

## PLACE STRATEGY

### Executive summary

Since its inception in 1996, Aberdeenshire Council has adopted a place-based approach with the creation of six administrative areas to ensure we are representing and responding to the needs of our communities. This local area approach and strong local focus is embedded in the way that we work. Our communities are at the heart of what we do and how we work, and this strategy builds on the solid foundations already in place.

Aberdeenshire has historically benefited from the excellent relationships with our partners such as the NHS, Public Health, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action and Skills Development Scotland to name a few. A place-based approach is about understanding the assets, issues and needs of a place, and coordinating action and investment to deliver better outcomes, promote interconnections and strong relationships, and improve the quality of life for communities. This approach underpins our commitment to work more closely with our partners to deliver the services that will have the greatest impact for our communities.

### Strategic Context

The Council is operating in a significantly challenging environment and this model of service delivery builds on current success but more deliberately supports effective partnership working to deliver the outcomes needed in our communities. Our place-based approach is about understanding our places and planning policy responses, so they are coordinated to deliver improvements across a range of outcomes. Collaboration is key to our approach, which supports the four pillars identified in the Christie Commission report – **prevention, performance, participation and partnership**.

Our place strategy is founded on the [Place Principle](#) agreed by Scottish Government and COSLA and seeks to work more closely with communities in their role as custodians of local places and seek solutions through working with partners at a local level. The Place Principle is fundamental to National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which promotes a shared understanding of place and the need to take a more collaborative approach to a place's services and assets to achieve better outcomes for people and communities.

The strategy also presents an opportunity to more formally embrace community wealth building, to transform our local and regional economic systems to enable more communities and people to own, have a stake in, and benefit from the wealth our economy generates.

Our approach complements the National Performance Framework, aligns with Best Value obligations and our Council Plan and is a key document to drive change. The strategy and place plans are underpinned by our Strategic Assessment and involve us holding a strategic vision with and for our citizens, to craft economic and social outcomes that are equitable for all.

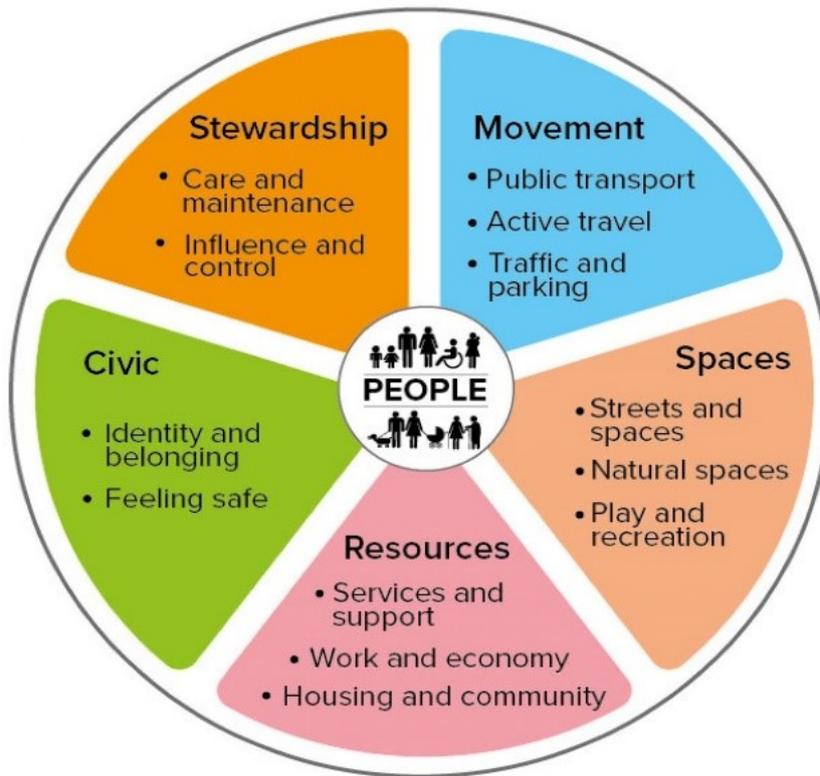
## **Framework**

Our Place Strategy supports our Place Policy and explains how the Council will, in partnership with our communities, achieve the vision and objectives for our places. The strategy represents a fundamentally different approach by Services in how we engage with each other and our communities, and work at a local level. We need to transition from a predominantly service provider-based approach to one that is adaptable, collaborative and creative, driven by strong local democratic mandates that put our people and communities at the heart of what we do.

Place Plans will be developed using a co-design approach, putting local people and their experiences at the centre. We will actively engage and bring together people from a wide range of sectors, to draw together collective experiences to help design our Place Plans to deliver for our communities and people in need.

