



Law & Standards

Service Plan 2022-24

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Introduction

Newport City Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27 has four Well-being Objectives to support its vision 'insert Vision Statement here' and contribute towards Wales' Well-being Goals set in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. To support the delivery of these objectives and strategic priorities, each service area has developed their service plan. The Law and Standards Service Plan 2022-24 outlines its own priorities and how the service will contribute towards the Corporate Plan and deliver continuous improvement.

Law and Standards is part of the Council's Transformation & Corporate Directorate and is responsible for delivering wide range of statutory and professional support services for internal clients, Councillors and members of the public.

- Legal services, Insurances and Local Land charges.
- Democratic Services, including Overview and Scrutiny and the Mayoralty
- Elections and Electoral Registration
- Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- Gwent Coroner's service.

The roles of the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Head of Democratic Services and the "Proper Officer" are prescribed by legislation and the functions of the Registration and Coroner's Service, Electoral Registration, Scrutiny, and Local Land charges are all statutory requirements. Professional services such as Legal and Democratic Services directly support the Council's corporate governance arrangements and the delivery of other statutory and regulatory services throughout the Council. The service area has a gross operating budget of £4.5m and employs 131 staff.

Service Area Objectives

To support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, meet our statutory duties and improve the services we deliver, Law & Standards will be delivering Six objectives:

Objective 1 - To improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of statutory and professional services and optimise the use of available resources

Objective 2 - To improve the constitutional and corporate governance arrangements

Objective 3 - To extend and improve the use of technology and modernise working practices in order to underpin and drive service delivery changes

Objective 4 - To improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of statutory and professional services and optimise the use of available resources

Objective 5 - To improve the constitutional and corporate governance arrangements

Objective 6 - To extend and improve the use of technology and modernise working practices in order to underpin and drive service delivery changes.

Transformation Plan / Service Area Projects

To support the successful delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan, NCC will have a Transformation Plan that will deliver the strategic programmes and projects that will contribute towards the delivery of the Corporate Plan. Service areas will also be delivering smaller scale projects that will contribute towards continuous improvement in the delivery of services as well as contributing towards the strategic priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Law & Standards will not be leading on the delivery of any Transformation Plan or service area projects. However, the service will be supporting the Council with other programmes and projects through its legal and democratic services.

Workforce Development

To support workforce development across the Law & Standards service area, the following actions have been identified as priority between 2022-24.

Action	Outcome(s) of Action Delivery	Responsible Officer (Service Manager)	Action Start Date	Anticipated Completion Date
Undertake further succession planning activities to provide opportunities for staff to develop and improve resilience of the service area.	Service Managers provide opportunities for staff to develop, provide career progression and job shadowing. This will support formalising succession plans and create the foundations for a regular reviewing cycle.	Head of Service (Lead Officer) Service Managers.	1 st April 2022	31 st March 2023
Explore options for trainee posts for legal executives and solicitors and training programmes for other staff to develop local talent management framework.	Opportunities provided for new and existing staff to improve the capability and capacity of the service area.	Head of Service (Lead Officer) Service Managers.	1 st April 2022	31 st March 2023
Undertake a further review of current Job Descriptions and current workforce capability to future skills and knowledge gaps.	This work will enable the service area to identify training opportunities and updating of Job Descriptions to bridge the knowledge and skills gaps identified.	Head of Service (Lead Officer) Service Managers.	1 st April 2022	31 st March 2023

