

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Policy and Strategy Committee

approval noting

Ref LJ/SL

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Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) - update on recommendations

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Executive Summary

Members will recall the eight recommendations arising from the Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) published in May 2019.

Certain recommendations align directly to a Programme of Work element, others to the supporting frameworks required to ensure the delivery and assessment of The Plan for North Lanarkshire in line with statutory Best Value and good governance requirements. One requires to be advanced in conjunction with the North Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP).

As the eight recommendations are reflective of a snapshot in time (i.e. April 2019), work is well underway to progress the improvement actions required.

This report provides Members of the Policy and Strategy Committee with details of the planned action and an update of progress against these recommendations.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Policy and Strategy Committee:

- (1) Notes the contents of this report, and
- (2) Approve the actions outlined in Appendix 1 to address the recommendations contained within the Best Value Assurance Report.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority All priorities

Ambition statement All ambition statements

1. Background

- 1.1 Members will recall the Accounts Commission's final Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) for North Lanarkshire Council was published by Audit Scotland on 23rd May 2019.

- 1.2 In line with legislative requirements, this report was subsequently presented to the full Council meeting on 20th June 2019.
- 1.3 The report in June 2019 outlined the next steps in terms of progressing the improvement actions to be taken in response to the recommendations.
- 1.4 This included an update on progress to the Policy and Strategy Committee in cycle 3 with ongoing monitoring and scrutiny carried out by the Audit and Scrutiny Panel thereafter.
- 1.5 This report provides Members of the Policy and Strategy Committee with an update of progress against the recommendations.

2. Accounts Commission recommendations

- 2.1 The BVAR process is governed by the Accounts Commission who have expectations in line with their strategic audit priorities. These focus on:
- The clarity of council priorities and quality of long-term planning to achieve priorities.
 - How effectively councils are evaluating and implementing options for significant changes in delivering services.
 - How effectively councils are ensuring that members and officers have the right knowledge, skills, and time to lead and manage delivery of council priorities.
 - How effectively councils are involving citizens in decisions about services.
 - The quality of council public performance reporting to help citizens gauge improvement.
- 2.2 The purpose of the BVAR is to provide the Accounts Commission with assurance on the council's statutory duty to deliver Best Value. These assurances were outlined by Audit Scotland in the key findings section of the report, and affirmed by the Accounts Commission in the key messages section.
- 2.3 The BVAR contained eight recommendations for action; these are listed below.

- 1) Revised strategies, policies and plans should be developed to deliver the programme of work that underpins the council's ambitious vision, based on its five priorities.
- 2) Workforce plans should be finalised to set out the current and future workforce requirements of the council and evidence how this supports other strategies.
- 3) The council should complete the Investors in People programme as planned and determine how it will maintain staff engagement.
- 4) The council and its partners should develop locality plans for the 16 planning priority areas.
- 5) The council should investigate and better understand the reasons for falling satisfaction levels, particularly for care services, and whether they can apply learning from the high satisfaction levels in housing.
- 6) The council should implement the recently approved Performance Management Framework and reporting schedule to support the delivery of The Plan for North Lanarkshire and its scrutiny by members.
- 7) Performance information on the council's website should be kept up-to-date to improve accountability to the public.
- 8) Improvement plans arising from self-evaluation exercises should include measurable actions and clear deadlines.

- 2.4 Certain recommendations align directly to a Programme of Work element and are being progressed in line with The Plan for North Lanarkshire. Others align to the supporting frameworks (policy, performance, self-evaluation, and governance) required to ensure the delivery and success of The Plan for North Lanarkshire in line with statutory Best Value and good governance requirements.
- 2.5 The recommendation in terms of locality plans (number 4) requires to be advanced in conjunction with the North Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP).
- 2.6 The eight recommendations are reflective of a snapshot in time (i.e. April 2019). As such, work is already underway to progress the improvement actions required.
- 2.7 Appendix 1 shows the alignment of the recommendations to the respective Programme of Work element and supporting frameworks. An update on progress is also provided for each recommendation.

Next steps

- 2.8 A further update will be provided in six months in line with the Strategic Performance Framework governance arrangements.
- 2.9 As part of the annual audit of the council, future work by the external auditors (Audit Scotland) will follow up the findings and recommendations in the BVAR. It will also include more detailed audit work on other Best Value areas as appropriate.
- 2.10 Members should also be aware that Audit Scotland will also keep many other aspects covered in the BVAR (not just the recommendations) under review for the remainder of their audit term, i.e. until the new five year external auditors' appointment in October 2021.
- 2.11 Audit Scotland will also provide regular updates on all councils' BVAR recommendations to the Accounts Commission.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

There is no requirement to carry out a Fairer Scotland Duty assessment in this instance.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

There is no requirement to carry out an equality impact assessment in this instance.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial impact

There is no financial impact.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative impact

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 introduced the duty of Best Value; this requires that councils "*make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance*".

4.3 Environmental impact

There is no environmental impact.

4.4 **Risk impact**

Risk will continue to play a key role when auditors are determining their annual audit plans. As such, work is continuing to ensure performance information, evidence, and risk management complement each other and contribute to informed decision making, forward planning, and identification of areas requiring improvement.