The framework adopted to support the place-based approach is that of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes. These outcomes are evidenced based features, which provide a clear framework outlining what is required in order for people who live, work and rest in our places, to thrive. The evidence behind these outcomes has been developed by Public Health Scotland, with the importance of each of these outcomes fully supported and recognition that a holistic approach to the outcomes is required. The evidence underpinning the outcomes clearly demonstrates that these features should be the foundation of all successful places, but that the people within those places, with their experiences and relationships with their places, are also essential.

## Place and wellbeing outcomes



The framework is based on the thirteen Place & Wellbeing Outcomes grouped into five themes.

- **Movement** – active travel; public transport; traffic and parking.
- **Spaces** – streets and spaces, natural spaces; play and recreation
- **Resources** – services and support; work and economy; housing and community
- **Civic** – identity and belonging; feeling safe
- **Stewardship**– care and maintenance; influence and control.

The principles of equality, net-zero emissions and sustainability underpin all of these themes, and all themes should be embedded in policy and action.

Adopting the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes as a framework for Aberdeenshire Council’s place-based approach, ensures that there is a clear and consistent language that can be used corporately by all services and teams. This will facilitate and encourage collaborative working, as it provides a common understanding that can cross discipline, professional and organisational boundaries.

### How will the Place Strategy be delivered?

Place Plans will be overseen by Place Directors (nominated Directors to take ownership of named places) with Area Managers and Heads of Service co-leading each Place Plan supported by local teams. The success of the Place Strategy hinges on Council Services and Partners working together collaboratively with communities to deliver the holistic elements of Place and is ultimately everyone’s responsibility.

Place Teams (formerly known as Area Management Teams) will be constituted. The Place Teams (and subsequent Place Plans) will be led through a co-sponsor arrangement, with the Area Manager as the place lead, supported by a Head of Service who will actively champion the support of services in developing and delivering the council’s response within the respective Place Plan.

Place Teams will include representatives of all Services with a responsibility for delivering services in a place as required, along with partner agencies and community organisations and stakeholders to ensure their local knowledge and activity is reflected within the Place Plans and delivering a joined-up approach to the delivery of services and approach to assets is carefully considered.

The Place Team for each 'Place' will reflect the different needs and requirements of that Place, supported and informed by strong local data, so may differ in approach. The Place Team will be responsible for the development and delivery of each Place Plan, and for ensuring the council activities for their respective Service are delivered in full. They will be accountable for their actions as a Team to their Place Director.

Place Plans will be long-term and based on the needs of our communities as determined by data, for example, [Place & Wellbeing indicators](#), [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (SIMD), the [Strategic Assessment](#) and [Intermediate Zone Summaries](#), as well as local knowledge, particularly through community conversations, ensuring that voices of communities can provide local context to quantitative data. Services will be responsible for delivering place action plans. The place action plans will inform and link directly to Service Business Plans with Services being held accountable for these by their respective Director and Policy Committee.

Measuring the impact of Place Plans is crucial and will be reported regularly to Area Committees, to Policy Committees through Business Plans, as well as through the LOIP to the Community Planning Partnership Board. Impact will be measured using the Improvement Service [Community Planning Outcomes Profile](#) (CPOP) as well as the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes Indicators.

## Place Plans

Place Plans will be developed for settlements in Aberdeenshire that have an Academy (secondary school) (academy towns). Place Plans may be created for other settlements where data demands.



A timetable is attached at appendix 1 which sets out the programme for the development of the Place Plans and the place leads from area managers and Heads of Service. It is important to note that whilst there is a leadership required in the development of place plans, all services are expected and required to actively contribute to shaping these plans.

Not all settlements are the same in terms of size, complexity and need. A data led approach will inform each place plan and consideration will be given to population and SIMD profile, the Strategic Assessment and Intermediate Zone summaries with local knowledge contributing firmly to determining need and priority for Place Plans.

Place plans will be developed by Place Teams over a rolling three-year period, with all towns having a place plan agreed by the end of 2026/27. By the end of 2024/25 each of the six administrative areas for Aberdeenshire will have one Place Plan.

The Place Plans are aligned to academy towns (towns with secondary schools) and, by their nature, are unlikely to cover all areas across Aberdeenshire. It is important to reflect that those communities not covered by a Place Plan should be encouraged to develop plans that reflect their own aspirations for their places through the development of a Local Place Plan.

## **Governance**

The Place Strategy seeks to build on existing governance arrangements, with performance of Council activity being reported to and scrutiny carried out by Policy and Area Committees as appropriate.

The Place Strategy is an Aberdeenshire Council document and will be approved by Full Council, following consultation with Area Committees. The Place Strategy will be endorsed by the Community Planning Partnership Board prior to Council approval.