Service Area Objectives and Action Plan 2022-24

Objective 1		To improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of statutory and professional services and optimise the use of available resources.				
Objective Outcome(s)		To deliver the best, affordable statutory and professional support services. Statutory requirements and service area demands continue to be met within available budget and staffing resources.				
Corporate Strategy and/or Strategic Plan supported (If Applicable)		Not Applicable – Law & Standards will be supporting other service areas in the delivery of their objectives and activities.				
Well-being Objective Supported (If Applicable)		Not Applicable				
Well-being Strategic Priorities Supported		Not Applicable				
Objective Owner(s)		Head of Law & Standards and Service Managers				
Communication Support / Promotion (Yes / No)		No				
Reference	Action	Action Outcome(s)	Strategic Priority Strategy / Self-Assessment / Continuous Improvement	Action Owner (Service or Team Manager)	Start Date	Anticipated Completion Date
1	To contribute towards the delivery of key corporate projects and cross-cutting transformational change projects, including alternative service delivery models.	Key milestones for the legal work associated with key corporate regeneration and transformational projects will continue to be met and advice will be provided in a timely manner.	Not Applicable	Head of Law & Standards	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2024
2	Undertake a review of staffing structures within the Legal Section and explore options for the creation of trainee posts for Legal executives and Solicitors.	Improved capability and capacity to deliver legal services within available budget. Development of local talent and succession planning to meet workforce planning objectives	Not Applicable	Assistant Head of Legal Services	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2023
3	Undertake a review of staffing structures within Democratic Services and Elections.	Improved integration of the Elections and Governance Teams, with improved management structures and increased resilience. Improved capability and capacity to deliver democratic	Not Applicable	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2023

		and elections services within available budget				
4	Undertake a review of staffing structures within the Registration and Coroners Service and identify any changes required to address workload issues, legislative changes and budget pressures	<p>Appoint Area Coroner and/or Additional Assistant Coroners to address workload issues and backlog of coroner's inquests.</p> <p>Casual staff within registration service are moved to annualised hours contracts, where appropriate, to mitigate budget pressure.</p> <p>Formalise arrangements with Gwent Police for the appointment and management of Coroner's Officers</p> <p>Improved capability and capacity to deliver services within available budget and to meet proposed legislative changes to Registration services.</p>	Not Applicable	Registration and Coroner Services Manager	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2023
5	Undertake a review of accommodation and court premises, supplies and services budgets and commissioning arrangements, to improve the Coroner service and deliver efficiencies	<p>Identify most viable option for the relocation or refurbishment of the Coroner's court and office accommodation, to meet disability access requirements and improve public service. To meet the requirements of the Transformation Plan and property asset rationalisation objectives.</p> <p>Re-commissioning of supplies and services and longer-term agreements for post mortem and other coroner services will deliver efficiency savings and service improvements.</p>	Not Applicable	Registration and Coroner Services Manager	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2024

6	Undertake a review of discretionary fees and charges for Legal work and local land charges searches and identify any opportunities to generate additional income	Fees and charges are set at an appropriate level to maximise income generation and manage budget pressures, while delivering value for money.	Not Applicable	Elizabeth Bryant Assistant Head of Legal Services	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2023
7	Undertake a review of ceremony fees and other discretionary fees and charges for Registration services and identify any opportunities to generate additional income.	Fees and charges are set at an appropriate level to maximise income generation and manage budget pressures, while delivering value for money.	Not Applicable	Registration and Coroner Services Manager	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2023
8	To develop and extend customer satisfaction surveys for the Registration Service to cover registrations, in addition to ceremonies.		Not Applicable	Registration and Coroner Services Manager	1 st April 2020	31 st March 2023

Objective 2		To improve the constitutional and corporate governance arrangements				
Objective Outcome(s)		The published constitution accurately reflects all legislative changes and corporate governance arrangements. Democratic decisions are taken in a lawful, open and transparent manner, with improved scrutiny, public participation and engagement.				
Corporate Strategy and/or Strategic Plan supported (If Applicable)		Corporate Plan 2022-27 Public Engagement and Participation Strategy				
Well-being Objective Supported (If Applicable)		Well-being Objective 4 – Newport City Council is an inclusive organisation that places social value, fairness and sustainability at its core.				
Well-being Strategic Priorities Supported		WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 3 - Deliver our organisational Climate Change Plan to become a net zero organisation by 2030. WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5 - Promoting and improve the way in which residents and businesses can interact with the Council’s democratic process and decision making.				
Objective Owner(s)		Head of Law & Standards and Democratic and Electoral Services Manager				
Communication Support / Promotion (Yes / No)		Implementation of the Public Participation and Engagement strategy may require support to promote consultation and participation and to monitor the level of engagement				
Reference	Action	Action Outcome(s)	Strategic Priority Strategy / Self-Assessment / Continuous Improvement	Action Owner (Service or Team Manager)	Start Date	Anticipated Completion Date
1	To ensure that Standards Committee continues to operate effectively and discharges its statutory responsibilities	Standards Committee continue to be provided with timely advice, reports and training to enable them to discharge their statutory duties and their terms of reference. Succession planning in place for recruitment and replacement of independent members. Forward work-programme developed and delivered in accordance with agreed timescales.	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5	Assistant Head of Legal Services	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2024

