

# **Contents**

Our corporate plan	01
More about us	03
Successes in 2023/24	05
Our people	06
Our place	12
Our future	14
Sustainability	16
Risks and opportunities	18



# Our corporate plan

Our 2019-24 corporate plan sets out our aims for Moray, and our vision, which is "a life of opportunity for all where people can thrive in vibrant communities and we work together to enrich our future."

It details our four priorities: our people, our place, our future, and working towards creating a financially sustainable council. Within this public performance report, these priorities will be broken down into outcomes, actions, measures of success and next steps, to demonstrate progress towards achieving these.

Underpinning all of this are our values, which are the driver of everything we do.

## We are:

. Fair

in tackling inequalities and tailoring services

- Ambitious
  - promoting Moray making it better for the most vulnerable
- Improving

driving improvement and investing in the future

Responsive

involving and listening to communities





# More about us

Moray is a largely rural area covering a land mass of 2,238km2.

It has a long coastline on the Moray Firth with harbours, fishing villages and worldclass beaches. The area's population in 2022 was projected to be 95,780.

Moray Council was established in 1996 following local government reorganisation and the demise of regional councils. Elections are held every five years to appoint the 26 councillors who form the membership of the Council.

Following the May 2022 election, the Council was led by a minority Conservative administration. There are three groups of councillors: Conservative (eleven councillors reduced to nine following one member becoming an Independent and another being non-aligned), SNP (nine councillors following a by-election reduced to eight following one member becoming an Independent), Labour (three councillors). There is one Scottish Green Party councillor, and four independent councillors.

The council continued throughout 2023/24 to respond to the Accounts Commission's Best Value Assurance progress report of 2022. A further Best Value Report was published in March 2024, which collected evidence from the annual audit from October 2023. The Commission indicated it will monitor progress but does not need to conduct a follow-up report.



March 2022 Progress Report

www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file152703.pdf

Key findings showed financial sustainability remains a key challenge; while there have been improvements the pace of change and transformation is slow; performance reporting timescales need improved. Acknowledgement was made that there is a long-standing challenge of recruiting senior staff; the council has used external support to develop leadership, scrutiny and officer/member relations. A marked improvement in cross-party working and positive engagement with communities on the budget were also noted.



# Successes in 2023/24

# **Our people**

- Continuing developing new approaches to Learning Estate and sport and leisure facilities
- Poverty related attainment gap reduced
- Sustained improvement in key attainment measures for our children and young people
- Increase in positive leaver destinations for young people
- Increase in education and employment participation in young people

### **Our future**

- Smarter Working plans approved
- Armed Forces Employer Gold Award achieved
- · Commitment to housing tenants reaffirmed
- Pregnancy Loss and Menopause support for staff enhanced
- Cultural Quarter projects progressed
- New Corporate Plan approved

# **Our place**

- · Launched m.connect bus service
- Began engagement on Local Development Plan 2027
- New council houses came on-stream
- Mosstodloch Masterplan started
- Draft Community Wealth Building Strategy agreed
- Town Centre regeneration progressed

# **Sustainability**

- Active Travel projects progressed in Keith and Buckie
- Housing Mix Delivery project progressed in Dufftown and Forres
- Successful Meet the Buyer events hosted
- Recycling performance the best in Scotland
- Joint Energy from Waste facility fully operational

# Our people

Provide opportunities for people to be the best they can be throughout their lives with a strong and sustained focus on those individuals and groups in our society who experience the most disadvantage and discrimination.

# **Corporate Plan priority**

1. Children and families: Provide opportunities where young people can achieve their potential and be the best they can be.

#### What we want to see:

The attainment gap between most and least disadvantaged children will reduce.

To achieve this, we've worked to reduce the impact of poverty:

- By continuing work with schools on curriculum choice and innovation
- By having a clear focus on learning, teaching and assessment so that our children and young people benefit from quality learning experiences across all establishments
- Reviewing our Additional Support Needs resources and provision
- Working in identified Early Learning and Childcare establishments regarding our offer for 2 year olds and their families
- Working with our attainment advisor to ensure that Pupil Equity - Funding is targeted and has a key focus on improvement for learners
- Continuing projects using Strategic Equity
   Funding with additional focus on attendance and
   engagement
- Extended curriculum and accreditation opportunities for young people in line with ongoing work around curriculum innovation
- By supporting opportunities for Early Learning and Childcare families in Buckie and Forres to receive targeted support through Equity and Excellence Leads
- Five key projects delivering Strategic Equity
   Funding with additional focus on attendance and engagement

#### How can we tell it's working?

We are seeing positive trends in Curriculum for Excellence levels for children and young people in P1, P4, P7 and S3.

