. The best collection rate in Scotland was 97.8% and the worst rate was 85.1%. Aberdeenshire Council was **ranked 14<sup>th</sup>** in Scotland in terms of its performance in collecting council tax.

The figure of 94% does not represent the final amount of council tax that will be collected as the Council continues to pursue non-payers after the year-end. However the costs of chasing people who do not pay does influence the overall costs of collecting council tax.

The cost of collection of council tax in the year 2003/2004 was £14.43 per chargeable dwelling, a slight increase on last year's cost of £14.41. The average cost of collection in Scotland was £14.11. The best performing council in Scotland achieved a collection cost of £7.13 per chargeable dwelling. In the worst performing council the cost was £26.14 per chargeable dwelling. Aberdeenshire Council was **ranked 18<sup>th</sup>** out of the 32 councils in Scotland in terms of the cost of collecting council tax.

### Payment of Invoices

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to being fair to suppliers and contractors, many of whom rely on the Council for their business. During 2003/2004 the Council paid 88% of their invoices within 30 days an increase of 3% from the previous years performance of 85%.

The average payment rate within Scotland was 82.9%. The best performing council in Scotland paid 95.8% of their invoices within 30 days. Aberdeenshire Council was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of the 32 councils in Scotland in its performance in paying invoices.

### Benefits Administration

Aberdeenshire Council is responsible for processing claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. In processing claims the Council fully complies with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) verification framework. The framework sets out the information that councils should collect, the verification requirements

that need to take place before benefit is paid, and the checks that should be made during the life of the claim.

The DWP has set targets for processing times as a guide to performance levels that councils should aspire to achieve or exceed. These targets are based on the top quarter of all performance figures reported to the Department by councils across the UK. These targets are:-

- Processing times for new claims – 36 days
- Processing times for notification of changes in circumstances – 9 days
- Percentage of renewal claims processed on time – 83%

During 2003/2004 Aberdeenshire Council took on average 49 days to process **new benefit claims**, a fall from the previous years average of 44 days. This was outside the DWP target. The Scottish average for processing new benefit claims was 47.5 days with the best performing council taking only 14 days and the worst 116.6 days. For the year Aberdeenshire Council was **ranked 18<sup>th</sup>** out of the 32 councils in Scotland for its performance in processing new claims.

In the year 2003/2004 Aberdeenshire Council took on average 6.8 days to process changes of circumstances notifications, a fall from the previous years average of 5.7 days but still remains inside the DWP target. The Scottish average for processing changes of circumstances notifications was 12.3 days with the best performing council taking only 3 days and the worst taking an average of 27.2 days. For the year Aberdeenshire Council was **ranked 8<sup>th</sup>** out of the 32 councils in Scotland for its performance in processing changes of circumstances notifications.

In the year 2003/2004 Aberdeenshire Council's performance in processing renewal claims on time fell to 82.2% compared with the previous years performance of 88.1%. However performance still exceeded the Scottish Average of 70%. The best performing council was able to process 99.8% of renewal claims on time whilst the worst performing council was only able to process 22.4% of renewals on time. During the year Aberdeenshire Council was **ranked 9<sup>th</sup>** out of the 32 councils in Scotland for its performance in processing benefit renewals.

Over the year the Gross Administration cost per case was £62.93 compared with £46.41 for the previous year. The Scottish average cost was £47.96 per claim. The gross administrative cost per case for the best performing council was £14.73 and for the worst was £98.52.

In 2003/2004 the percentage of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct on the basis of the information available at the determination was 94.6%. This compares with a Scottish Average of 96.3%. The best performing council achieved a rate of 100% and the worst 91.0%.



Please find below details of some of the reports that we produce. Each can be downloaded from the Council section (Plans and Reports) of the Aberdeenshire Council's web site, which is [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

To obtain hard copies of the reports or any more information about their contents please use the contact numbers given for each report.

***Aberdeenshire Council Strategic Plan 2003 – 2007.*** This is the second Strategic Plan and it builds on the targets set by the Council in the first Plan launched in August 2001. It provides the strategic framework for service delivery for the next four years. For further information contact Anne Murray, Policy Co-ordinator on 01224 664057

***Community Plan and Action Programme.*** The first Community Plan set out 16 actions the partners would take to progress community planning in Aberdeenshire. The update report details progress with these actions and the main themes contained in the Community Plan. For more information contact Gillian Buchanan, Community Planning Project Manager on 01224 664308. Email: [community.planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:community.planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

***Community Safety Action Plan and Community Safety Strategy.*** Reports are produced by the Aberdeenshire Community Safety Partnership. For further information contact Colin Walker, Grampian Police Local Authority Liaison Officer on: 01224 664293

***Aberdeenshire Local Housing Strategy.*** The all encompassing strategy assesses housing needs and conditions as well as identifying priorities to tackle the issues in Aberdeenshire over the next five years. A copy of the summary of the Aberdeenshire Local Housing Strategy is available online or on request by contacting Ritchie Johnson, Head of Strategic Development (Housing and Community Care) on: 01224 664992. Alternatively telephone the Information Officer (Housing) on 01467 625567 or e-mail [housing@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

***Homelessness Strategy.*** This was developed under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. For more information on this strategy or any other homelessness queries please contact Margaret Malone, Senior Housing Officer (Options) on 01779 483249 or Judith Sutherland, Senior Housing Officer (Options) on 01467 620515 or by e-mailing [housing@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

***Annual Reports.*** The reports include the Financial Statements for each year and a copy of the Council's statutory performance indicators. For further information contact Charles Armstrong, Director of Finance, on 01224 665410 or e-mail [finance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:finance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

**Statement of Accounts 2003/2004.** The purpose of the Statement of Accounts is to demonstrate proper stewardship of the Council's financial affairs. For further information contact Charles Armstrong, Director of Finance, on 01224 665410 or e-mail [finance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:finance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

**Performance Information 2003/ 2004.** The Local Government Act 1992 requires the council to publish performance information for its main services each year. These are the figures for April 2003 - March 2004. Figures for 2002/03 are also included where they are available. If you have any comments or questions about this performance information, please contact: David Hughes, Chief Internal Auditor on: 01224 664184 or e-mail: [enquiries@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

**Aberdeenshire Council Race Equality Scheme.** This was first published in November 2002 as a requirement of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The Scheme sets out what the Council is committed to doing to meet its duties under this legislation. The report and the Review of the Race Equality Scheme can be found on the Council's web site. If you have any questions or comments on the scheme please contact Mercy Yaor, Race Equality Policy Officer on 01224 664414 or e-mail : [equality@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:equality@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

**Tell Us What You Think.** The Council values comments, compliments or complaints about the quality of services that it provides. These can be made:-

(a) **By post** to Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB

(b) **By phone** - 0845 606 7000 (Local Rate Calls)

(c) **On line** using the electronic form which can be found at :-  
<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/contact/contact.html>

For more information about Aberdeenshire Council please contact:-

Mike Lowson, Communications Manager on 01224 664405 or

Linda Robertson, Press Officer on 01224 665422

Or e-mail- [enquiries@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).