2	Embed the Public Participation and Engagement Strategy into business as usual practice	<p>Members and Officers will be aware of and understand the role they play in engaging with residents</p> <p>Key Actions within the Public Participation and Engagement Strategy will be implemented and the effectiveness of the measures will be reviewed by Democratic Services Committee</p> <p>Hybrid meetings will be operated in accordance with the Council's multi-location meetings policy to allow Councillors and the public to attend and participate in meetings either in person or remotely.</p> <p>The Participation Strategy and Petitions scheme will ensure that the views of the public are brought to the attention of Scrutiny Committees.</p>	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2024
3	To continue to improve Scrutiny arrangements and the composite work programme.	<p>Training and development for Scrutiny Members and Chairs. Scrutiny is understood and members are supported to continually develop knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Training and development for Scrutiny Officers. Scrutiny is understood and Officers are able to support and advise scrutiny through reports and presentations.</p>	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2024

4	<p>Implement the legislative requirements of the Elections Act 2022 in accordance with prescribed timescales and in readiness for the May 2024 parliamentary elections</p>	<p>Legislative requirements successfully implemented in accordance with prescribed timescales.</p> <p>Measures introduced to reduce the potential for voter fraud in elections, including a new requirement for voters to show photographic identification at polling stations</p> <p>A broad range of commonly used photographic identifications will be accepted in polling stations and, in addition, Electoral Returning Officers will be required to provide an 'electoral identity' document' –a Voter Card – to electors who apply for one.</p> <p>Changes will be implemented to polling stations to support voter ID legislation.</p> <p>Permanent and temporary staff working on elections will be fully trained to implement the new legislation.</p>	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2024
5	<p>Undertake a community review of community areas and electoral arrangements in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government & Democracy (Wales) Act 2011.</p>	<p>Any changes to existing community boundaries and electoral arrangements, including membership and warding of community council areas, will be identified prior to the next electoral review by the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales in 2024/25.</p> <p>Full engagement and consultation will be undertaken</p>	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st April 2023	31 st March 2024

		with key stakeholders and the public to inform the outcomes of the review.				
6	To complete the review and re-drafting of the Council's Constitution as part of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act.	See Objective 2	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5	Head of Law & Standards	1 st April 2021	31 st March 2023
7	Improve and strengthen arrangements in accordance with National Scrutiny Survey and Corporate Assessment.	See Objective 2	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st April 2021	31 st March 2024
8	To develop and implement a programme for Member training and development, including individual training plans and Members Annual Reports.	See Objective 2	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st April 2021	31 st March 2024
9	Deliver a programme of member induction training for new elected Councillors following the May 2022 elections	Induction programme and training modules prepared to ensure that new members have the necessary skills and knowledge to discharge their roles and responsibilities	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 5	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	30 th September 2021	31 st March 2023
10	All elected members undertake eco and carbon literacy training within the first year after local elections with regular updates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding sourced for training Sessions in place for members (1 session Oct/Nov - 1 session Feb) 	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 3 Climate Change Plan	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st April 2022	31 st March 2023
11	All political and corporate decisions to evaluate the climate change, ecological and carbon reduction impacts as part of the decision-making process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic report templates reviewed to incorporate climate change and decarbonisation. Training and guidance in place to support this. 	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 3 Climate Change Plan	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st June 2022	30 th September 2022