School leaver attainment data for 2022/23 (published March 2024) shows Moray remains above the national benchmark comparator in literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 4 and level 5 for the second year in a row.

The number of school leavers who moved on to a positive destination remains in line with the national benchmark, with 95% of pupils entering employment or going on to Further and Higher Education.

Young people in the areas of highest deprivation are performing in-line with or slightly above the national comparators.

#### What's next?

Schools continue to develop approaches to wellbeing and family engagement, strengthening knowledge and developing interventions and continue on the improvement path for attainment.

Continue to reflect on our stretch aims set for all secondary schools as a measure to focus improvement activities, following review of the Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress by Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

#### What we want to see:

Improved literacy and numeracy attainment at both the Broad General Education and Senior Phase.

To achieve this, we've taken action to improve attainment including:

- Developing our approaches to moderation with training offered across all schools.
- Implementing AnalyseM tool to improve data literacy and provide opportunities for staff to interrogate learner progress and attendance.
- Continuing collaborative working across the Northern Alliance Partnership.
- Continuing partnership with UHI Moray to open up pathways and extend course opportunities.

#### How can we tell it's working?

Data only available for 2022/23.

BGE - ACEL 2023/24 data released Dec 2024.

Senior Phase 2023/24 - Cohort data Sept. 2024 / School Leavers March 2025.

#### What's next?

Schools continue to be supported to improve attainment through a strategic approach set out by the Curriculum Strategy Group and Moray Improvement Groups with priorities identified including early years transition; primary-secondary transition; numeracy and literacy; skills and learning pathways.

Young people are better prepared for life beyond school and for the workplace.

To achieve this, we've targeted action to improve employability skills and sustain positive school leaver destinations for all people:

- Overall sustained improvement in initial positive school leaver destinations
- Moray Pathways Employability and Training Hub at the Inkwell programme continued
- Continued partnership with Developing the Young Workforce Moray
- Extend opportunities for young people to access Foundation Apprenticeships and work based learning opportunities.

#### How can we tell it's working?

Follow Up leaver destination 2022/23 figures due June 2024. Initial leaver destination 2023/24 figures due March 2025.

#### What we want to see:

A plan for an affordable, sustainable Learning Estate.

To achieve this, we've progressed our review and transformation of the learning estate:

- Progressing community engagement on raising awareness of the Moray Learning estate strategy.
- Launched the first phase of engagement with the Forres Academy Associated School Group (ASG) stakeholders.
- Site options for a new Forres Academy explored.
- Launched the first phase of engagement with the Buckie High School ASG stakeholders.
- Elgin High School future capacity project started.
   Temporary modular accommodation provided to add capacity until mid-2027.

#### How can we tell it's working?

Decisions are being made on the future of Moray's learning estate in-line with the approved strategy.

Elgin High School temporary accommodation completed on time and within budget.

#### What's next?

Launch the first phase of engagement for the Sustainable Learning Estate review in the Elgin ASG and remaining ASGs.

Select a site for the new Forres Academy building with a planned 2028 completion date.

Implement 15 year existing school B condition upgrade and maintenance programme.

Complete detailed design and start construction of Elgin High School capacity extension.

Confirm project approach for future Buckie High School.

More children live with their families and are cared for in strong, safe communities in Moray.

To achieve this, we've worked with families as partners to give their children the kind of lives they want them to lead so that their children grow up to be strong and resilient:

- Continuing to review individual situations by incorporating the young person's feedback
- Continuing a whole system approach to intensive family support
- Additional marketing campaign to recruit more foster carers

#### How can we tell it's working?

The percentage of children in community-based care was 82% in 2023/24, meeting our target and maintaining the same level as 2022/23. The number of looked after children in Moray as at March 2024 was 173, a slight increase from 2023. There is evidence of social workers finding creative solutions to support families to stay together and keep children remaining within their families which resulted in an overall decrease in numbers at the end of March 2024.

#### What's next?

Continuation of support for families to stay together.

Corporate parenting strategic group and virtual school head teacher working with multi-agency colleagues in support of improving outcomes for care experienced children and young people.