Place Plans will be owned by the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and endorsed by Area Committees. To support this, the role of Local Community Planning Groups must be strengthened with revised Terms of Reference, role, purpose and governance. This review can be co-ordinated by the corporate Community Planning Team, working alongside area managers and their teams, with wide engagement with partners.

Area Managers and Head of Service co-lead will take Place Plans to Area Committees six monthly to report progress on activities that are owned by Council Services.

Performance reporting and scrutiny of Council activities under Place Plans will be reported to Area Committees. This sits within their current delegations, whereby area committees will approve work programmes and expenditure on activity at a local level. Monitoring and scrutiny of partner actions within Place Plans will take place through the Community Planning Partnership Board.

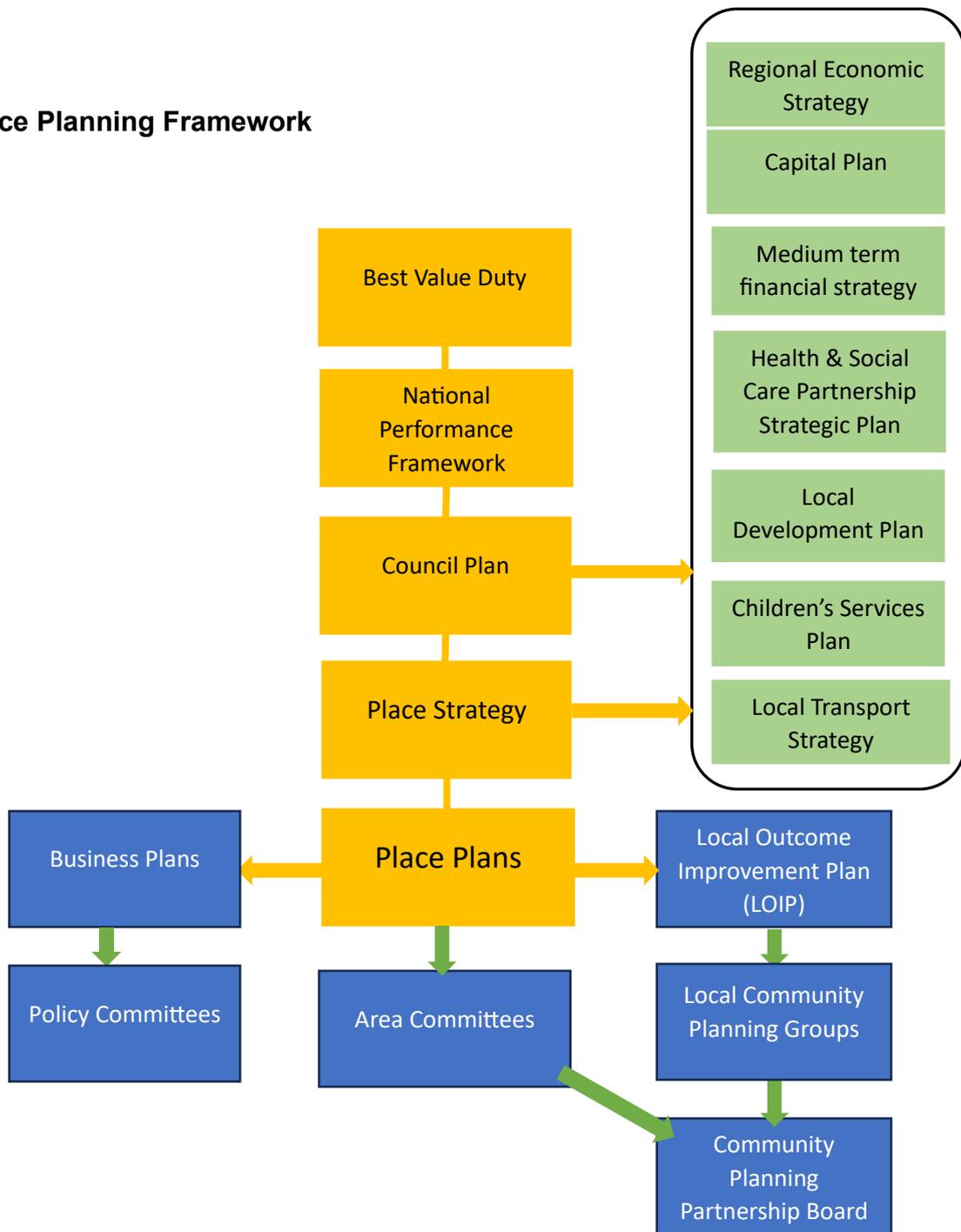
All corporate processes, such as budget-setting and development of the capital plan, will be considered through the lens of Place. All budget lines in both revenue and capital should reference place priorities as part of the reporting and monitoring of

activity. Some corporate support services - such as legal, finance, IT, comms and policy - support delivery of place through support provided to Services and Place Teams and will not necessarily be directly aligned to a Place Plan

Place plans are fundamental to Business Plans and to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. Services will need to demonstrate how Place Plans have been considered and actioned in the development of Business Plans.

