Fife
COUNCIL

Our Place:

Living in Fife 2023

Final Report

Fife
People's
Panel

February 2024

Topics: Economy, Environment, Health and Wellbeing, Housing and Community

1. Why a sense of place matters

Integrating a sense of place into an area transforms it into a home, neighbourhood, or community. People from differing backgrounds and walks of life can come together and feel welcome, whether long-time residents, new members or visitors. Every place is a different blend of physical, social and economic characteristics that interact and influence each other.

The geography, architecture, and environment of an area all contribute towards how a place feels for the people who use it. Greenspaces, community buildings, and transport links are all important elements. Physical, economic and social elements all collaboratively impact on how an area feels to its residents. The strength of a community lies with the people, their connection to each other and their space. When members of a community develop a sense of Place they work together to bring new ideas, engage in civil discourse and discuss plans for the future. They care about where they live, derive a sense of belonging and identity from and to their community and they seek to nurture it.

Creating good places is difficult. Not least because circumstances change and a place that was ideal at one time may be less ideal at another. Many of the towns and villages in Fife have a rich heritage connected to their industrial past, where community was centred around the jobs these industries created and supported thriving communities. When the traditional industries stopped, the people remained but began to struggle as investment in the area reduced and there were fewer jobs for people. The location itself stayed much the same, but the sense of place, of having everything connected and working for the people, was reduced. Nowadays few people in an area will have a mutual workplace in common, and the traditional place of the church as an anchor in the community has diminished. In our larger towns, that feeling of belonging that is found in many small towns and villages can be difficult to replicate. This can often mean that tailoring solutions to individual neighbourhoods is replaced by generic approaches, which further weakens the sense of ownership.

It is a challenge to make sure that the Council and its partners deliver services and improvements which address the need for places to match what people need. Local communities themselves, critical partners in all of this, have a huge role to play in shaping places too – through volunteering, helping each other and entrepreneurship. Improving the quality of places can help tackle inequality and generally enhance the quality of lives. Understanding the existing and potential strengths of a place can inform good decision making, allowing resources to be best targeted to where they are needed and delivering better results in the long term.

We have undertaken research to better understand these strengths and to answer some fundamental questions about the idea of place in Fife. In 2016 the Place Standard tool was our starting point. This tool was jointly developed by Architecture & Design Scotland, NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government, and complemented our place and community-based activities. Over the years we have been embedding this structured method for considering places and how they will be changed by development and design. We have since repeated this process three times, approximately every two years, in 2018, 2021 and now in 2023.

In this latest survey "Our Place 2023", we analysed the views of 1,268 people who completed the survey on the places that are important to themselves and their families. The result of this work is presented in this report.

2. What makes a place

Identifying what makes a place important to someone is not easy. Depending on their interests and outlook on life, different people can view a place in vastly different ways. There are many things about a place that most people agree on, for instance that it should be safe, well maintained, and suitable for all people to use.

Our requirements of different spaces change as we change, whether we grow older, have families, or become less able. Most places are therefore multi-purpose; how 'good' they are will differ from person to person and from time to time. Yet the places that form the backdrop for our lives are tremendously important. Developing an understanding of 'what is place?' and how well we create and shape those spaces, is important for our ambition to make Fife itself a better place.

We have used the Scottish Government's Place and Wellbeing Outcomes from the Place Standard tool, which identifies the key elements of what makes a place better (Figure 1). This framework allows us to consider a wide range of key elements consistently and to think about how they link together and what this may look like in Fife, and how we might improve it. The questions are grouped into 5 outcomes: **Movement**, **Spaces**, **Resources**, **Civic** and **Stewardship**.
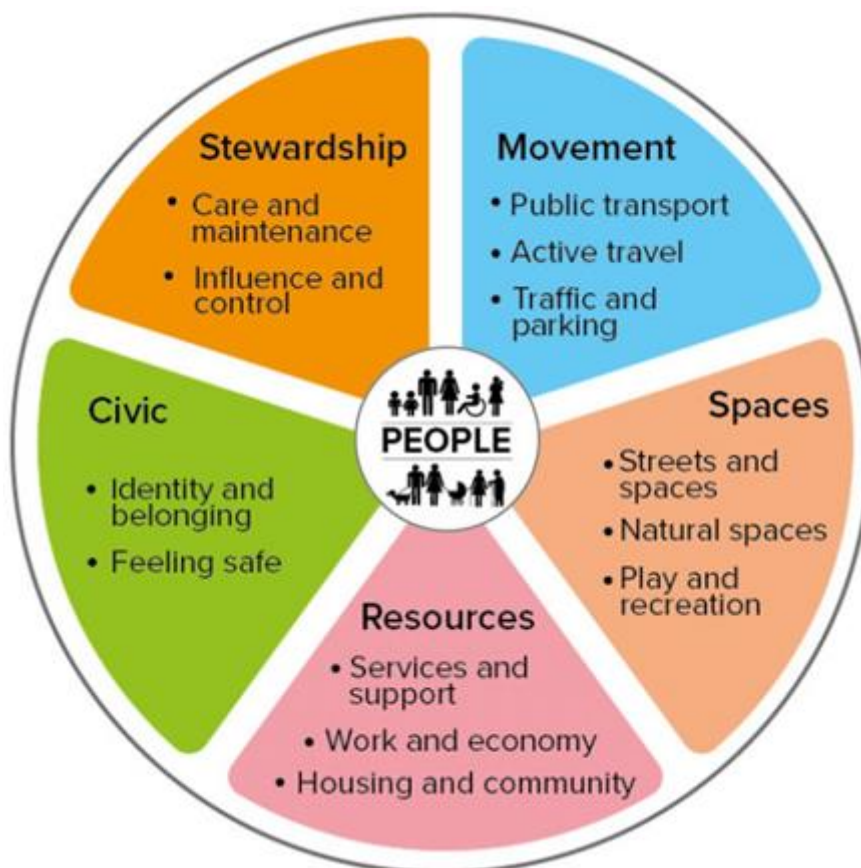

Figure 1: Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

3. Fife as a place

People in Fife generally view where they live as being ok but with room for improvement.

In the place standard tool, people are asked to rate each aspect of place on a 7 point scale, where 1 is most need for improvement and 7 is little need for improvement.

Overall, Fife is seen as a place with good natural spaces and active travel options but where greater improvement could be achieved in relation to work and the local economy, housing and community and in how they can influence what is going on around them to provide a greater sense of control (Figures 2, 3 and 4).
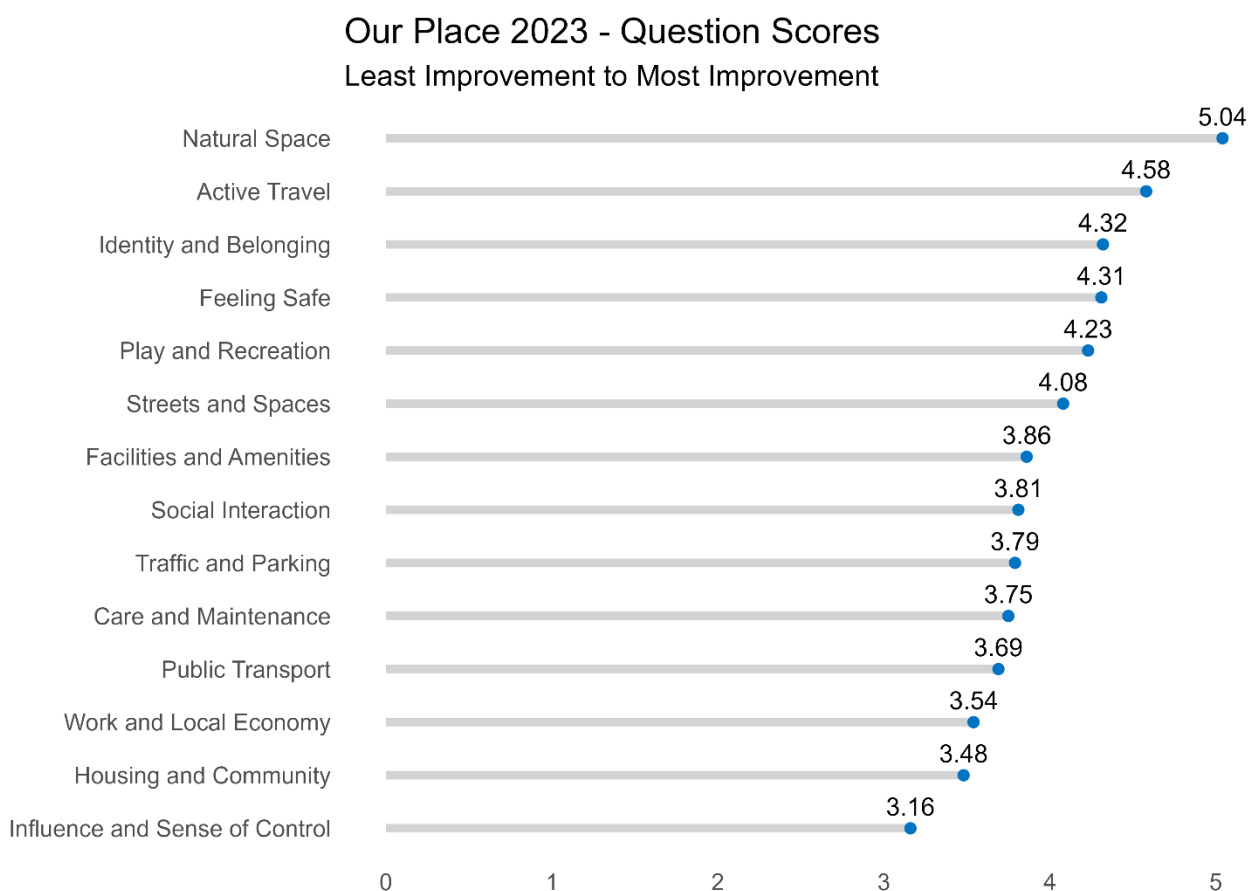
Our Place 2023 - Question Scores
Least Improvement to Most Improvement

