

# **Finance Directorate Plan 2024-28**

**Version 2.0 April 2026 – March 2028**

**Director: Simon Davey Director of Finance**

**Portfolio holder: Cllr Sam Hawkins - Finance**

## **Directorate Plan 2024-2028 (Version 2.0 for year 2026-27)**

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### **Notes for Director and Assistant Director/Service Leads**

#### **When you have completed your Directorate Plan:**

- ✓ Save to Directorate Planning 2024-28 – Version 2026-27 Teams folder. Final versions will be placed on the intranet/internet
- ✓ Link it to your Service Scorecards once in place
- ✓ Communicate it to your staff, and sharing with all staff progress and updates on a quarterly/six monthly basis within the directorate
- ✓ Keep it under review – make it a live document which adds value!
- ✓ Use it to formulate individual objectives

## Section 1 – What we do and who we deliver to

The key objectives of the directorate are to maintain financial sustainability and provide comprehensive financial oversight for the council. This includes supporting service delivery to achieve value for money, ensuring services are aligned with the approved Financial Strategy, safeguarding public funds, and prioritising protection for the most vulnerable members of the community.

The Finance directorate includes:

### **Revenues, Benefits and Financial Resilience, Corporate Customer Services, Fraud & Compliance**

Our primary purpose is to protect and maximise council income, financially support low-income households and to be the main point of contact for council services leading on the corporate customer charter. Our priority is to not only ensure that our performance remains in the top quartile but that we continue to look for how we can drive efficiencies in the way we deliver our services. We have 75,000 Council Tax Accounts and 8,000 business accounts to administer and collect over £200m in Council Tax and Business Rates and a further £10m respect of other balances. We award £19.2m in Housing Benefits and administer £10m in Council Tax Support along with leading on the Council's anti-poverty work. We have an anti-fraud strategy and associated delivery plan where we work to protect the public purse.

### **Financial Services**

Accountancy - Providing financial advice to officers and members of the Council ensuring compliance with statutory regulations and best practice. Budget preparation, monitoring and reporting, Treasury Management, VAT, Statement of Accounts, statutory returns and provision of a financial system and appropriate controls and procedures that operate throughout the Council.

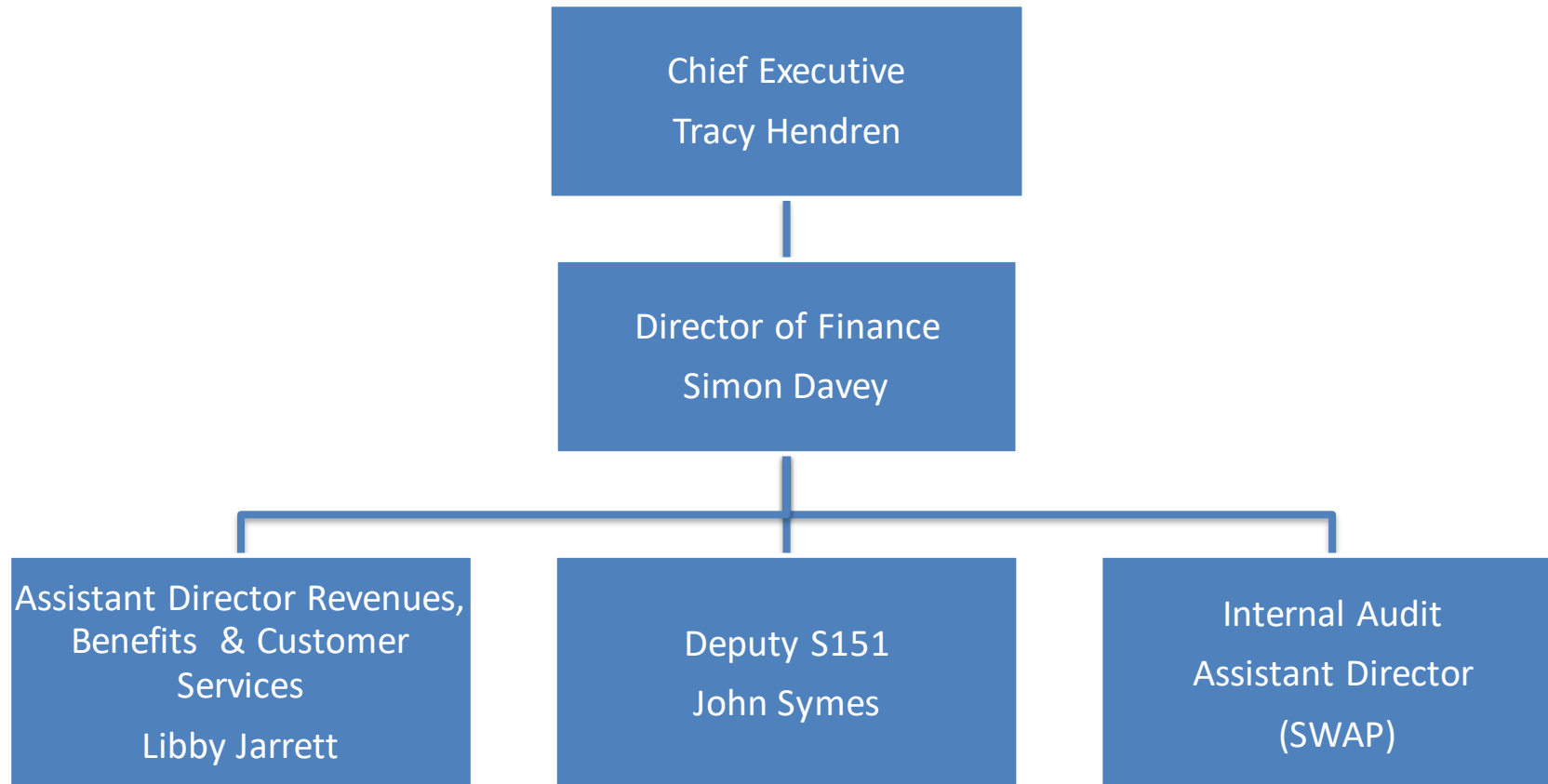
Income & Payments - Administer all EDDC creditor balances, paying council's suppliers and other payments through the Creditor team with over 60,000 payments made annually: administration of the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS). Processing and allocation of all income to the council resulting in over 220,000 transactions (Business Rates, Council Tax, Sundry Debts, Rents, Parking Charges, Benefits Overpayments etc) equating to £702m through the Cashier team.