#### What we want to see:

Improve life chances and outcomes for care experienced children and young people

To achieve this, we've improved identification and monitoring in the youth and criminal justice systems and worked to reduce over representation of care leavers and care experienced young people:

- Further training for justice staff in relation to criminal exploitation of young people
- Continued use of multi-agency solution oriented practice

#### How can we tell it's working?

As at March 2024, 8% of care experienced young people were in the youth and criminal justice systems, a reduction from 10.63% in 2023 and below the local acceptable target level of 15%.

National evidence shows there is a higher proportion of care experienced young people, per capita, in the Criminal and Youth Justice systems in comparison with mainstream young people, and the aim is to reduce this.

#### What's next?

Development of Youth Pod within throughcare and youth justice services.

## **Corporate Plan priority**

2. Improve health and wellbeing for the people of Moray.

#### What we want to see:

Improved outcomes for our more vulnerable young people and families.

To achieve this, we've made improvements in children and young people's health and wellbeing with continued engagement around this.

- Integration of Children and Families and Justice Social Work Services with the MIJB.
- NSPCC Graded Care Profile training rolled out 31 members of staff are licensed practitioners with 18 members of staff becoming trainers
- Safe and Together Model training continuing to be delivered – increase of 54% of staff members trained
- Our Family Story training rolled out increase of 17% of families trained

#### How do we know if it's working?

The Young People's Champions Board has become embedded in practice with young people being involved in recruitment, tendering process and representation on relevant groups.

#### What's next?

Complete the integration of Children and Families and Justice Social Work Services with the MIJB.

# **Corporate Plan priority**

3. Optimise outcomes for adults and older people by enhancing choice in the context of a home first approach delivered through the IJB

#### What we want to see:

People will be able to look after and improve their own health and well-being and live in good health for longer in home environments that support independent living.

To achieve this we've:

- Introduced a new two-monthly induction training programme
- Seen staff retention rates remaining high at 79% in the Care at Home service
- Continued to progress the Home First approach (Hospital Without Walls) to support people to avoid unnecessary hospital admission and to return home, wherever possible, without delay

#### How can we tell it's working?

92% of adults are able to look after their health very well or quite well; this is higher than the national figure at 91%. (Scottish Health and Care Experience survey).

61% of adults felt supported to live as independently as possible, slightly below the national rating of 64%.

People are able to live independently at home or in a homely setting in their community.

To achieve this, we've ensured that people are supported at home or in a homely setting as far as possible.

#### How can we tell it's working?

49% of adults were aware of the help, care and support options available to them. Similar to the Scottish figure of 51%.

50% of adults believed they had a say in how my help, care or support was provided, slightly below the Scotland-wide figure of 53%. I over decisions affecting their care.

#### What we want to see:

People who use health and social care services have positive experiences of those services, and have their dignity respected

To achieve this, the draft Workforce Plan 2022-2025 was implemented to help provide support to give services users choices and control over decisions affecting their care.

#### How can we tell it's working?

80% of adults rated services in Moray as good or very good, compared to the Scottish average of 75.8%.

69% of adults had positive experiences at the GP in Moray, an increase of 9% from the previous year.

Adults are 57% positive that they have a say in how help, care or support is provided to them in Moray. This is slightly below the national figure of 63%.

#### What's next?

Reducing the number and length of time people are delayed in hospital remains a priority.

# Our place

## **Corporate Plan Priority**

 Empower and support communities to build capacity by becoming more informed, involved and influential in service design and delivery

#### What we want to see:

Our communities' ability to address their own needs and aspirations is improved.

To achieve this, we've enhanced community participation in service delivery:

- Community Led Action Plans produced in partnership with key community anchor organisations in Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth
- · Agreed an updated volunteering policy
- Drafted Community Wealth Building Strategy

#### How can we tell it's working?

- Completed eight Community Asset Transfers.
- Three new Community Action Plans in place.

#### What's next?

Continued support to community led groups as outlined in the Partnership CLD Plan 2021-24.

#### What we want to see:

1% of council budget allocated through Participatory Budgeting (PB) by April 2027

To achieve this, we've made a start on developing and implementing PB:

- Mannachie Playpark in Forres supported to upgrade via community-led steering group
- Distributed funding through the Pupil Equity Fund to four schools
- Buckie and Keith Active Travel projects supported to delivery
- Forres Developer Obligations steering group supported

#### How can we tell it's working?

The Scottish Government set a target of 1% of a local authority's budget to be allocated by Participatory Budgeting (PB). Our target is to achieve 100% of the Scottish Government target. In 2023/24 PB allocated spend was 23% of the 1% target.