Question	Score
Natural Space	5.04
Active Travel	4.58
Identity and Belonging	4.32
Feeling Safe	4.31
Play and Recreation	4.23
Streets and Spaces	4.08
Facilities and Amenities	3.86
Social Interaction	3.81
Traffic and Parking	3.79
Care and Maintenance	3.75
Public Transport	3.69
Work and Local Economy	3.54
Housing and Community	3.48
Influence and Sense of Control	3.16

Figure 2: Our Place 2023 Fife Scores

In Figure 2, the average question score for Fife has been plotted on the x axis with the corresponding question on the y axis. These are ordered so that the question with the highest score is at the top (the areas where people felt least improvement was required) to the lowest scores at the bottom (most improvement is needed in these areas).

In Figures 3 and 4, the average question scores for Fife have been plotted on a radar chart, graded from 1 to 7, with 7 (the outside ring) being the most positive perception, and the area with the least improvement needed. As questions are scored lower, areas in greater need of improvement, the line moves towards the centre of the chart.

From the 2023 radar chart (Figure 3), we can see that the maximum score was around 5 (for Natural Space) and the lowest scored question was Influence and Sense of Control which scored just over 3.
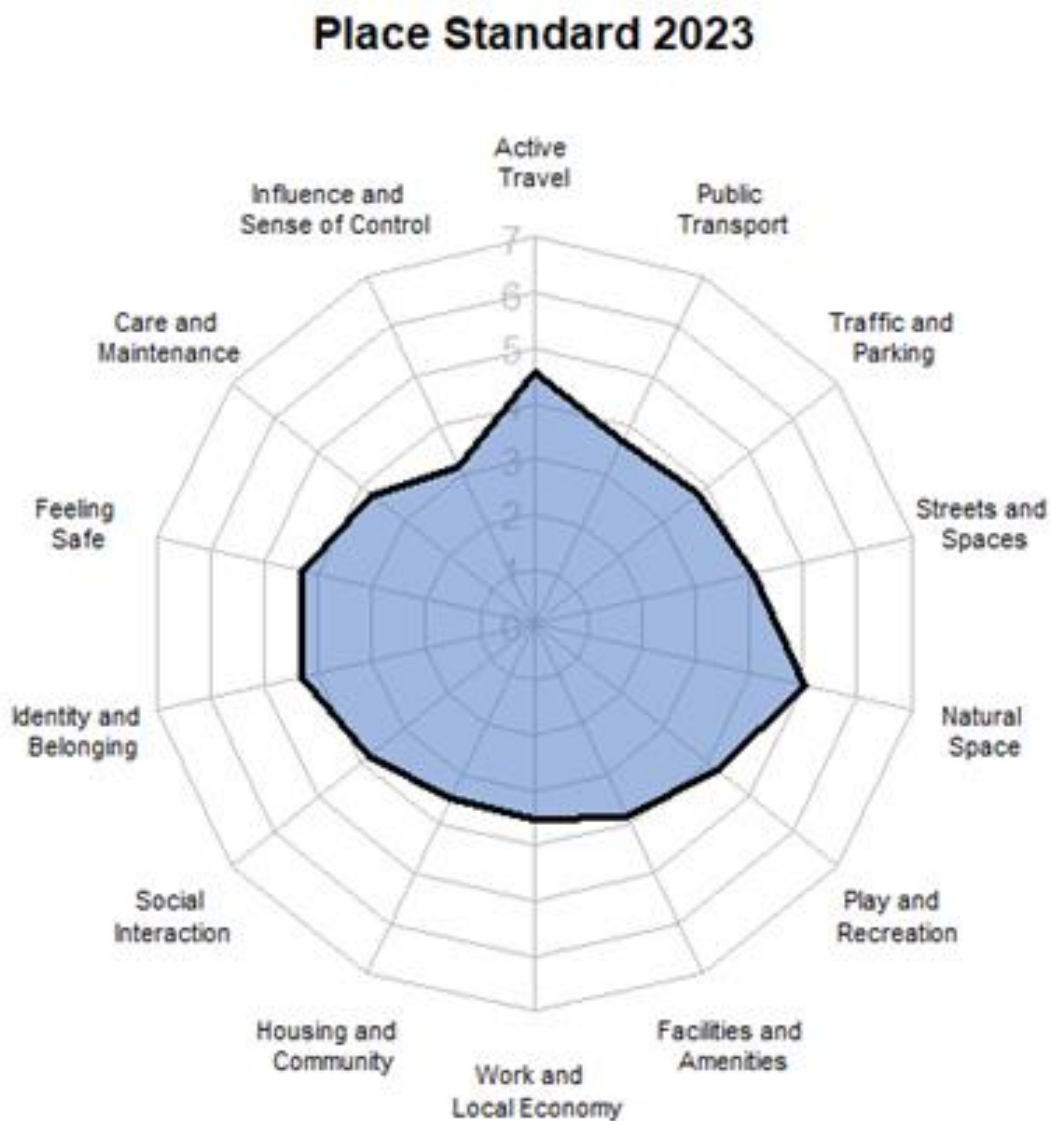
Place Standard 2023

Figure 3: Radar chart - How people perceive Fife as a Place, 2023

The second chart shows the change in these scores over the four iterations of the Place survey.

The 2023 scores are mostly all closer to the centre, indicating that these areas have decreased. Indeed, with each survey taking place, our perceptions of places are decreasing, with things going in the wrong direction! The only area which bucks this trend is Active Travel, where the score has improved since the first survey took place in 2016.
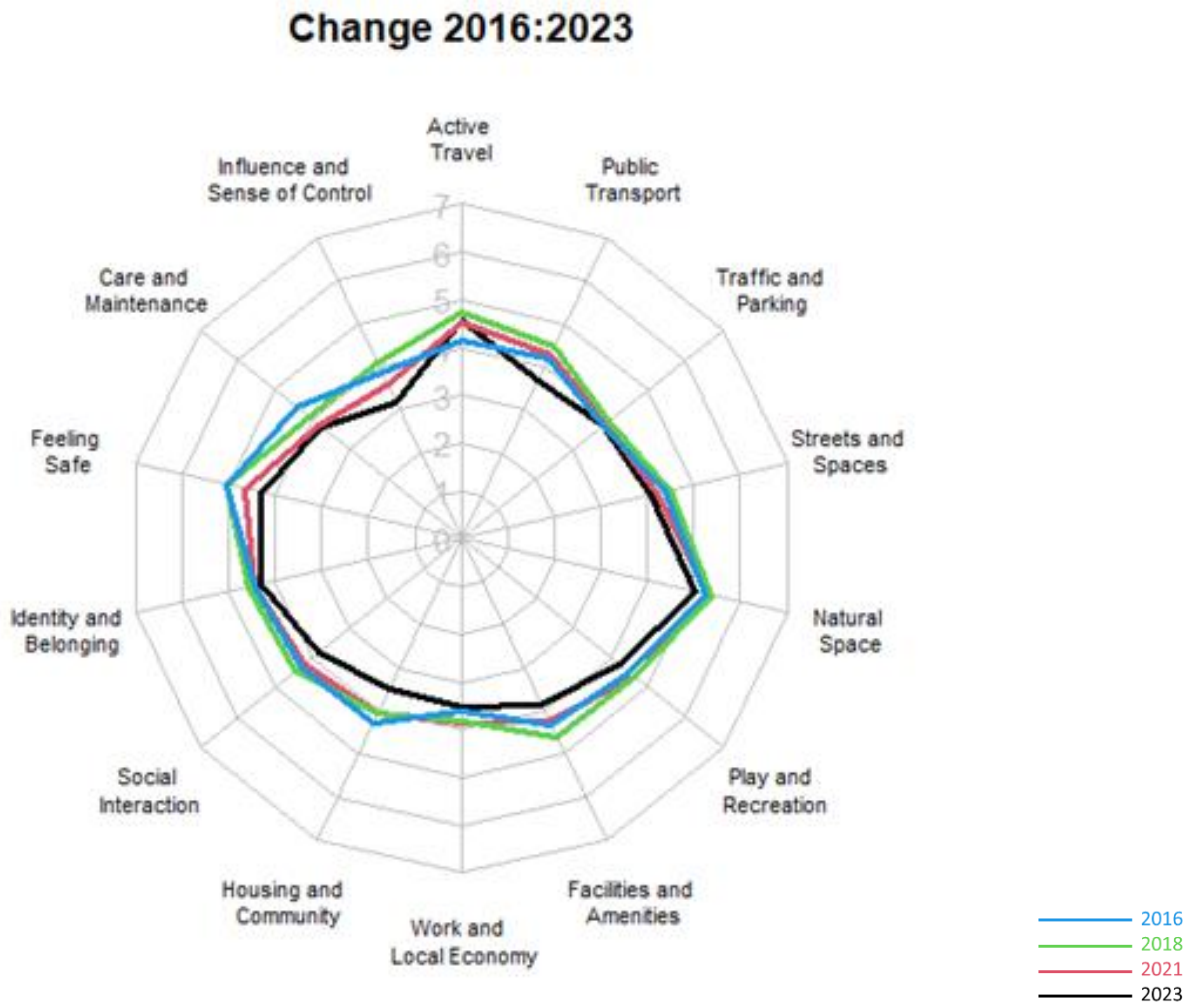

Figure 4: Radar chart - How people perceive Fife as a Place, 2023 and change from previous years (2016, 2018, 2021, 2023)

4. Differences across Fife

We now explore where in Fife greater or lesser improvement is needed for each aspect of place.