Payroll - handles the timely and accurate processing of employee salaries, benefits, and deductions, the reporting of statutory figures and information to third parties such as HMRC and The Pensions Regulator and provides iTrent system access and implements system changes.

**Internal Audit**

This service is provided through the SWAP. An Annual Audit Plan is approved through the Audit & Governance Committee, we have 376 days allocated to us which is considered appropriate to gain the assurance required.

## Finance Directorate Structure 2025



## Section 2.1 Supporting the Council Plan

### Theme – Homes & Communities (HC)

Action ID	Key action	ID	Measure of success	Timeframe
CPA 4.	4. Implement the Poverty Strategy and deliver its action plan to support households in financial hardship.	HC14	Update the Anti-Poverty Strategy and action plan	30/09/2026
		New	From our VCSE event 13 Feb 2025 additional objectives were agreed to support and strengthen collaborative working with VCSE and partner organisations. This will include hosting more events.	31/03/2027
		New	Understanding community resilience and strengthening visibility of accessing support – Placed base pilot project in final stages – finding to be published March 2026	01/03/2026
		New	Launch and deliver a new community grant scheme – live from January 2026	01/03/2026
		HC16	Increase in financial outcomes for household income for applicants. In place and will be reported ongoing	Measure to be reported on annually
		New	New Crisis & Resilience Fund Introduction (working with DCC & other districts). EDDC also working directly with DWP as best practice model	1/4/2026

### Theme – Quality Services (QS)

CPA 35.	35. Implement the Financial Strategy to ensure financial stability of the Council whereby expenditure is met by available income.	QS8	New Financial Strategy adopted by Council October 2025 – now being used to prepare 2026/27 budget.	01/04/2026
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CPA 39.	39. Implement a Customer Charter to monitor performance, ensure transparency and monitor the performance on key service areas of service delivery.	QS16	Customer Charter completed with training roll out in 2026/27. Develop corporate performance measures for customer access to key services across all the different customer access channels.	01/09/2026
		QS17	Monitoring of the identified performance measures	Measures to be reported quarterly from 01/09/26
CPA 44.	44. Adoption of a Fraud, Corruption and Compliance Strategy and action plan to safeguard council finance.	QS28	Strategy approved and delivery plan agreed. Delivery against the key performance targets identified in the Fraud Strategy action plan.	Progress to be reported yearly to A&G

## Section 2.2 Directorate Objectives - cross directorate objectives / projects

Services involved	2.2 Cross Directorate objectives / projects we will deliver in 2026-28 which support the Council Plan Priorities to be monitored within directorates	Financial/ corporate resource	Lead Officers	Due Date
All Directorates	1. Phase 1 complete of replacement of the Council's Telephone System and Corporate Contact Centre  Phase 2 roll out in 2026/27 of added technology including Omni channels.	Budget allocated	Strata, Assistant Director Revenues & Benefits, CSC & Compliance and Customer Access Team Manager.	Further development in 2026/27
All Directorates	2. Replacement Income Management System – go live by 31/3/26	Budget allocated	Strata / Finance Manager DS151 Officer/Exchequer Manager	Main System Implementation and service roll out council wide March 2026  Embed and full utilisation 2026/27
All Directorates	3. Customer Charter and performance measures	Within current resources, but will be kept under review	Assistant Director Revenues & Benefits, CSC & Compliance	Charter complete - Implementation of Measures and