5. **Measures of success**

- 5.1 Measures of success include delivering on the recommendations identified within the BVAR, demonstrating continuous improvement in outcomes and service delivery in line with priorities, and evidencing a positive impact on the people and communities of North Lanarkshire as a result of the resources expended.
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6. **Supporting documents**

- 6.1 North Lanarkshire Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR):
- on the council web site <https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/bestvalue>
 - on Connect <http://connect/BVAR>
- 6.2 Appendix 1 - Update on BVAR recommendations



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Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR)

Update on recommendations

Best Value recommendation	Programme of Work alignment	Progress update - August 2019	Lead responsibility
<p>(1) Revised strategies, policies and plans should be developed to deliver the programme of work that underpins the council's ambitious vision, based on its five priorities.</p>	<p>P009 Strategic Policy Framework All strategies have been mapped with the ambition statements in The Plan for North Lanarkshire. This will continue with further work to evaluate the impact of the Programme of Work on the Framework, and ensure the council's strategies and policies continue to align with, and enable, the required resources and working practices needed to facilitate delivery of the shared ambition.</p>	<p>The Strategic Policy Framework was approved at Committee in September 2018.</p> <p>A report was provided to the Audit and Scrutiny Panel in May 2019 providing an update on progress. Policies and strategies continue to be reviewed in line with the schedule and reported to the relevant Committee.</p> <p>A further update on the Strategic Policy Framework is scheduled for CMT on 20th August and Policy and Strategy Committee on 26th September 2019.</p>	<p>Head of Business Solutions</p>
<p>(2) Workforce plans should be finalised to set out the current and future workforce requirements of the council and evidence how this supports other strategies.</p>	<p>P009 Strategic Policy Framework The Workforce for the Future policy is part of the Strategic Policy Framework.</p>	<p>A CMT session on Workforce for the Future is scheduled for 24th September 2019 and following this, the draft Workforce for the Future Strategy will be brought to CMT in October and thereafter remitted to Policy and Strategy Committee on 5th December 2019.</p> <p>Detailed workforce plans are currently being drafted for all services and the first of these, Waste and Regulatory Services and Adult Health and Social Care, will be shared at the CMT session on the 24th September. These plans take into account the specific workforce impact of individual service programmes of work aligned to The Plan for North Lanarkshire, as well as council wide programmes including Digital NL.</p>	<p>Head of People and Organisational Development</p>
<p>(3) The council should complete the Investors in People programme as planned and determine how it will maintain staff engagement.</p>	<p>P064 Employee engagement and wellbeing The roll out of Investors in People will continue as part of the ongoing focus on employee engagement.</p>	<p>The Programme of Work is scheduled to be considered by Finance and Resources Committee in cycle 4 (27th November 2019).</p> <p>The Education and Families Investors in People baseline assessment will take place during October and December 2019, with the full report and recommendations presented in January 2020. This</p>	<p>Head of People and Organisational Development</p>

Best Value recommendation	Programme of Work alignment	Progress update - August 2019	Lead responsibility
		<p>completes the roll out of the Investors in People framework enabling us to attain full accreditation at a council level. Our focus will then be on working with services to improve their performance against the framework to drive increased levels of staff engagement.</p>	
<p>(4) The council and its partners should develop locality plans for the 16 planning priority areas.</p>	<p><i>P057 Community engagement / community visioning framework</i> This Programme of Work refers to both the council and CPP requirements referred to in paragraph 2.5.</p> <p>A revised framework to shape and guide engagement with communities will be developed to ensure that all citizens and communities are involved, ambitious, and empowered to work with the council and partners to shape future public services.</p>	<p><u>Community engagement framework</u> The Programme of Work for the Community Engagement Framework is scheduled to be considered by Youth, Equalities, and Empowerment Committee in cycle 3 (26th August 2019).</p> <p><u>Locality plans</u> Following discussions at CMT on 6th August 2019, it was agreed the Locality Plans should be redeveloped to ensure appropriate alignment with the Vision Plans currently being prepared as part of the Programme of Work (P020) for town centre and community regeneration. P020 is scheduled to be submitted to the Enterprise and Growth Committee in cycle 4 (7th November 2019).</p>	<p>Head of Communities</p>
<p>(5) The council should investigate and better understand the reasons for falling satisfaction levels, particularly for care services, and whether they can apply learning from the high satisfaction levels in housing.</p>	<p><i>P075 Best Value - Continuous improvement and good governance</i> The Strategic Performance Framework and Strategic Self-Evaluation Framework are part of the suite of four supporting frameworks required to assess the delivery and success of The Plan for North Lanarkshire in line with statutory Best Value and governance requirements.</p>	<p>The Business Solutions Team will convene a short-life task and finish group to review the information relevant to this recommendation and ensure sharing and implementation of best practice to better understand the reasons for failing satisfaction levels.</p>	<p>Head of Business Solutions</p>
<p>(6) The council should implement the recently approved Performance Management Framework and reporting schedule to support the delivery of The Plan for North Lanarkshire and its scrutiny by members.</p>		<p>The Strategic Performance Framework, along with Level 1 indicators, were approved at Committee in February 2019.</p> <p>Following work with Heads of Service to review their portfolio of performance information at Levels 2 and 3, the Strategic Performance Framework document is scheduled to be considered by CMT on 3rd September and Policy and Strategy Committee thereafter on 26th September 2019.</p>	<p>Head of Business Solutions</p>

Best Value recommendation	Programme of Work alignment	Progress update - August 2019	Lead responsibility
(7) Performance information on the council's website should be kept up-to-date to improve accountability to the public.		The website has been reviewed and updated as appropriate. Moving forward, the public performance reporting schedule has been integrated within the Strategic Performance Framework.	Head of Business Solutions
(8) Improvement plans arising from self-evaluation exercises should include measurable actions and clear deadlines.		<p>The Strategic Self-Evaluation Framework, outlining the programme of self-evaluation for each of the 25 ambition statements, was approved at Committee in February 2019.</p> <p>The Strategic Self-Evaluation Framework is scheduled to be considered further by CMT on 5th November 2019; this includes a self-evaluation exercise. A further report is scheduled for Policy and Strategy Committee on 5th December 2019.</p>	Head of Business Solutions