Figure 5: How Place is perceived differently across Fife, 2023

Figure 5 displays the average question score for each of the 7 local areas in Fife and compared to the overall Fife score (the top line in each graph). For instance, in Active Travel, we can see that this has scored above the Fife average in City of Dunfermline, Glenrothes, and South and West Fife, however these scores are lower in Cowdenbeath, Levenmouth and North East Fife.

Where the question scores are similar across all areas to the overall Fife picture, then the points will be "lined-up" with the Fife average. The Facilities and Amenities response is a good example of this – all areas are scored similarly to the Fife average – so all the points sit along a similar vertical.

Where there is more variation across Fife in how people feel about the different aspects of their places, the points will appear more widely "scattered" across the plot.

This is seen in how areas are scored for "Feeling Safe", "Streets and Spaces" and "Care & Maintenance", with "Traffic & Parking", "Facilities and Amenities" and "Social Interaction" scoring more similarly across all areas of Fife.

People living in North East Fife and Dunfermline generally rated their area most positively, while those living in Levenmouth and Cowdenbeath tend to rate their area less positively. As would be expected in such a diverse area, there are differences between different parts of Fife. Generally, most areas scored each question similarly across all of Fife. There are key exceptions to this, most notably:

- People in Cowdenbeath and Levenmouth feel less safe than might be expected
- People in Dunfermline and Glenrothes find it easier to get around than elsewhere (Active Travel & Public transport)
- Levenmouth's streets and spaces are seen to have the most scope for improvement
- Levenmouth's play and recreation needs more improvement than may be expected looking across Fife as a whole
- Work and Local Economy have most room for improvement in Cowdenbeath
- Care and Maintenance has most room for improvement in Cowdenbeath and Levenmouth.

Figure 6 shows a representation of how each question scored across Fife, and the 7 local areas. Areas in green need least amount of improvement whereas those in red require the most. This shows that Natural Space has scored well across all areas, whereas Influence and Sense of Control is universally seen as requiring most improvement.

Variability between communities in each area is to be expected as shown in Figure 7. Across all 14 of the questions asked North East Fife and City of Dunfermline had higher scores (less improvement needed) and Levenmouth and Cowdenbeath had lowest scores (more improvement needed).
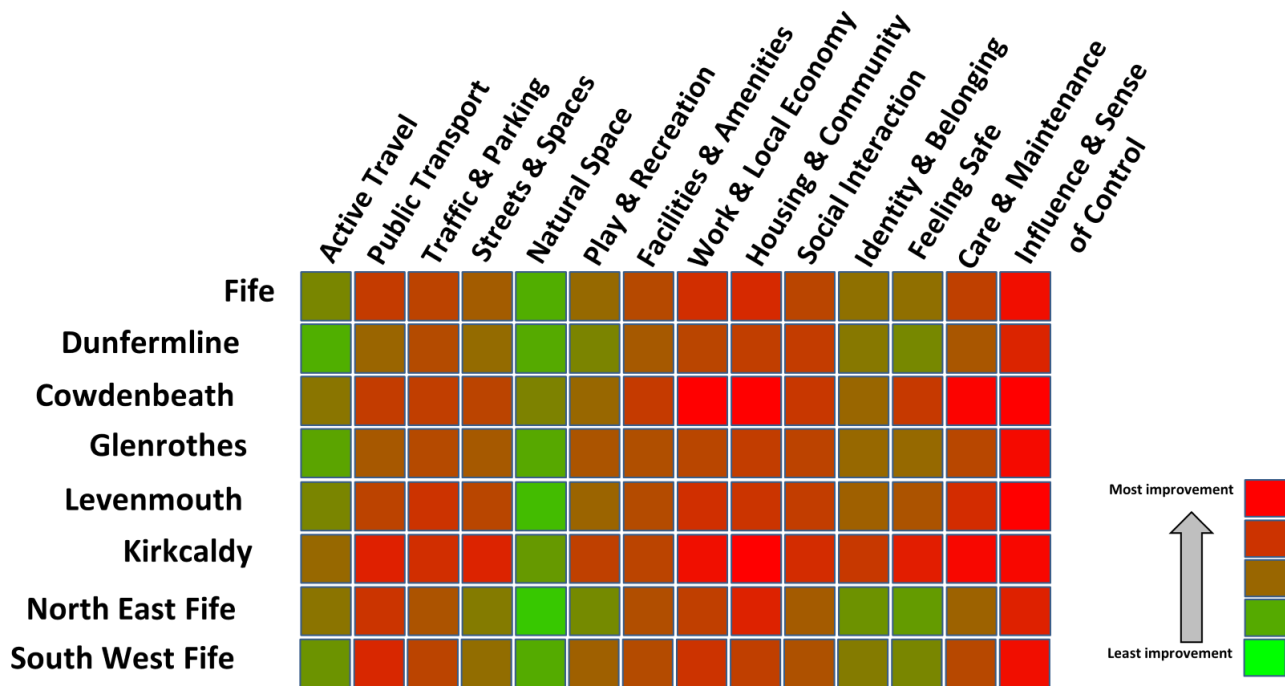
Figure 6: Colour shaded diagram of how different aspects of Place are viewed across Fife
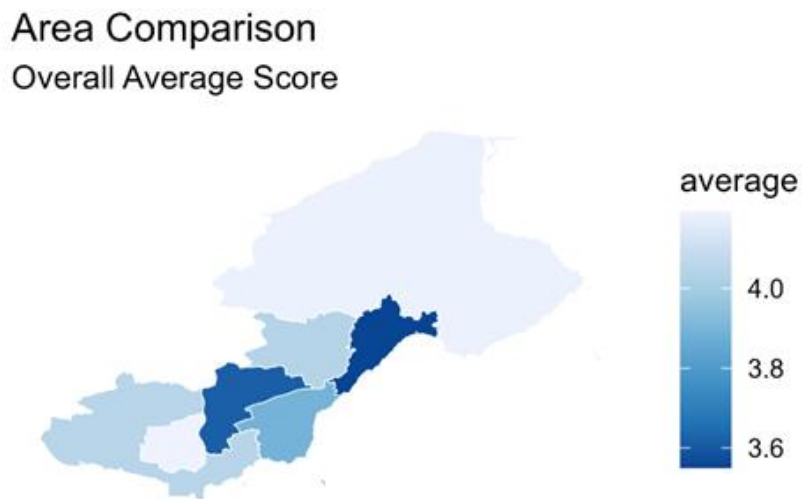

Figure 7: Area Committee map showing variation in view of Place across Fife, 2023

5. Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

The place and wellbeing outcomes are all the characteristics of a place that allow those who live, work, and relax there to thrive. They are key features for delivering ambitions for 20-minute neighbourhood / living well locally.

A primary use for the place and wellbeing outcomes is to provide evidenced consistency and clarity on what is needed for our places to impact positively on those who use them. The outcomes are to enable all stakeholders in a place to critically question whether they are taking the most appropriate action to bring about the change people need from places, and to take collaborative action on delivering in every place.