Objective 3		To extend and improve the use of technology and modernise working practices in order to underpin and drive service delivery changes.				
Objective Outcome(s)		Improvements in technology and working arrangements will provide better, streamlined and efficient services, with more inclusive, flexible working arrangements for staff and improved public access to services.				
Corporate Strategy and/or Strategic Plan supported (If Applicable)		Corporate Plan 2022-27				
Well-being Objective Supported (If Applicable)		Well-being Objective 4 – Newport City Council is an inclusive organisation that places social value, fairness and sustainability at its core.				
Well-being Strategic Priorities Supported		WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 1 - Become an inclusive organisation that represents the citizens of Newport, providing equitable opportunity for people to succeed and places the citizen at the centre of decision making. WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 4 - Provide fair access to the council's in-person and digital services, including digital skills training and support.				
Objective Owner(s)		Head of Law & Standards and Service Managers				
Communication Support / Promotion (Yes / No)		No				
Reference	Action	Action Outcome(s)	Strategic Priority Strategy / Self-Assessment / Continuous Improvement	Action Owner (Service or Team Manager)	Start Date	Anticipated Completion Date
1	Introduce Stopford electronic diary system for Registration Service	Stopford electronic diary system successfully implemented, and staff are fully trained to operate system. Customers will be able to order birth and death registration certificates and book registration appointments on-line. Improved customer access and service delivery and more efficient use of resources	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 4	Registration and Coroner Services Manager	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2024
2	Fully implement Legal Civica case-management system	Civica Case management system successfully implemented and Legal staff are fully trained to operate the system. Time recording, document management and case management modules will	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 4	Assistant Head of Legal Services	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2024

		provide staff with a more efficient and flexible working platform and will provide timely management information to ensure that resources are being used effectively.				
3	Secure and adopt software and hardware to support voter identification applications and fulfilment as part of Election Act reforms	Legislative requirements successfully implemented in accordance with prescribed timescales. Voter identification software and hardware procured and successfully implemented and elections staff are fully trained to operate the system.	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 1 WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 4	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	1 st October 2022	31 st March 2024
4	Migration of Local Land Charges register and property information databases to the HM Land Registry central database and on-line web portal.	All existing Land Charges registers will be updated and transferred onto the new system, together with all planning, highways, development control and other spatial GIS property data. This will provide up-to-date and accurate property search information which can be accessed on-line as part of any property transaction.	WBO 4 / Strategic Priority 4	Assistant Head of Legal Services	1 st April 2021	31 st March 2023

Performance Measures

Performance Measure Title / Description	KPI for Corporate Plan (Yes/No)	Frequency (Quarterly / Half-yearly / Annual)	Performance Measure Owners (Service Manager Name)	Name of Data Provider	Actual 20/21	Actual 21/22	Target 21/22	Target 2022/23
Percentage of legal searches in 5 days.	No	Quarterly	Assistant Head of Legal Services	Land Charges Officer(s)	78.3	79.3%	95%	85%
Percentage of customers seen within 10 minutes.	No	Quarterly	Registration and Coroner Services Manager	Registration and Coroner Services Manager	No Data	No Data	95%	95%
Percentage of single justice procedure notices drafted within timescales	No	Quarterly	Assistant Head of Legal Services	Legal Support Officer	No Data	100%	98%	98%
(New) No. of views of Scrutiny meetings including live and You Tube	No	Half-yearly	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	No Data	No Data	No Data	First year measure – monitoring data
(New) Participation rates in consultations and surveys	Yes	Half-yearly	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	Senior Partnership Officer	No Data	No Data	No Data	First year measure – monitoring data
(New) Percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area (National Survey for Wales and local data)	Yes	Annual	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	Democratic and Elections Services Manager	No Data	No Data	No Data	First year measure – monitoring data
(New) Percentage of births registered within 42 days	No	Quarterly	Registration and Coroner Services Manager	Registration and Coroner Services Manager	No Data	No Data	No Data	98%

Service Area Risk Register

Risk Title	Risk Description	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk Score	Target Risk Score	Corporate / Service Risk
Budgetary Pressures on Service Demands	Failure to meet increasing service demands and the requirements of new legislation due to budgetary pressures and the need to reduce staffing and other resources.	Head of Law & Standards	12	6	Service Risk
(New) Failure to meet new legislative requirements under the Local Elections Act 2022	Failure to meet the legislative requirements could mean members of the public are not supported to use their votes in May 2024 parliamentary elections	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager	TBC	TBC	Service Risk