

Best Value Assurance Report

Action Plan 2021-22

Recommendation 1	Relevant Paragraph	Actions	Key Indicators of Success	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
<p>The Council should confirm that it has the capacity and skills required to increase its pace of improvement in key aspects of Best Value, such as community empowerment, financial and workforce planning and transformation</p> <p>Where appropriate external support should be sought from other Councils, or the Improvement Service, to help with focussing its areas of improvement. (paragraph 119)</p>	<p>119. However, despite this the Council's leadership, Elected Members and management have made limited progress on key aspects of Best Value. Progress has been particularly slow in community empowerment, financial and workforce planning and transformation. And, while there has been some very recent progress, the Council needs to increase both its ambition and pace across these all of these important areas</p>	1 Secure additional funding to add temporary resources to key areas of Best Value	Additional funding for extra resource agreed	Eileen Howat – Chief Executive	Ongoing
		2 Engage the Improvement Service on aspects of Best Value	Improvement Service are engaged with the Council where appropriate	Eileen Howat – Chief Executive	Ongoing
Recommendation 2	Relevant Paragraph	Actions	Key Indicators of Success	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
<p>The Council prepare both medium and long-term financial plans. The plans should consider changes to both income and expenditure, identify both budget gaps and set out the actions necessary to address those gaps. There should also be a clear linkage to Council priorities (paragraph 62)</p>	<p>62. The Council's financial planning is not sufficiently well-developed to provide assurance about its financial sustainability in the medium-to long-term. There is no clear medium-term financial plan, with a linkage to Council priorities, in place, with the 2021/22 budget simply setting out indicative scenarios for 2022/23 which estimate a budget gap of between £2.380 million and £14.819 million. A 10-year Financial Strategy covering the period 2020/21 to 2029/30 was approved by the Council in October 2019. This recognised that the Council faces significant financial challenges over the longer term. Scenario based modelling was undertaken due to the uncertainties regarding the level of grant funding</p>	1 Develop a Long-Term Financial Outlook (LTFO) that draws together all known factors which affect the Council's financial position and its financial sustainability over the longer term (i.e., a ten-year period). The LTFO will be refreshed bi-annually	Plan developed and approved	Tim Baulk -Head of Finance and ICT	Complete
		2 Develop a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that provides a clear understanding of the anticipated resources available to the Council in the short and medium term (i.e. three years) in order to deliver its priorities and objectives. The MTFP will be updated annually	Plan developed and approved.	Tim Baulk - Head of Finance and ICT	Complete
		3 Ensure clear and continued linkage between the LTFO and MTFP with other key strategic documents, including the Council Plan, Workforce Plan, Long Term Financial	Linkage evidenced in future strategic developments.	Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)	Ongoing and aligned to Council Plan and Workforce Plan

		Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy			
		4 Develop a public-facing communication plan to publicise and explain the significant financial challenges facing the Council for the foreseeable future	Plan developed	ELT Tim Baulk - Head of Finance and ICT Jane Bradley - Assistant Director - People	March 2022
		5 Develop a clear understanding of public needs, preferences, and priorities through a robust and recurring engagement process, aligned with the local government electoral cycle	Linked to recommendation 5	Elected Members and ELT/ CLT	
		6 Develop processes to support Elected Member]s in setting clear, prioritised objectives based on the Council Plan and the projected needs of the public, including service redesign, reduction, and cessation where appropriate	Linked to recommendation 6	ELT/ CLT	December 2022
		7 Engage with external partners (e.g. Improvement Service) to ensure that the design and delivery of community engagement improvement actions are effective and reflects best practice	Evidence of constructive engagement	Tim Baulk - Head of Finance and ICT Jane Bradley -Assistant Director - People	March 2022
Recommendation 3	Relevant Paragraph	Actions	Key Indicators of Success	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
The Council should improve and embed workforce planning, so that service workforce plans are developed consistently across the Council. The plans should include clear links to the Council's priorities and to its strategic change programme. (paragraph 77)	77. A corporate workforce plan is in place which runs to 2022 along with a workforce planning toolkit, released in 2019, to assist services and teams to develop their own workforce plans. However, the guidance and toolkits are not embedded or consistently deployed throughout the Council, and plans do not extend beyond 2022. There is	1 Convene a Corporate Working Group to develop a workforce plan for 2022-25 that links to the Council's strategic priorities and improvement areas in relation to Best Value	Working group established	Eileen Howat – Chief Executive	December 2021
		2 Workforce Plan Implementation	Consistent use of workforce planning toolkit across services.	Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)	March 2022