This is the first time that the place and wellbeing outcomes have been reported for Fife. However, as they are derived from the place standard tool, we can look at how outcomes have changed since the 2021 survey. They fall under five overarching themes of **movement**, **spaces**, **resources**, **civic**, and **stewardship**.
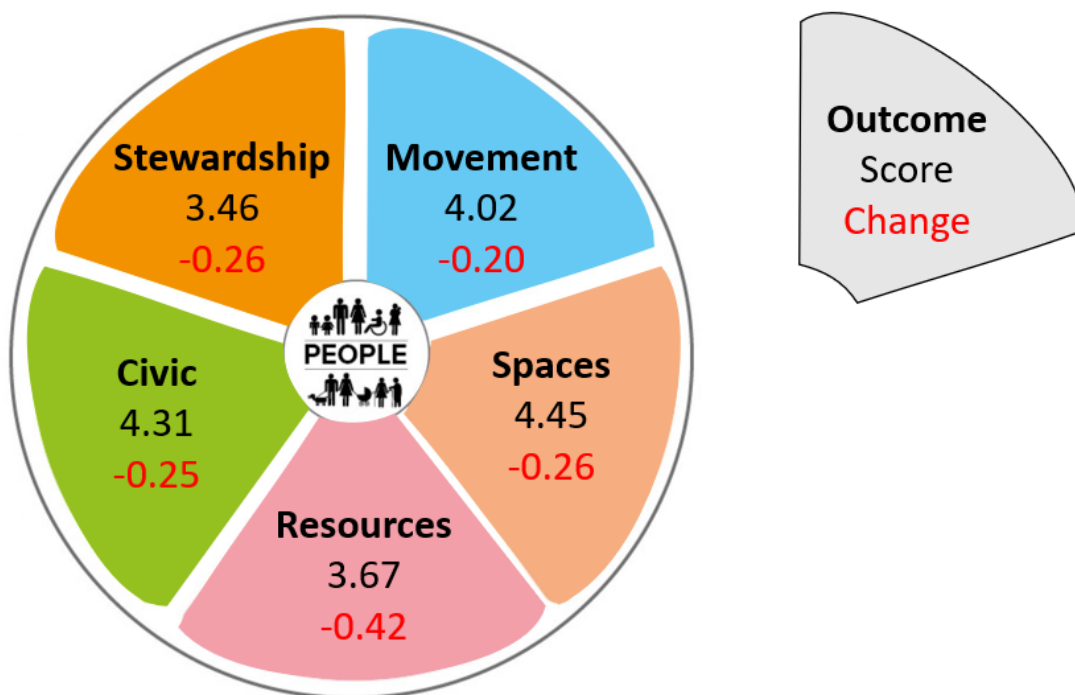

Figure 8: Place & Wellbeing Outcomes: Fife outcome score 2023, change from 2021

The Place and Wellbeing Outcomes represent the desired reality that we all need to strive to reach.

The latest results from the Our Place 2023 survey show that in terms of place and wellbeing outcomes our Spaces are ranked the highest and Stewardship the lowest. However, all outcomes have decreased in the last two years with Resources showing the biggest drop (-0.42) indicating that the areas in this outcome would benefit most from a focus for collaborative effort.

Movement

What is it?

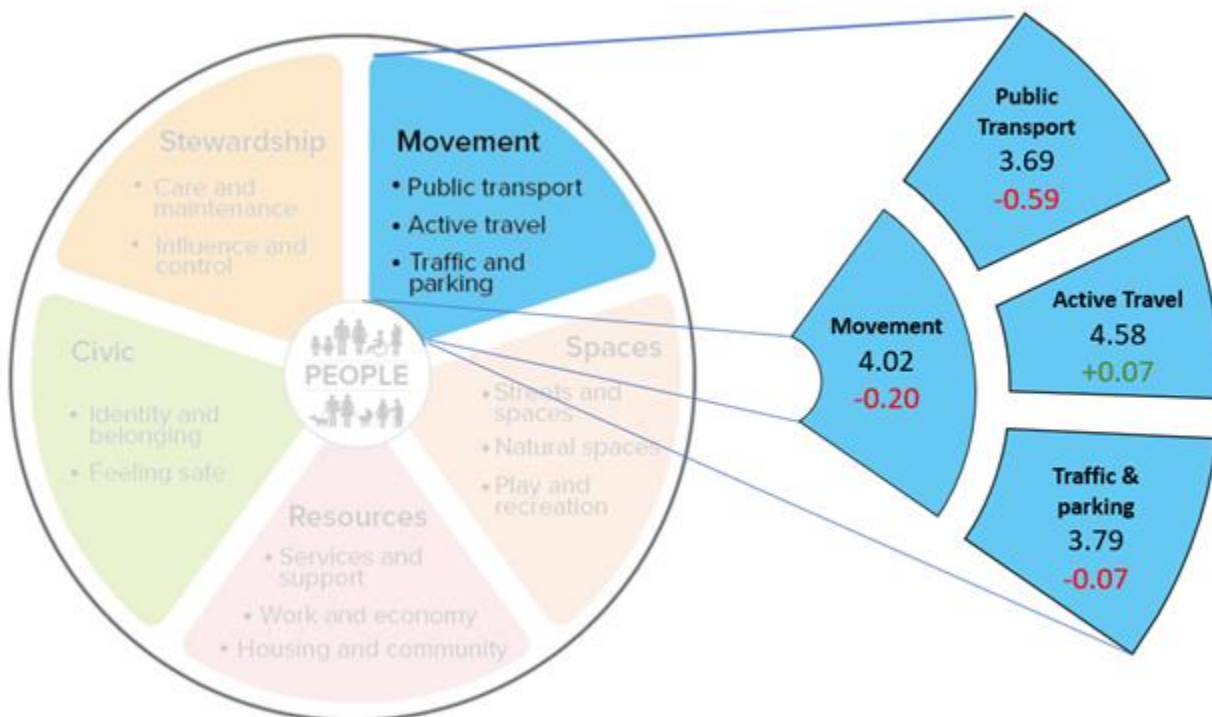| Theme	Outcome
Public Transport	Everyone has: • access to a sustainable, affordable, accessible, available, appropriate, and safe public transport service.
Active Travel	Everyone can: • easily move around using good-quality, accessible, well-maintained and safe segregated wheeling, walking and cycling routes and access secure bike parking • wheel, walk and cycle through routes that connect homes, destinations and public transport, are segregated from, and prioritised above, motorised traffic and are part of a local green network.
Traffic and Parking	Everyone can benefit from: • reducing traffic and traffic speeds in the community • traffic management and design, where traffic and car parking do not dominate or prevent other uses of space and car parking is prioritised for those who don't have other options.

Figure 9: Movement – Average Score for Fife by question, change from 2021

Movement ranked 3rd of the 5 outcomes in 2023 for Fife. Of the 3 elements making up this outcome, Active Travel was scored highest and Public Transport lowest. Active Travel was the highest scored element of the Movement outcome in all 7 areas of Fife. There was some variation in the ranking of the other 2 movement indicators depending on area (Public Transport was 2nd in Dunfermline, Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy, whereas Traffic and Parking fared better in Cowdenbeath, Levenmouth, North East Fife and South West Fife).

Overall, a reduction in score for Movement is seen since 2022 (-0.20), with a reduction in the Public Transport and Traffic and parking elements and an increase in Active Travel.

Table 1: Perception of 'Movement' 2023 and change from 2021

	Movement							
	Movement		**Active Travel**		**Public Transport**		**Traffic and Parking**	
Area Committee	score	change	score	change	score	change	score	change
Cowdenbeath	3.93	-0.29	4.37	-0.20	3.70	-0.98	3.73	0.32
Dunfermline	4.37	0.21	5.05	0.62	4.18	0.05	3.89	-0.02
Glenrothes	4.28	-0.03	4.93	0.26	4.04	-0.20	3.87	-0.14
Kirkcaldy	3.99	-0.18	4.57	-0.08	3.79	-0.33	3.61	-0.13
Levenmouth	3.71	-0.46	4.22	-0.24	3.37	-0.85	3.54	-0.34
North East Fife	3.98	-0.21	4.36	0.19	3.61	-0.21	3.97	-0.21
South West Fife	4.00	-0.53	4.74	-0.13	3.46	-1.01	3.81	-0.46
Fife	4.02	-0.20	4.58	0.07	3.69	-0.59	3.79	-0.07

The overall score for the Movement questions was 4.02 for Fife, Active Travel was scored higher across all areas of Fife in these questions than how people felt about public transport or traffic and parking in their areas.

Levenmouth and Cowdenbeath score Movement lower than the Fife average, while Dunfermline and Glenrothes recorded the highest scores. Individually, Active travel is scored most highly in Dunfermline and lowest in Levenmouth, Public transport highest in Dunfermline and lowest in Levenmouth and Traffic and Parking highest in North East Fife and lowest in Levenmouth.

Overall change in Active Travel and Traffic and Parking are broadly the same (Active Travel +0.07, Traffic & parking (-0.07) with a decrease in Public Transport (-0.59). However, individually South West Fife showed the largest decrease in Public Transport score (-1.01) and Dunfermline had the largest positive swing in Active Travel (+0.62).

Movement: What people said

From analysis of the 750 comments received regarding movement the following themes and points emerged:

Active Travel

Although some areas have good walking and cycling routes, there are safety concerns about cycling on busy roads which is a barrier to people considering it a viable option. Cycling routes end and force cyclists onto busy roads. Pavements are badly maintained and do not encourage walking. The transition from using private cars is not working because the alternatives take too long or do not provide the required routes. Safe walking or cycling routes are not found in rural areas. There is a lack of connection between smaller communities and villages as there are no safe links for active travel between them.

Some key points:

- Some good walking and/or cycling routes in Fife
- More – and improved – cycle routes needed
- Heavy traffic makes it difficult to walk or cycle
- More seats or benches are required
- Paths and pavements in poor condition (major issue for wheelchairs etc)
- Lack of safe paths or pavements in rural areas.

Public Transport

It is perceived that there are not enough direct routes and no link up between bus/train connections to allow seamless travel. There is not enough availability of public transport, and reliability and cost were a barrier to use. Access is particularly difficult for those with disabilities. There is not enough quick express links between our towns and inappropriate sized buses used to service routes round housing estates, where no passengers are on them, and they cannot negotiate the streets due to bus size and parked cars. There is a particular problem of being unable to use public transport outside of the normal working hour week, making public transport an unfeasible option.