- We've reported a £476,000 spend against the £2.06m target.
- £91,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund distributed to eight arts and culture projects.

#### What's next?

Develop revised PB guidance for services and skills development approach to support. Continue working with youth groups in Forres and Buckie to distribute grants programme.

Complete development of Letterfourie play park.

## **Corporate Plan priority**

Improve our understanding of the issues in our communities based on the experience of local people

#### What we want to see:

More of our activities, services and plans are influenced by the communities they serve.

To achieve this, we've developed engagement with the public on the future of council services:

- Carried out extensive consultation and engagement on the future of council services in the context of the 2024/25 budget
- Ran housing needs; rent setting; and allocations surveys for tenants
- Active Travel spend decisions made by the communities in Buckie and Keith
- Invited communities to register local place plans
- Town centre opinion survey completed

#### How can we tell it's working?

Over 2,300 consultation responses to the initial budget survey received. Follow up service-specific proposals received over 1,500 responses and Culture and Leisure services engagement included around 60 stakeholders.

#### What's next?

Continue to engage with communities on financial planning and local priorities.

#### What we want to see:

We are more successful in developing a shared understanding between the council and communities that helps us to design the future together

To achieve this, we've developed locality engagement to ensure solutions are influenced by the experience of local people:

- Roll out of engagement for the Local Development Plan 2027
- Approved Town Centre Improvement Plans for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth.
- Mosstodloch Masterplan engagement began
- Findrassie Masterplan consulted on

#### How can we tell it's working?

Providing a more accessible option for young people to petition the council, increasing opportunities to engage with the local authority.

£1.5m of external funding allocated to regeneration and business grant schemes.

#### What's next?

Develop approaches to wider PB i.e. Participatory Democracy.

# Our future

## **Corporate Plan priority:**

1. Create a step change in the regional economy to enable inclusive economic growth

#### What we want to see:

Increased economic impact of tourism in Moray, and an increase in the level of 16-29 years living and working in Moray.

To achieve this, we've:

- Started consideration of the Local Visitor Levy concept
- Continued partnership between Skills
   Development Scotland, Moray College UHI,
   Moray Education, DYW Moray, Moray Pathways
   and CLD Youth Work to improve participation.

#### How can we tell it's working?

The latest mid-year statistics from 2022 show the 16-19 year old population in Moray reducing slightly from the previous year to 14.4%.

#### What we want to see:

Better employment, skills and earnings, increase in higher-skilled jobs and wage levels through a reduction in the gender pay gap, and increasing apprenticeships in key sectors.

To achieve this, we've:

· Four Moray Growth Deal projects in delivery

#### How can we tell it's working?

Living Wage data is expected to be available by early 2025.

## **Corporate plan priority:**

2. Work to protect and enhance our environment, creating a more resilient and sustainable future

#### What we want to see:

Achievement of targets, indicators and outcomes identified in climate change action plan.

To achieve this, we've:

- Implemented Aberlour flood protection plans
- Developed Coastal Change Adaptation Plans
- · Coastal protections for Kingston agreed
- Jointly organised a hydrogen stakeholder workshop in Elgin

#### How can we tell it's working?

Reduction in waste sent to landfill at Nether Dallachy

#### What's next?

Aim to reduce remaining residual waste emissions through the waste hierarchy

Development of a suitable natural capital enhancement delivery model for carbon offsetting which will create jobs and opportunities in Moray

Increased provision and use of electric vehicles and plant, with supporting infrastructure.

To achieve this, we've promoted and developed active and green travel:

- Updated Electric Vehicle Charging plan
- Ran the Speyside Challenge encouraging people to walk or cycle on the Speyside Way when commuting or shopping for the second year

#### How can we tell it's working?

Increased number of electric vehicles within council fleet by 13% in 2023/24, and during the year a draft Zero-Emission Fleet Strategy was developed for approval and implementation in 2024/25. The council adopted an Electric Vehicle strategy focussed on provision of charging infrastructure for public use, and is participating in a pathfinder project for the procurement of additional electric vehicle chargers for public use.

