

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Audit and Scrutiny Panel

approval noting

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The Plan for North Lanarkshire - Performance benchmarking

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Executive Summary

Members of the Audit and Scrutiny Panel will recall the Strategic Performance Framework is one of five inter-related corporate frameworks which is key to assessing the success of The Plan for North Lanarkshire and monitoring delivery of the Programme of Work (while ensuring each stage of delivery towards achieving the overall vision is appropriately planned, guided, implemented, and governed).

To ensure these frameworks remain aligned to The Plan for North Lanarkshire and Programme of Work, all five are on an annual review and refresh programme. This also helps the council to ensure it is proactive in responding to social, economic, and environmental trends and changes in legislation and governance, as well as the broad range of national policy changes and new developments that have an impact locally.

The review of the Strategic Performance Framework has included assessing the range of performance and benchmarking measures contained therein to determine if they remain fit for purpose and are effective in contributing to the council's performance monitoring, management, and scrutiny processes in line with today's local government environment and the updated Programme of Work for 2021/22. Reporting arrangements have also been reviewed and a Strategic Performance Framework reporting schedule has been established for 2021/22 (as noted by the Audit and Scrutiny Panel in March 2021). This includes arrangements for reporting to service committees (which is being piloted at three committees during August / September 2021) and the Audit and Scrutiny Panel.

Key to reporting performance is the need to continue to ensure that this process remains effective in achieving the best fit between reporting on progress against the council's long-term vision and delivering on what matters today locally. In this respect the results available through the council's Strategic Performance Framework, and the various performance benchmarking measures contained therein, also play an important role in demonstrating the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on council services and local communities. As such, an ongoing programme of performance benchmarking scrutiny is under development for the Panel that will look at specific themes in this respect. This report therefore provides Members with the background context for information and to set the scene for presentation of the first theme by the Improvement Service.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Audit and Scrutiny Panel:

- (1) Note the contents of this report,

- (2) Note the accompanying presentation by the Improvement Service establishes the model that will form the performance benchmarking programme of scrutiny moving forward,
- (3) Note the next steps.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority All priorities

Ambition statement All ambition statements

1. Background

- 1.1 The Plan for North Lanarkshire sets a clear long-term vision for what the council (working with partners, other stakeholders, and local communities) aims to achieve. The annual Programme of Work process allows for policies and plans of action to be developed that inform the projects, activities, services, technologies, and resources that need to be harnessed in order to seize the most and best opportunities to deliver on the long-term strategy, while achieving value for money in the here and now.
- 1.2 The fast moving, unpredictable, and increasingly challenging and complex local government environment, means planning and change are constantly evolving and ongoing visibility into all programmes of work and their interconnections is essential. The council's Strategic Performance Framework plays a key role in this respect in terms of enabling the council to (a) look back and report on the level of performance attained, (b) assess the progress made in delivering on the Programme of Work and achieving the long-term vision, (c) identify areas requiring further investigation or improvement, and (d) benchmark with local authorities who are operating within a similar demographic and/or social and economic environment.
- 1.3 As Members will recall, the Strategic Performance Framework comprises three levels of indicators which collectively (1) provide the North Lanarkshire context, (2) enable an assessment of progress towards delivering on the priorities and ambitions outlined in The Plan for North Lanarkshire and achieving improved outcomes for all, and (3) comprises a suite of indicators that allow the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of day to day operations to be assessed. This includes the targets and standards set internally as well as appropriate national outcome and benchmarking comparators.
- 1.4 The most recent in a series of performance and benchmarking reports and presentations considered by the Audit and Scrutiny Panel over recent years, was a presentation by the Improvement Service at the Panel meeting in March 2021. This provided an overview of one particular performance benchmarking framework, the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) and its purpose and role as a tool for Elected Members to review data on costs, outputs, and outcomes on a range of service areas for all 32 councils.
- 1.5 The presentation in March 2021 set out the key highlights from the latest performance benchmarking results for North Lanarkshire Council. This was presented within the context of the national position as well as the position of similar councils. Links were also provided for Members to view a supplementary range of materials; this included the public online tool: <http://scotland.mylocalcouncil.info/>
- 1.6 The presentation also provided a high level analysis of key LGBF indicators within the

context of the five priorities within The Plan for North Lanarkshire. Within this context, it was also noted that results available through the council's Strategic Performance Framework and the various performance benchmarking frameworks will play an important role in demonstrating the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on council services and local communities and, as such, an ongoing programme of performance benchmarking scrutiny is under development looking at specific themes in this respect. This report therefore provides Members with the background context for information and to set the scene for presentation of the first theme by the Improvement Service.

2. Performance benchmarking programme of scrutiny

- 2.1 The performance benchmarking programme of scrutiny has been developed mindful of the key role the Audit and Scrutiny Panel has in respect of providing that "*independent review of the council's governance, risk management, performance, and control frameworks*" and "*reviewing and monitoring the performance of the council in delivering upon its priorities, outcomes, programme of work and targets in the council plan*".
- 2.2 In light of the important role of performance and benchmarking information in demonstrating the impact of the pandemic on council services and local communities - specifically the ability to review comparable performance results over a considerable period of time - the programme will focus on specific themes that are linked to the five priorities within The Plan for North Lanarkshire:
1. Improve economic opportunities and outcomes.
 2. Support all children and young people to realise their full potential.
 3. Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.
 4. Enhance participation, capacity, and empowerment across our communities.
 5. Improve North Lanarkshire's resource base.
- 2.3 The first presentation in the programme will focus on the *employability* aspect of priority 1. *Improve economic opportunities and outcomes*. This presentation, delivered by the Improvement Service, will focus on a small suite of key benchmarking measures which show North Lanarkshire's performance results in this theme within the context of other councils' performance as well as the national position.
- 2.4 Comparisons with other similar councils will also involve a deeper dive into particular activities or projects in operation in those other councils who are higher performing. Some prompts will also be provided which Members may wish to use to investigate particular aspects of performance further.
- 2.5 The operating context for the council will be complemented through the inclusion of the range of policies and plans, and Programme of Work items in operation in North Lanarkshire, and identification of the links therein.

Next steps

- 2.6 Following presentation of the first theme at the Panel meeting on 22nd September, any feedback received and improvements identified that require to be made to the approach will be incorporated into the final development of the performance benchmarking programme of scrutiny moving forward.

3. Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty

- 3.1 There is no requirement to carry out a Fairer Scotland Duty assessment based on the recommendations in this report; no new decisions are being made.
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4. Implications

4.1 Financial impact

None identified.

4.2 HR policy / Legislative impact

Implementation of the Strategic Performance Framework, and ongoing scrutiny of the performance information therein, has a key role to play in terms of ensuring the council continues to (a) support the Best Value duty by demonstrating continuous improvement in performance, and (b) comply with the principles set out within the *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)*.

4.3 Technology / Digital impact

None identified.

4.4 Environmental impact

None identified.

4.5 Communications impact

None identified.

4.6 Risk impact

Implementation of the Strategic Performance Framework contributes towards the mitigation of the risk on the Corporate Risk Register for *Governance, Leadership, and Decision Making*.

5. Measures of success

- 5.1 In the short to medium-term, assessing the impact of COVID-19 on the council's planned delivery of day to day activities and achievement of strategic priorities to ensure continued good governance.
- 5.2 In the longer-term, effective scrutiny of the information presented to ensure a positive impact on day to day operations, improved outcomes for the people and communities of North Lanarkshire, and delivery of The Plan for North Lanarkshire.
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6. Supporting documents

Accompanying presentation by the Improvement Service.



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