Some key points:

- Unreliable service
- Too expensive compared to taking car
- Infrequent service for rural communities
- Timetable changes / frequent cancellations
- Off peak availability poor
- Access issues, particularly for disabled
- Accessing timetables without technology
- Local travel more difficult than intercity
- Poor connections between bus and train services.

Traffic and Parking

Roads are perceived as badly in need of repair and potholes reported all over Fife in urban and rural settings, which are not being repaired when reported, and cause damage to cars. Flooding, speeding and poorly designed traffic management systems were all highlighted as concerns.

Traffic and parking is particularly bad around schools with parents picking-up/dropping-off children and no consideration taken for the restrictions which may be in place. Parking-bay lines and restricted areas road-markings are often worn and difficult to see. Inadequate parking provision has been planned or provided around people's homes meaning congestion, resentment and dangerous parking practices take place.

Parking on pavements is preventing pedestrian access and impacts on safety, which narrows the road space available for other vehicles. Buses and emergency services vehicles struggle with access as a result. No enforcement takes place of those who disregard traffic or parking regulations.

Some key points:

- Poorly maintained roads and potholes not repaired
- Problems caused by bad / inconsiderate / dangerous parking
- Multi-car households but insufficient parking planned
- School pick-up/drop-off congestion
- Not enough good parking areas
- Parking and traffic offences not being policed/enforced
- Poor road surfaces create hazards for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

Spaces

What is it?

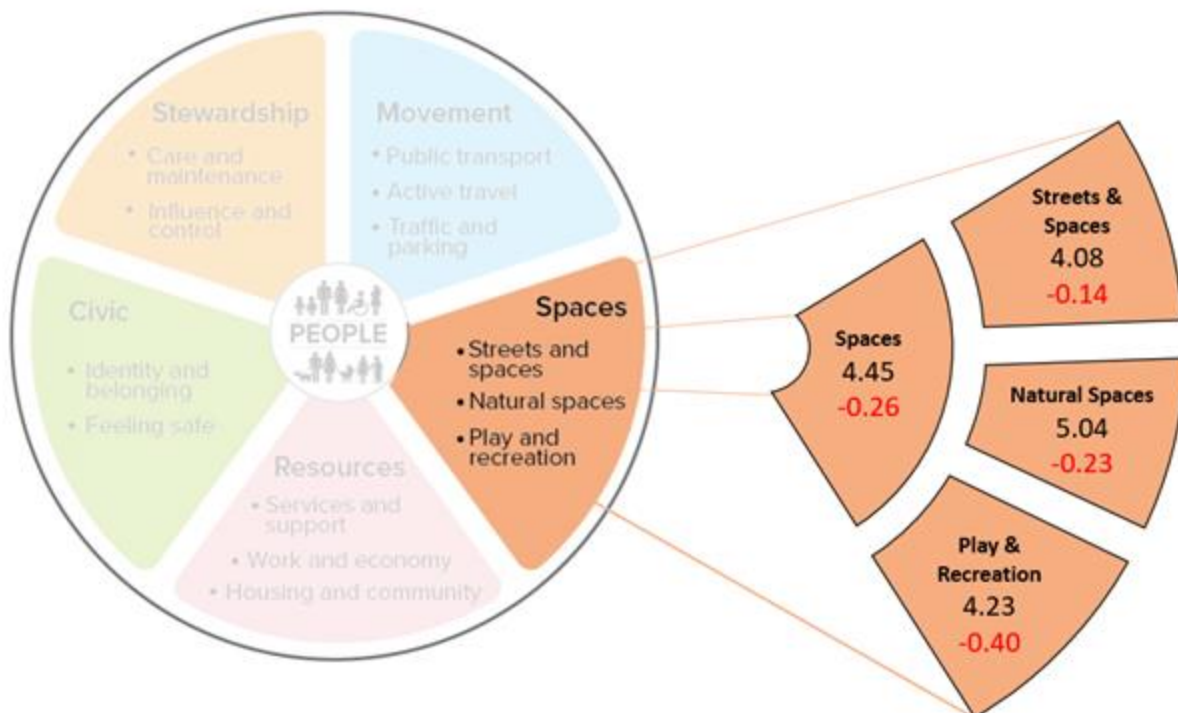| Theme	Outcome
Streets and Spaces	Everyone can access: • buildings, streets and public spaces that create an attractive place to use, enjoy and interact with others • streets and spaces that are well-connected, well-designed and maintained, providing multiple functions and amenities to meet the varying needs of different population groups.
Natural Spaces	Everyone can: • access good-quality natural spaces that support biodiversity and are well-connected, well-designed, safe, and maintained, providing multiple functions and amenities to meet the varying needs of different population groups • be protected from environmental hazards including air/water/soil pollution or the risk of flooding • access community food growing opportunities and prime quality agricultural land is protected.
Play and Recreation	Everyone can access: • a range of high quality, safe, well-maintained, accessible places with opportunities for play and recreation to meet the varying needs of different population groups and the community itself.

Figure 10: Spaces – Average Score for Fife by question, change from 2021

The highest ranking of the outcomes in Fife, Spaces was 1st with an overall score of 4.45. Of the 3 elements making up this outcome, Natural Spaces was scored highest and Streets and Spaces lowest.

Natural Space was the highest scored element of the Spaces outcome in all 7 areas of Fife, but there was some variation in the ranking of the other 2 space questions depending on area. Most areas, 5 of the 7, (Cowdenbeath, Dunfermline, Levenmouth, North East Fife and Kirkcaldy) had Play and Recreation in second spot, with only Glenrothes and South West Fife scoring Streets and Spaces 2nd.

Overall, a reduction in score for Spaces is seen since 2022 (-0.26), with a reduction in all question areas. Play and Recreation scores showed the largest reduction since 2021 (-0.40).

Table 2: Perception of 'Spaces' 2023 and change from 2021

	Spaces							
	Spaces		Streets and Spaces		Natural Space		Play and Recreation	
Area Committee	score	change	score	change	score	change	score	change
Cowdenbeath	4.18	-0.21	3.80	0.07	4.53	-0.43	4.21	-0.27
Dunfermline	4.61	0.02	4.26	0.16	5.00	0.03	4.56	-0.14
Glenrothes	4.34	-0.11	4.05	0.04	4.98	-0.04	3.99	-0.34
Kirkcaldy	4.40	-0.22	3.82	-0.31	5.21	0.07	4.18	-0.41
Levenmouth	3.99	-0.48	3.41	-0.41	4.80	-0.36	3.75	-0.67
North East Fife	4.81	-0.37	4.45	-0.42	5.35	-0.44	4.63	-0.25
South West Fife	4.48	-0.65	4.29	-0.34	5.01	-0.64	4.13	-0.96
Fife	4.45	-0.26	4.08	-0.14	5.04	-0.23	4.23	-0.40

North East Fife and Dunfermline have scored their areas highest for Spaces, and Levenmouth and Cowdenbeath lowest. Although Kirkcaldy had a higher-than-average score for the Natural Space element, and a lower score for Streets and Spaces which brought the overall average down.

Overall, all 3 elements have reduced since 2021 (Streets and Spaces (-0.14), Natural Space (-0.23), Play and Recreation (-0.40).

Individually, no area has changed by more than one full point (either up or down), the largest increase (improvement) was +0.16 in Dunfermline for Streets and Spaces, and the largest decrease was -0.96 in Play and Recreation in South West Fife.

Spaces: What people said

From analysis of the 512 comments received regarding spaces the following themes and points emerged:

Streets and Spaces

There was dissatisfaction with the state of repair of pavements, with complaints of weeds growing between, and through, slabs and that no weeding was being done to address this and repairs not completed, affecting safe and suitable use of pavements. Comments around grass areas not being cut enough, or that the clippings being left and not collected was detrimental to the look/feel of an area. The rewilding policy to leave areas uncut/unkept was criticised, with comments suggesting that it results in areas which look unappealing. Dog fouling and litter is an ongoing problem making our spaces unattractive and undesirable to spend time in. Untidy gardens making areas look uncared for.

Town centre decline was highlighted with the maintenance of buildings and the closure of businesses leading to areas looking run down and derelict with buildings empty and left to fall into disrepair.

Some key points:

- Roads and pavements need repair/maintenance
- Grass cutting schedule
- Decline of high streets/town centres/village centres
- Derelict land and buildings
- Untidy gardens
- Dog fouling and litter.

Natural Space

There was positivity around the natural heritage in Fife and the availability of good quality outdoor space. Although there was some feeling that not all are able to access these areas, particularly where public transport is needed. Good natural walks / spaces in forestry / country parks / coastal paths / countryside / beaches / lochs / open space access.

There was praise for the formal parks in our towns which were well loved, used and seen as an important asset. There were concerns about some of these areas, along with some natural spaces, frequently becoming inaccessible due to flooding.

There is a feeling that too much housing development takes place on areas of green space or open space and that this is to the detriment of the open spaces that are currently available to existing residents.