				training Matrix by September 2026  Ongoing monitoring of compliance.
All Directorates	4. Implementation of the updated anti-poverty strategy through the delivery of the action plan.	Within current resources	Assistant Director Revenues & Benefits, CSC & Compliance	Delivering against the action plan Sept 2026
All Directorates	5. Delivery of the action plan for the Fraud Strategy 2024-28	Within current resources	Assistant Director Revenues & Benefits, CSC & Compliance	2024 to 2028
All Directorates	6. Ensure the delivery of the Financial Strategy 2026 – 2036.  The Strategy will be refreshed in Summer 2026 to reflect announcement from Government on LGR	Within current resources	Director Finance	Ongoing - progress to be reported annually, with an update in Summer 2026
All Directorates	7. Payroll System Upgrade	Budget Allocated	Strata, Finance Manager & Payroll Services Manager	TBC with Strata
All Directorates	8. To support the delivery of the People Strategy	Budget Allocated, but under review.	All Managers and individuals	2025 - 2028
All Directorates	9. Implementation of e-notification (electronic billing, issuing of letter, texting etc)	Budget with Strata Allocation	Strata Assistant Director Revenues & Benefits, CSC & Compliance	2026 - 2028

## Section 2.3 Service level objectives / projects

Service	2.1 Service level objectives / projects we will deliver in 2026-28 which support the Council Plan Priorities to be monitored within directorates	Financial/ corporate resource	Lead Officers	Due Date
Directorate wide	1. Action, monitoring and reporting of recommendations from Grant Thornton Audit and SWAP Audits.	Within current resources, but will be kept under review	Director Finance	The specific recommendations and due dates are recorded and monitored centrally.
Financial services	2. Meet statutory deadlines for production of accounts and resource the following external audit inspection. Meeting increasing auditing standards and heightened financial risk and accounts complexity.	Within current resources, but will be kept under review	Director Finance / Finance Manager DS151 Officer	Publication of 2025/26 by end June 2026 Audit by 31 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2027 (26/27 by 28 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2028)

Revenues & Benefits Financial Services	3. Significant reforms have been announced by Government on business rates and welfare for implementation in 2026/27. There are substantial changes to be made to systems and process with appropriate communications required to businesses and the public. This will primarily impact the Revenues & Benefits Teams.	Within current resources, but will be kept under review. There will be burdens of funding to support IT changes and additional resources required.	Assistant Director Rev's, Ben's, CSC & Compliance	April 2026
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	4. Financial support and scrutiny in the development and delivery of the Housing Business Plan.	Within current resources with possible requirement for specialist support.	Finance Manager (Deputy S151)	June 2026
Corporate Wide projects - LGR, CHP, CAT, Recycling & Refuse LATCo, New Town Development Corporation, Leisure Contract & Cranbrook Leisure Centre	5. Professional support and guidance including Treasury Management considerations in delivery of these projects.	The full implication and need for additional resources are under review.	Director, AD & Finance Manager	As projects are defined.
Revenues & Benefits	Aligning Council Tax Discounts once outcome of LGR in Devon is known to achieve consistency in policy and meeting Financial Strategy target	Currently within resources	Assistant Director Rev's, Ben's, CSC & Compliance	Review in Aug 2026

Revenues & Benefits	Review CTR scheme following changes in Government Policy – Nov Budget 2025 for example two child benefit cap and once outcome of LGR to achieve consistency in policy.	Currently within resources but will need reviewing when details become clear	Assistant Director Rev's, Ben's, CSC & Compliance	March 2028
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### Section 3 – What we will measure in 2026-28 : Performance targets

Service	3.1 Service performance indicators  Also include any performance indicators that support the council plan. (Indicators from the plan have been added as a starting point)	Target	How often – monthly, quarterly, bi-annually, annually	Responsible officer
Each Team will produce a score card, that describes the customer journey through the service, including key performance indicators, income maximisation and generation information and a summary/narrative demonstrating the monthly position reasoning with a quarterly and annual position statement provided.				
Revenues and Benefits	Percentage of Council Tax collected	98.5%	Monthly	Council Tax Manager

Revenues and Benefits	Percentage of Non-domestic Rates collected	98.7%	Monthly	Revenues, Fraud & Compliance Manager
Revenues and Benefits	Days taken to process Housing Benefit new claims )	19 days	Monthly	Benefits & Financial Resilience Manager
Revenues and Benefits	Days taken to process Housing Benefit change events	5 days	Monthly	Benefits & Financial Resilience Manager
Revenues and Benefits	Fraud and Compliance (Income maximisation initiatives)	£100k	Half yearly	Revenues, Fraud & Compliance Manager
Financial Services	Invoice Payments	30 days	Quarterly	Exchequer & Systems Manager

## Section 4 – What we will stop doing or reduce to enable us to carry out the above objectives/projects

Service	Corporate Priority Objectives/Projects	Description of Impact
Rev's & Ben's	Will no longer hold Poverty Panel meetings outcomes will be reported annually to existing Committee	Officer time saving in preparation time and attendance.
Rev's & Ben's	Annual Council Tax Empty Homes Review	Officer time saved to focus on other Government changes
Rev's & Ben's	Move HRA Service Charges from Finance to Housing	Frees up officer time to focus on debt recovery and charges can be accommodated with current rent system
Customer Services & Rev's & Ben's	Review services to be carried out at Exmouth Town Hall	Allow service to cover ED Business Centre reception and help with resources in a stretched service.