Services will continue to report Business Plans to Policy Committees but with an emphasis on Place. Following agreement of the Place Strategy, the Business Plan template for 2025 will be amended to focus on Place with the clear expectation that Service priorities align directly with Place Plans.

# Place Planning Framework



## Key

	Informs
	Reports to

## Communication strategy

It is important to recognise who we intend to communicate with, when, and what the key messages are. As the intention of the strategy is to inform the direction of place plans, it will be the place plans themselves which require public engagement. The strategy requires to be visible and accessible to staff, to guide their role in the development process.

The key message around the Place Strategy is the move to an adaptable, collaborative and creative model, driven by strong local democratic mandates that put people and communities at the heart of change.

Internal communications from Chief Executive and Directors will be crucial to aid Services' understanding of this fundamentally new way of working and of their key role in development and delivery of Place Plans.

Regular updates have been provided to the Community Planning Partnership Board and Executive, which have agreed to adopt a Place-based approach to Community Planning. The Strategy will be endorsed by the Board in June 2024 and updates will continue to be provided as the Strategy is progressed and Place Plans are developed.

Area Managers will ensure that Local Community Planning Groups have an awareness of the Strategy and Place Plans in their areas.

Focus sessions	Upskilling officers and Elected Members on the strategy, and direction, and the next steps, creating the unified champion cohort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face to face and Teams sessions for Officers and Councillors</li> <li>• To define the strategy aims</li> <li>• To define the next steps</li> <li>• To lead on the team engagement</li> <li>• Shaping Places for Wellbeing sessions to set out the data lead approach.</li> <li>• To define the Shaping Places for Wellbeing framework and the assessments outcome tool.</li> </ul>
Viva Arcadia	Spotlight features on the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could take the form of a spotlight on individual champions with their own experiences and case studies</li> </ul>
Team Talk	CE and Directors team talk on Place and the next steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on existing conversations – what is place strategy, who will be impacted, what will it mean for our communities.</li> </ul>

Viva Engage	Place Champions to host ask-me-anything style place sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilisation of Viva Engage for an open dialogue about place – promoted through other Viva channels.</li> </ul>
Community dialogue	Content for awareness-raising.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllrs/Area Managers/rolling programme of engagement</li> </ul>
Partner engagement	Place engagement event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set out the Place Plan and what it means for all partners</li> <li>- Understand the ask and expectations</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX 1 DRAFT Place Plan Development**

Place	Area Manager Lead	Head of Service Lead	Director Sponsor	Data set available	Plan Completion date
<b>Banff and Buchan</b>			<b>LF</b>		
1 <b>Fraserburgh</b>	Area Manager – B&B	Susan Smith		2021 (SNA) draft 2024 Shaping Places	<b>June 2025</b>
2 Banff & Macduff	Area Manager – B&B	Paul Macari		2020 (SNA)	March 2026
<b>Buchan</b>			<b>RS</b>		
1 <b>Peterhead</b>	Area Manager - Buchan	Paul Macari			<b>March 2025</b>
2 Mintlaw	Area Manager - Buchan	Ewan Wallace			March 2026
<b>Formartine</b>			<b>RS</b>		
1 <b>Turriff</b>	Area Manager - Formartine	Ally Macleod		2020 (SNA) draft	<b>Sept 2025</b>
2 Ellon	Area Manager - Formartine	Alex Pirie			March 2026
3 Oldmeldrum	Area Manager - Formartine	Mary Beattie			March 2027
<b>Garioch</b>			<b>LF</b>		
1 <b>Inverurie</b>	Area Manager - Garioch	Kate Bond		2021 (SNA)	<b>Dec 2024</b>
2 Westhill	Area Manager - Garioch	Avril Nicol		2020 (SNA)	June 2026
3 Kemnay	Area Manager - Garioch	Anne Marie Davies Macleod			Dec 2026
<b>Kincardine and Mearns</b>			<b>AW</b>		
1 <b>Stonehaven</b>	Area Manager – K&M	Philip Mackay			<b>Sept 2025</b>
2 Portlethen	Area Manager – K&M	Paul Macari			March 2026
3 Laurencekirk	Area Manager – K&M	Ally Macleod			March 2027
<b>Marr</b>			<b>AW</b>		
1 <b>Huntly</b>	Area Manager - Marr	Avril Nicol			<b>March 2025</b>
2 Banchory	Area Manager - Marr	Janine Howie			March 2026
3 Aboyne	Area Manager - Marr	Philip Mackay			March 2027
4 Alford	Area Manager - Marr	Ewan Wallace			March 2027