Some key points:

- Good formal parks and natural spaces in Fife
- Coastal paths / countryside / forestry is an asset
- Access to natural spaces can be a problem
- Natural spaces being built on
- Flooded paths block access

Play and Recreation

Comments around playparks were around the removal of smaller playparks close to or within housing estates, lack of maintenance for the equipment, a need for more appropriate equipment for larger age ranges and include disabled access. Pitches available for playing sports are perceived to be left to become overgrown or not maintained.

Playparks were also seen as a focus for antisocial behaviour and spoilt by litter and motorbike/off-road quad bike use. The lack of lighting in areas discourages use and increases the feeling of parks being unsafe spaces.

Some key points:

- No play areas within walking distance
- Playparks poorly equipped, in need of upgrade or maintenance
- Anti-social behaviour (quad bikes, alcohol, drugs)
- Multi-age appropriate provision needed
- Disabled access to facilities
- Lack of lighting.

Resources

What is it?

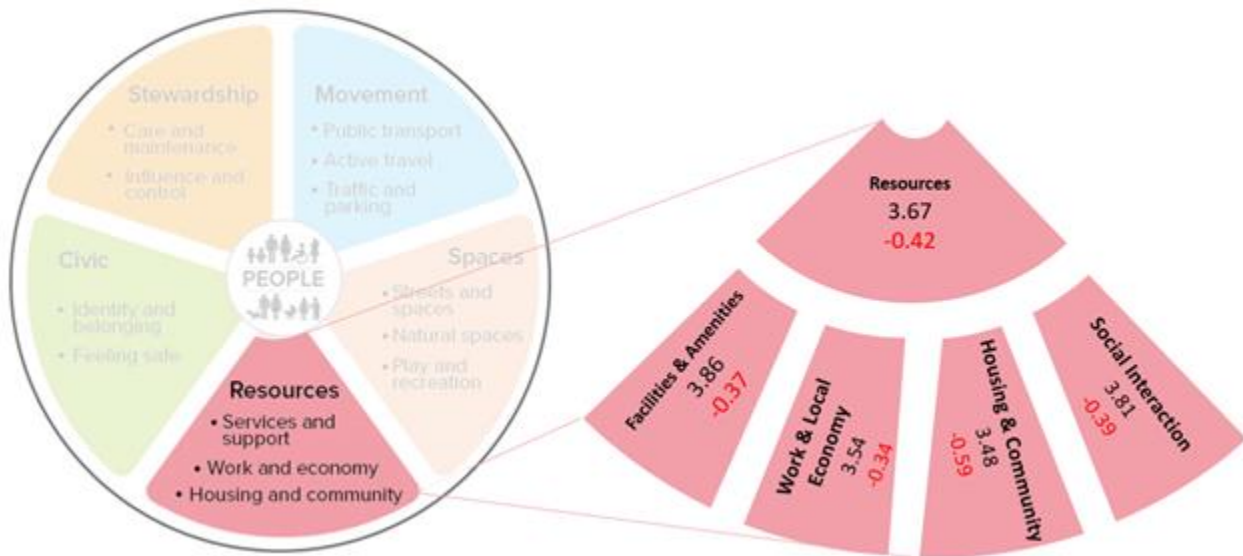| Theme	Outcome
Services and Support	Everyone can access: • health enhancing, accessible, affordable and well-maintained services, facilities and amenities; these are informed by community engagement, responsive to the needs and priorities of all local people • a range of spaces and opportunities for communities to meet indoors and outdoors • information and resources necessary for an included life in a range of digital and non-digital formats.
Work and Economy	Everyone benefits equally from a local economy that provides: • essential goods and services produced or procured locally • good quality paid and unpaid work • access to assets such as wealth and capital and the resources that enable people to participate in the economy such as good health and education • a balanced value ascribed across sectors such as female dominated sectors and the non-monetary economy • the resources that enable people to participate in the economy such as good health and education.
Housing and Community	Everyone has access to: • a home that is affordable, energy efficient, high quality and provides access to private outdoor space • a variety of housing types, sizes and tenancies to meet the needs of the community; and of a sufficient density to sustain existing or future local facilities, services and amenities • a home that is designed and built to meet need and demand, is adaptable to changing needs and includes accessible/wheelchair standard housing • new homes that are located and designed to provide high levels of climate resilience and use sustainable materials and construction methods • homes that are designed to promote community cohesion.

Figure 11: Resources – Average Score for Fife by question, change from 2021

The second lowest ranking of the outcomes in Fife, Resources was 4th of the 5 with an overall score of 3.67. Of the 4 elements making up this outcome, Facilities and Amenities was scored highest and Housing and Community lowest. Overall, a reduction in score for Resources is seen since 2021 (-0.42), with a reduction in all of the questions. Housing and Community showed the largest reduction since 2021 (-0.59).

There is more variation in this outcome in how it is viewed across the different areas of Fife. While the more rural of our areas in North East Fife and South West Fife have scored the Social Interaction question highest, Facilities and Amenities was scored higher in the other 5 areas. Work and Local Economy scored particularly badly in Cowdenbeath (score of 2.43 – the lowest score received across all 14 questions), resulting in the overall Resources outcome score being lowest in Cowdenbeath.

The overall score for Resources was 3.67 for Fife and is one of the lower scoring of the outcomes. This is seen across all 7 areas in Fife. Work and Local Economy and Housing and Community are contributing most to the lowering of the score. Facilities and Amenities is graded highest. Cowdenbeath scores lowest overall for the Resources indicator (3.13) – and is lowest scoring for all elements except Social Interaction, where Levenmouth scores lower. North East Fife has the highest score for Social Interaction.

Overall, all 4 questions/indicators have reduced since 2021, with the largest drop seen in Housing and Community (-0.59). The largest individual decrease is seen in Cowdenbeath in Work and Local Economy (-1.36). There are no improvements in scores seen across any of the questions in any of our areas for this outcome.

Table 3: Perception of 'Resources' 2023 and change from 2021

	Resources									
	Resources		Facilities and amenities		Work and local economy		Housing and community		Social interaction	
Area Committee	score	change	score	change	score	change	score	change	score	change
Cowdenbeath	3.13	-0.78	3.68	-0.46	2.43	-1.36	2.77	-0.97	3.65	-0.34
Dunfermline	3.82	-0.32	4.05	-0.39	3.82	-0.13	3.73	-0.31	3.71	-0.44
Glenrothes	3.81	-0.17	3.93	-0.08	3.82	-0.05	3.72	-0.49	3.79	-0.07
Kirkcaldy	3.69	-0.52	3.88	-0.32	3.55	-0.52	3.61	-0.62	3.72	-0.60
Levenmouth	3.36	-0.39	3.80	-0.33	3.17	-0.12	2.97	-0.63	3.52	-0.48
North East Fife	3.78	-0.55	3.92	-0.36	3.74	-0.34	3.40	-0.82	4.07	-0.66
South West Fife	3.79	-0.63	3.88	-0.80	3.60	-0.50	3.75	-0.75	3.95	-0.46
Fife	3.67	-0.42	3.86	-0.37	3.54	-0.34	3.48	-0.59	3.81	-0.39

Resources: What people said

From analysis of the 459 comments received regarding resources the following themes and points emerged:

Facilities and Amenities / Social

Health centre access/provision was raised as an issue universally across Fife with difficulties in being able to get appointments or registered at Doctors or Dental practices. Limited availability and opening times in more rural areas – and difficulties with travel to more central hubs, especially where public transport is relied on. Areas where new facilities have been proposed and then cancelled (due to costs) leaves resentment/frustration. New housing developments are seen as squeezing already pressured services with no expansion seen as a result of bigger populations.

Local town centre decline was highlighted, with businesses (shops/restaurants/pubs/bars/nightlife) closing and the associated loss of places for social interaction as a result. Many now travel outside of Fife for leisure recreation and spend money in those economies as a result.

Community centres and halls were seen as useful facilities, however access varied and often they are not open at the point of need (not operating outside of standard Council times), and costs involved varied in what was seen as prohibitive or affordable. Centres could do more than they currently do, some are in need of renovation or upgrade, and not used to full potential.

Loss of banking facilities through branch and post office closures highlighted, particularly in the rural areas, but also mentioned in the urban areas in relation to decline of the high street and face-to-face business.

Some key points:

- GP and dentist appointments difficult to get
- Development without additional amenities
- Promised upgrades not happening
- Lack of facilities for teenagers
- Leisure centres too small, not open when required
- Closure of shops and business in town centres
- Shops in villages closing
- Unable to shop local due to no provision
- Banking / Post Office provision
- Parking provision difficult / unsuitable
- No facilities within easy distance
- Places for social interaction needed

Housing and Community

Differing views around housing depended on people's individual situation. Those unable to access think there is not enough, or the wrong type, and those already in a home question the new properties being built and both the allocation and facilities required as a result. There is a sense that there is a lack of affordable housing available for people wishing to buy and not enough social housing provision for those needing it.

Particularly in the North East Fife area, second homes and holiday / short-term lets frequently cited as impacting on local communities – not only in the availability of property for local people being able to afford to buy (or rent) but in the communities themselves then lacking the people present. Transient student populations and the accommodation required for them was also a specific issue raised in St Andrews.