#### What's next?

Continue to progress the aims of the Climate Change Strategy and the hydrogen plan opportunities for Moray.

#### What we want to see:

Implement surface water infrastructure improvements in vulnerable flood risk areas

To achieve this, we've:

- Implemented Aberlour flood protection plans
- Developed Coastal Change Adaptation Plans
- Coastal protections for Kingston agreed

#### How can we tell it's working?

Offered flood protection products to residents at cost price alongside advice and guidance to protect property.

Coastal Change Adaptation Plans developed to give a clearer process for managing coastal assets and decision making based on evidence from coastal monitoring.

Engaged the local community at drop-in flooding events in Aberlour.

#### What's next?

Surface Water Management Plans for Forres and Findhorn will be developed in 2024/25, along with delivery of a Coastal Adaptation Plan in the first half of 2024/25 to support management of Moray's coastline in a sustainable way.

# **Sustainability**

Create a sustainable council that provides valued services to our communities.

## **Corporate Plan priority:**

1. Council's Financial strategy

#### What we want to see:

Development of sustainable financial plans, removing reliance on use of reserves.

To achieve this, we've reviewed and further developed the council's financial strategy alongside our medium to long-term planning.

#### How can we tell it's working?

When the Council set its budget for 2022/23 it included savings of £1.576m – £0.068 million were one off savings with recurring savings of £1.508 million, £0.204 million from increased income, £0.293 million from efficiencies, £0.8 million from Children's Service review of practice and £0.211 million other savings. The bulk of the savings were achieved.

The indicative savings from the Improvement and Modernisation Programme (£0.293 million) were not realised, though progress is being made with the work streams.

However, additional savings identified after the budget was approved more than covered the shortfall and in all a total of £3.318 million savings were removed for the budget, with £2.032 million of these recurring.

#### What's next?

- Develop a Savings Plan
- Revise Short to Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Revise Medium to Long Term Financial Strategy
- Revise approach to capital planning including Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan
- Improve financial forecasting and monitoring
- Review Reserves Policy

## **Corporate Plan priority:**

2. Transformation to achieve through our modernisation and improvement programme.

#### What we want to see:

Our modernisation and improvement transformation delivering an ICT strategy taking account of council priorities and requirements; implementation of online services for staff and services users for improved outcomes; a single service point of contact; and cultural change in customer service which delivers an enabling approach for most, with support for those who need it.

An expanded digital approach improved further with 105 services now available online, ranging from schools and nursery registrations, benefits applications and corporate complaint forms.

#### How can we tell it's working:

By the end of March 2024, 149,000 logins had been recorded to online services. The upward trend is expected to continue as digital services are further promoted and developed.

Uptake of council tax e-billing is now 9.3% against a target of 7.2%.

#### What's Next?

Work continues to identify opportunities to increase the number of online services available even further and all will be widely promoted.

Development of our workforce, including workforce planning taking account of council priorities and requirements, and effective and timely employee relations associated with change management at service and corporate level.

To achieve this, we've implemented actions to empower and enable the workforce to support develop skills for change; conduct budget related conversations and feedback; and increased Health and Work and Mental Health First Aid training for staff.

#### How can we tell it's working:

Support for the Smarter Working Project is complete with 81% of staff that use ICT now using mobile devices. Connectivity across council facilities have increased and wifi access in schools extended.

# Risks and opportunities

#### **Future risks**

We expect to need to make savings over the next two years with the ultimate goal of balancing our budget without relying on reserves. However, there is considerable lack of clarity about our future financial position.

#### Our main risks are:

- Risks arising from recent higher inflation and increased interest rates, with impact on pay claims and general increases in prices across the board;
- Future funding, with Scottish Government finances under pressure and being targeted to specific priorities;
- Significant funding at UK and Scottish
   Government level coming from bid funds,
   requiring expertise and effort to access and with
   considerable monitoring requirements;
- Demographic pressures and emerging social needs;
- Significant difficulties in recruiting staff;
- Moray Integration Joint Board (MIJB) is overcommitted against its budget and we will have to fund our share of any overspend. The long-term impact of the pandemic on MIJB services is as yet unknown;

- Our school estate requires significant investment to bring facilities up to the Scottish Government's recommended 'B-B' standard;
- Meeting our target of carbon neutral by 2030 will be a financial and technical challenge.
- Continuing to find budget savings after a prolonged period of making increasingly challenging savings will be difficult.