Difficulties with problem neighbours and anti-social behaviour linked to drug dealing and concerns around how areas are maintained and kept.

Some key points:

- Housing development added without additional facilities
- Lack of affordable/available social housing
- Housing too expensive
- Second homes and "buy-to-let" pushing up prices
- Allocating houses to "problem" tenants
- Houses being built with no infrastructure in place
- More housing for the elderly needed
- Maintenance/repair/upgrading of existing social housing stock.

Work and Local Economy

There is limited availability of high-quality well-paid jobs in the local economy, so travel outside of Fife is required. This relies on either private commuting or a public transport system which is unreliable (bus and train). There are few local opportunities for employment and accessing further afield requires a car as public transport links/provision is poor or non-existent after certain times of day. Businesses closing and lack of incentives to grow local businesses, are leaving towns empty.

Some key points:

- Lack of local work opportunities
- Seasonal/industry specific, low paid
- Workers priced out of the area
- Public transport availability limiting options
- Must travel to access higher paid opportunities
- Public transport not coordinated with industry need

Civic

What is it?

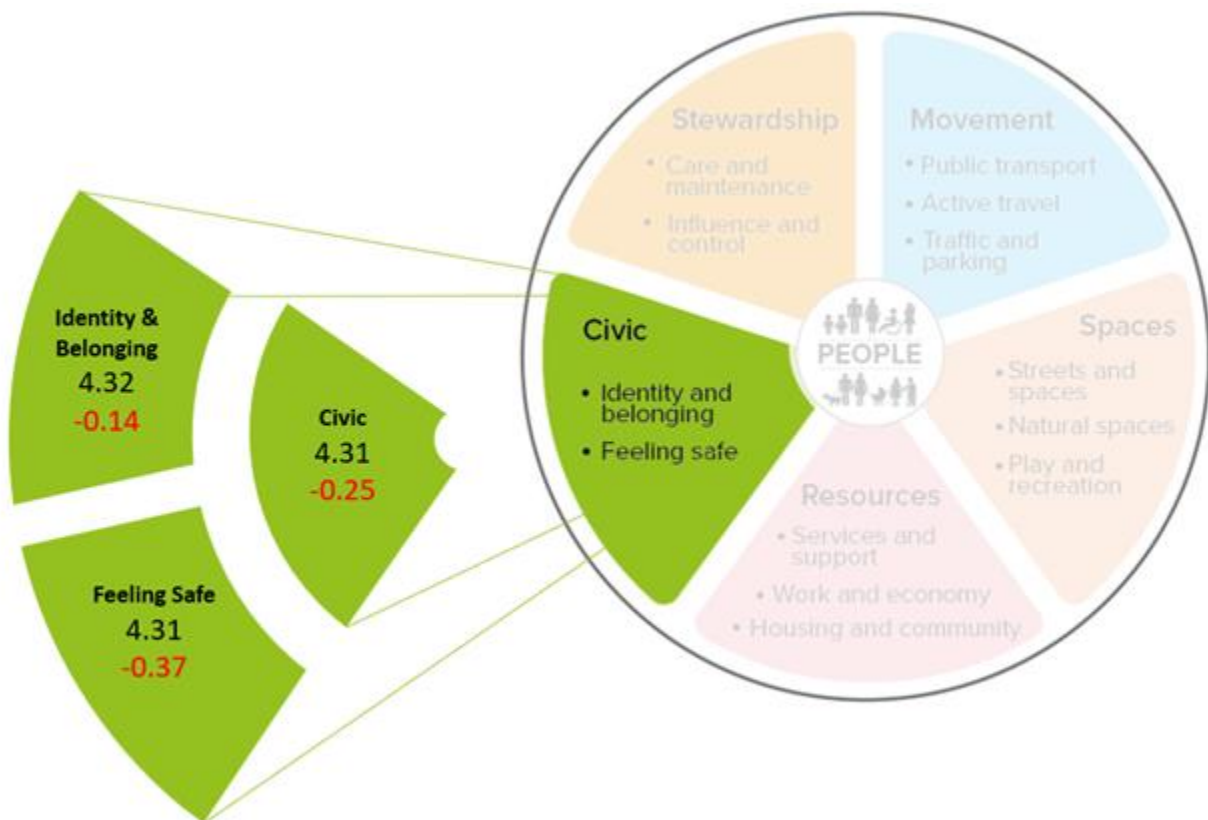| Theme	Outcome
Identity and Belonging	Everyone can benefit from: • a place that has a positive identity, culture and history, where people feel like they belong and are able to participate and interact positively with others.
Feeling Safe	Everyone feels: • safe and secure in their own home and their local community taking account of the experience of different population groups.

Figure 12: Civic – Average Score for Fife by question, change from 2021

The second highest of the outcomes in Fife, Civic received an overall score of 4.31. Of the 2 elements making up this outcome, Identity and Belonging and Feeling Safe, both received similar scored (4.32 and 4.31 respectively).

Overall, a reduction in score for the Civic outcome is seen since 2021 (-0.25), with reductions in both questions. Feeling Safe showed the larger decrease in score (-0.37).

Table 4: Perception of 'Civic' 2023 and change from 2021

Area Committee	Civic		Identity and Belonging		Feeling safe	
	score	change	score	change	score	change
Cowdenbeath	3.93	-0.53	4.20	-0.28	3.66	-0.79
Dunfermline	4.51	0.12	4.41	0.17	4.60	0.06
Glenrothes	4.23	0.08	4.23	0.17	4.24	-0.01
Kirkcaldy	4.05	-0.54	4.13	-0.47	3.97	-0.61
Levenmouth	3.50	-0.43	3.66	-0.30	3.34	-0.57
North East Fife	4.77	-0.63	4.71	-0.42	4.82	-0.85
South West Fife	4.52	-0.31	4.45	-0.18	4.58	-0.44
Fife	4.31	-0.25	4.32	-0.14	4.31	-0.37

Both questions in this outcome are scored similarly overall but there are differences across the areas in Fife. North East Fife scores highest in both elements (4.77 overall with 4.71 for Identity and Belonging and 4.82 for Feeling Safe) Levenmouth has the lowest score (overall 3.5, 3.66 for Identity and Belonging and 3.34 for Feeling Safe – the lowest scores across all areas).

Overall both indicators have reduced since 2021, with the largest drop in Feeling Safe (-0.37). Although Levenmouth scores lowest in this indicator, it is other areas that have seen bigger decreases in their scores – both North East Fife and Cowdenbeath have the largest reductions in Feeling Safe (-0.85 and -0.79).

The only increases were in Identity and Belonging scores in Dunfermline and Glenrothes, which both show a similar rise in this score since 2021. Only Dunfermline has recorded slight increases in scores in both questions. The recent award of City Status to Dunfermline may have contributed to this.

Civic: What people said

From analysis of the 421 comments received regarding civic wellbeing the following themes and points emerged:

Identity and Belonging

Although there was some praise for individual towns and community spirit and pride there is also a feeling that our local areas are now just where people live and there is no real sense of community in them. New housing estates with mixed tenure types have resulted in areas that view themselves differently from their neighbours resulting in a "them and us" situation where blame is easily cast. There is still more feeling of identity and belonging in the smaller towns and villages which is lost in larger urban towns, but there are elements of – 'you're never local to the locals' – and this is a barrier to new residents joining in and feeling welcomed. There is also an underlying feeling of a lack of integration in areas with perceived high immigration, either cultural differences or a transient population only here to live short-term (for example, St Andrews University students) – an undercurrent of resentment is present.

Examples of positive community events being organised for individual communities, by communities is something that cannot be forced and relies on the public or volunteers, however this requires support from the Council. There has been a decline in community cohesion and a feeling that new build estates have not been planned with sufficient infrastructure to support the feeling of community. Infrastructure lacking and amenities not provided result in people travelling out of their communities for work, rest and play.

Loss of community involvement takes place as you move through phases in life, where young family activity would keep involvement in local activities, once this phase is over, there is little to remain involved with. The change in working practices from working in towns to homes has also impacted on how much people have felt involved in their communities.

Some key points:

- Animosity to "others"
- Integration of perceived "incomers"
- More cohesive identity in smaller towns
- Barriers to established networks/groups
- Commuter extensions to the cities
- Infrastructure/facilities do not support communities
- Working practices changed community connection.

Feeling Safe

General reduction in all public services across Fife was felt (including Council, Police, Fire and NHS provision). There was a common feeling across all areas of Fife that a lack of Police presence (foot patrol and vehicular) is contributing to communities feeling less safe. No officers visible in the areas and a long response time to incidents were highlighted as concerns. Youth disorder and crime was cited as problematic, and a perception that little is done in the justice system to amend behaviour, so there is a lack of deterrent. A feeling that even when crime is reported it will either not be investigated or the justice system will fail them.

Drug misuse and antisocial behaviour in communities leads to fear, and little seems to be done to address it. Inability to have issues with anti-social behaviour dealt with and a feeling of lack of action when reported. Allocation of housing and the decisions around where to place difficult tenants is questioned, a high turnover of residents in areas with multiple scatter flats also contributes to areas lacking community identity and belonging.

Lack of, or inadequate, street lighting was frequently mentioned as contributing towards feeling unsafe. Speeding cars and motorbikes and unsafe parking practices were also leading to concerns about road safety.

Some key points:

- Lack of Police
- Slow or no response
- Reluctance to go out after dark
- Youth issues
- Drug misuse
- Housing allocations
- Lack of lighting
- Speeding vehicles.

Stewardship

What is it?

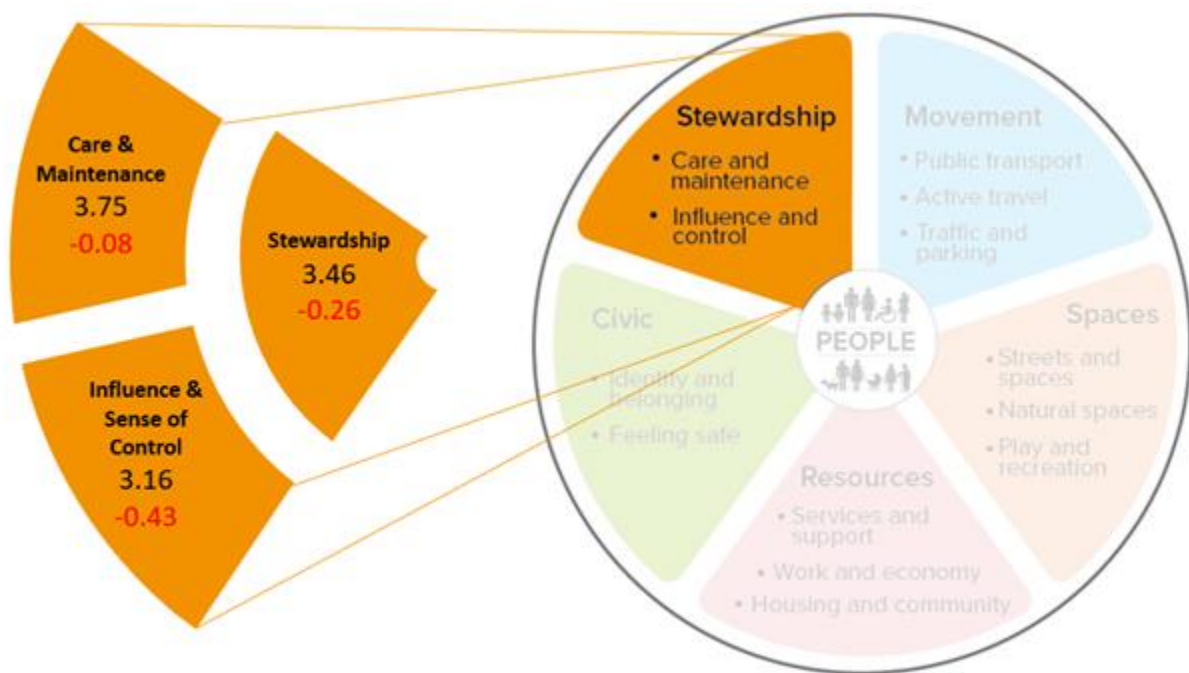| Theme	Outcome
Care and Maintenance	Everyone has access to: • buildings, spaces and routes that are well cared for in a way that is responsive to the needs and priorities of local communities. • good facilities for recycling and well organised refuse storage and collection.
Influence and Control	Everyone is empowered to be involved a place in which: • Local outcomes are improved by effective collaborations between communities, community organisations and public bodies. • Decision making processes are designed to involve communities as equal partners. • Community organisations co-produce local solutions to issues. • Communities have increased influence over decisions. • Democratic processes are developed to be accessible to all citizens.

Figure 13: Stewardship – Average Score for Fife by question, change from 2021

The lowest scoring outcome in Fife, Stewardship received an overall score of 3.46. Of the 2 elements making up this outcome, Influence and Sense of Control scored lower (3.16) than Care and Maintenance (3.75).

Overall, a reduction in score for the Stewardship outcome is seen since 2021 (-0.26), with reductions in both questions, and Influence and Sense of Control had the larger decrease in score (-0.43).

Table 5: Perception of 'Stewardship' 2023 and change from 2021

	Stewardship					
	Stewardship		Care and maintenance		Influence and control	
Area Committee	score	change	score	change	score	change
Cowdenbeath	2.94	-0.49	3.04	-0.43	2.85	-0.55
Dunfermline	3.72	-0.02	4.01	0.10	3.43	-0.15
Glenrothes	3.48	0.09	3.84	0.40	3.12	-0.21
Kirkcaldy	3.23	-0.48	3.52	-0.33	2.94	-0.63
Levenmouth	3.08	-0.36	3.08	-0.42	3.08	-0.31
North East Fife	3.77	-0.47	4.15	-0.27	3.38	-0.67
South West Fife	3.51	-0.62	3.85	-0.45	3.17	-0.78
Fife	3.46	-0.26	3.75	-0.08	3.16	-0.43

Influence and Sense of Control was the lower of the 2 questions in all areas except Levenmouth (where both had equal score). In all but Cowdenbeath (where the Work and Local Economy and Housing and Community questions scored lower) the Influence and Sense of Control question received the lowest score of all the 14 questions).

It is lowest overall, and in both individual indicators in Cowdenbeath (Care and Maintenance 3.04 and Influence and Sense of Control 2.85). North East Fife is the highest scoring of the areas overall (3.77). However, Dunfermline has a marginally better score for Influence and Sense of Control (3.43).

Overall, both indicators have reduced since 2021, with the largest drop in Influence and Sense of Control (-0.43). The only increases are in Care and Maintenance scores in Dunfermline (+0.10) and Glenrothes (+0.40). The largest decreases are for Influence and Sense of Control in South West Fife (-0.78) and North East Fife (-0.67).

Stewardship: What people said

From analysis of the 411 comments received regarding stewardship the following themes and points emerged:

Care and Maintenance

Lack of repair and maintenance to road network and associated drainage network, paving, verges etc and paving with potholes and pavements being highlighted as an issue. Overgrown areas encroaching onto roads and pavements and left to look unkempt. Both a lack of repair, cleaning and general tidying up of areas was a common thread throughout. There is a sense that upkeep of areas has declined and that funding reductions are partly responsible.

Buildings, both Council owned, or privately, in town centres and perceived to be part of the community, are being left to fall into disrepair, or only minimal basic maintenance taking place. Once closed and boarded up, the area then further declines as littering and vandalism increases. Fires in abandoned buildings lead to eventual demolition.

Town centre decline is highlighted, with large privately owned spaces/buildings either being empty or not maintained making the areas feel unpleasant and deterring people from wanting to visit.

Some key points:

- Buildings in disrepair
- Roads and pavements needing repaired
- Green spaces overgrown
- Minimum maintenance being done
- Increase in littering and vandalism as areas decline
- Reducing budgets
- Declining town centres
- Rewilding/biodiversity being seen as an excuse to save money.

Influence / Consultation / Involvement

There is feeling that any public consultation undertaken is tokenistic and views are neither listened to, nor acted upon. Multiple consultations take place, but no action is seen from them. When time is taken to report issues to the council, then the response is bound up in bureaucracy, lack of ownership with no follow through on action. Long standing problems, which have been known about for many years, never get solved. Local action plans are prepared, or new projects promised, but then further consultation takes place when agreed plans remain outstanding or promised projects fail to appear.

This is in contrast with opinion that things are done without consultation, and decisions are made without asking or involving the public. Notice given on consultations and opportunities to give opinion is not well publicised; and there is a perception that the decision is already a foregone conclusion making the consultation process pointless and that any concerns or issues raised fail to bring about real or effective change.

A feeling of community voices being lost in areas which are not part of the centre, and that while community councils may be present, there was not a great deal of belief in their effectiveness to address concerns raised at them. There is a lack of linking-up between elected local councillors and community councils. There is some reluctance to become involved in local democracy / community groups due to a toxic climate or unwelcoming nature from longstanding members and that alternative viewpoints are dismissed when not fitting with the established members views.

Some key points:

- Asking with no action
- Consultations are tokenistic and do not bring change
- Communication on consultations and outcomes poor
- What happened to…?
- Lack of consistency in elected member involvement
- Same problems reported, never solved
- Variation in perception of Community Councils
- Barriers to new member involvement

About this report

Fife Council Research and Insight Team works on prioritised projects to deliver strategic insight for the Council and community planning partners in Fife.

We aim to deliver engaging high-quality general insight for those involved in delivering public services across Fife.

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Important Notes on this Report

1. This report focuses on Place, and how Fife and its Areas are measuring up.
2. Since 2016, we have been using the Place Standard Tool at a strategic level - for Fife and each of the seven Areas - to track the relative need for improvement in aspects of Place over time.
3. While this is the first time that we have reported on the Place and Wellbeing outcomes, we have gone back and reanalysed the previous survey so we can start to track change over time in outcomes.
4. Data for this report was collected via a survey of Fife People's Panel (and wider Fife public), during October and November 2023. The questions in the survey mirror those used in the Place Standard Tool.
5. The information in this report can be used as a benchmark for any local use of the Place Standard Tool.

Useful Links

Place Standard The Place Standard tool is a way of assessing places. | Our Place

Place and Wellbeing Outcomes Place and Wellbeing Outcomes | Improvement Service