#### How we are managing these risks

- Financial planning, monitoring and review, including planning in the short to medium and medium to long term;
- Working within Moray Economic Partnership to support the local economy;
- · Developing Community Wealth Building;
- Creating teams with expertise in bidding for funds;
- Workforce planning;
- Reviewing our capital programme for areas of increased risk of slippage and / or costs increase and further developing a mechanism to prioritise our capital spend;
- Joint monitoring reviews with MIJB officers and officers and Board members from NHS Grampian;
- We are carrying out a comprehensive Learning Estate Review;
- We have mapped out a high-level route map to net zero.

#### **Opportunities and potential opportunities**

- The Moray Growth Deal, which is starting to see significant investment in Moray's economy;
- Our Community Wealth Building Strategy also looking to strengthen Moray's economy;
- Our Transformation Strategy, redesigning how we deliver services in today's world to deliver efficiencies, building on our investment in ICT for flexible working and a range of
- Our Learning Estate Review, looking at how we can improve the learning experience by enhancing the environment in which it takes place;
- Our Leisure Estate Review, looking to develop a strategic network of good quality leisure facilities across Moray;
- Our Climate Change Strategy, looking to become carbon neutral by 2030.

#### What's next?

Indicative budgets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 show the need to make further significant savings in early course. Although our level of funding from Scottish Government will not be confirmed for some months, we expect the need to make savings to continue.



£30.4m

Invested in Moray during the year – main items summarised below.



£5.2m

Vehicles and electric car chargers



£4.9m

New schools, improvements to existing schools and facilities for early learning and childcare



£3.1m

Moray Growth Deal



£2.9m

Waste management facilities and equipment, including a joint project with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils to build an energy from waste plant.



£2.4m

Harbour improvements



£1.0m

Other economic development



£0.5m

Flood alleviation and coastal protection

## **Showcasing our progress**

Despite the challenges the year brought, we were able to demonstrate the achievements of our colleagues, partners and communities against our corporate plan priorities.

#### April 2023







#### May 2023





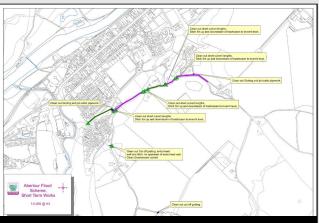




June 2023







Aberlour flood protection improvements announced



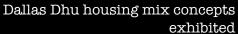
Local Plans Plans registered













Strategy agreed



Coastal adaptation plans consulted on



Coastal community fund support





**July 2023** 





August 2023



events held



MOD Gold Employer recognition awarded











Meet the buyer event hosted successfully

#### September 2023



Increase in education and employment participation in young people





#### October 2023



2024/25 budget engagement launched





Plans for new secondary schools in Forres and Buckie progress









26

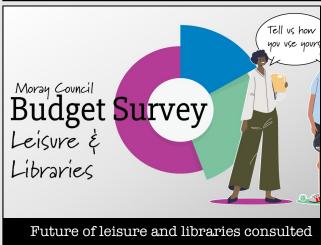




November 2023













Tenant participation feedback requested



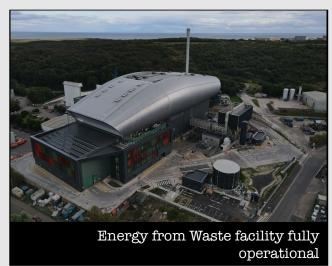
UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant scheme opens



Climate change grant scheme opens for young people







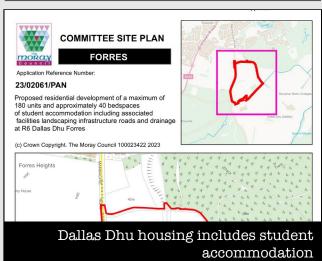


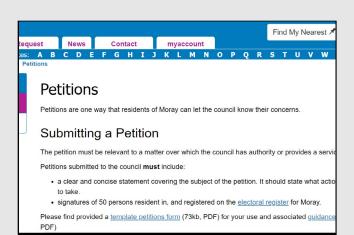






#### January 2024





# Petitions process simplified for young people







New electric charging tariff comes into operation



100% additional council tax premium on second homes to be introduced

#### February 2023



Coastal protection works approved for Kingston



























#### March 2024



UK Shared Prosperity Fund grants awarded



Forres Academy site consultation launched