	also no clear link between workforce planning and the Council's priorities. The Council plans to embed the workforce planning templates as mandatory to inform the 2022-25 workforce plan				
Recommendation 4	Relevant Paragraph	Actions	Key Indicators of Success	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
<p>The Council should make sure that its transformation work is fully aligned and integrated to its covid recovery planning work and improve its approach to its Strategic Change Programme by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding greater detail about individual projects • Setting clear timelines for each project • Developing a benefits realisation tracker to assess whether the Council has achieved its aims. <p>(paragraphs 123 and 124)</p>	<p>123. In December 2020, the Council approved its strategic change programme for the period 2020-2030. At this time, the Council agreed to establish three temporary posts: a Project Implementation Co-ordinator and two Project Implementation Officers, to be funded for a period of 18 months. The first recruitment exercise, which was advertised internally, did not identify any appropriate candidates. A subsequent external recruitment exercise has resulted in three applicants being offered posts, to start in summer 2021. Despite this initial progress, the programme currently lacks the level of detail required at a project level, with no clear timelines or details of the intended financial or operational benefits</p>	1 Update Leadership Panel on the development and delivery of the South Ayrshire Way Strategic Change Programme	Twice yearly reports to Elected Members demonstrating progress (subject to change if Members request more regular updates)	Louise Reid - Assistant Director - Place	Ongoing
		2 Development of a Communications Strategy including the roll out of key messages to staff, stakeholders, partners and the public on the launch of the Change Programme; key themes and outputs and the benefits that will be achieved	Communication Strategy approved and implemented, and updates provided to the Strategic Change Executive	Louise Reid - Assistant Director - Place	Complete
		3 Implementation of internal effective mechanisms for reporting programme progress and in particular tracking benefits	Benefits plans and tracking for all projects implemented	Louise Reid - Assistant Director - Place	March 2022
		4 Continue to progress the delivery of projects, focussing on moving projects from the scoping/exploratory phase and into delivery	Increase the percentage of projects at implementation /delivery phase for 60% (baseline Nov. 2021) to 80%	Louise Reid - Assistant Director - Place	March 2022
		5. Review governance arrangements across the Council to integrate its approach to transformation and change; avoid duplication, promote recovery from covid and inform best practice	New transformation governance arrangements embedded	Donald Gillies – Director - Place	May 2022
	124. The Council updated the governance and monitoring framework in December 2020. The Strategic Change Executive, comprising key members of the CLT and having responsibility for the management of programme delivery, are not due to meet for the first time until mid-2021 and the Benefits Review tracker is still at a pilot stage. Significant progress is				

	therefore required to make the transformational change needed given the long-term financial challenges the Council faces				
Recommendation 5	Relevant Paragraph	Actions	Key Indicators of Success	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
<p>The Council needs to build on the Service Recovery and Improvement Plans and the Community Engagement Strategy to ensure that future community engagement and consultation is consistent, and fully involves communities to develop how Council services will operate in the future in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in order that real change and outcomes can be delivered.</p> <p>(paragraphs 25 and 112)</p>	<p>25. The Council is considering how it could learn from the Covid-19 pandemic, to develop new ways of working and service delivery for the longer term. In June 2020, the Gold Group (paragraph 22) was expanded to form the Covid-19 Recovery Group, to oversee recovery planning and membership, including the service lead for risk and safety and the HR manager. In July 2020, the Covid-19 Recovery Group published a strategic framework to direct planning for recovery and renewal. Each service has produced a Service Improvement and Recovery Plan. These plans focus on improvements to deliver Council priorities, considering the opportunity for different ways of working and sustainable (green) ways of service delivery. Examples of changes proposed as a result of the pandemic include enhancing services delivery online and increasing opportunities for partnership working. This partly reflects the result of the Covid-19 citizen survey (carried out in September 2020), highlighting that over half of respondents stated that the Council could do more online. These improvements are, however, mainly operational in nature</p> <p>112. The Council responded by developing a Community</p>	<p>1 A new Thriving Communities service has been established to lead community engagement across South Ayrshire</p>	<p>Implementation of new structure and formation of community based locality teams</p>	<p>Jane Bradley, Assistant Director - People</p>	<p>Complete</p>
		<p>2 An annual log of all consultations and engagement will be published</p>	<p>Systematic monitoring and management of all consultation and targeted engagement activities</p>	<p>Jane Bradley, Assistant Director - People</p>	<p>Published annually from December 2022</p>
		<p>3 Thriving Communities will be responsible for engaging with local communities to help develop local place plans – November – March 2022 already underway and planned</p>	<p>Place plans developed for all villages and towns across South Ayrshire</p>	<p>Jane Bradley, Assistant Director - People</p>	<p>Phase 1 complete Phase 2 ongoing and targeted completion due March 2022 Phase 3 will begin in April 2022</p>
		<p>4 A new online platform will be launched in January 2022 and will provide an opportunity for residents to let public services and community groups know what is important to the people of South Ayrshire</p>	<p>Consul online platform launched and used to support consultation and engagement</p>	<p>Jane Bradley, Assistant Director - People</p>	<p>January 2022 – with outcomes reported in the annual report on consultation and engagement in December 2022</p>
		<p>5 A new officers group will be established to support and improve consultation across the organisation. We will continue to work alongside the Consultation Institute to improve our consultation processes</p>	<p>Officers group established, training extended to officers across the Council</p>	<p>Jane Bradley, Assistant Director - People</p>	<p>Officers group will be established in January 2022 to coincide with consul launch. Progress will be reported in the annual report in December 2022</p>

	Engagement Strategy in 2020. This includes a stakeholder engagement communications plan to encourage and improve the consistency of the Council's approach to involving communities in the future of Council services. The recently established Communities Reference group set within the CPP structure also encourages community influence at the Board level				
Recommendation 6	Relevant Paragraph	Actions	Key Indicators of Success	Responsible Officer(s)	
<p>The Council should improve performance reporting, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting targets for its KPIs • Including a summary of performance against KPIs in its performance reports to Members • Increasing the frequency of reports to Elected Members • Making performance reports more accessible to the public <p>(paragraphs 32, 47 and 51)</p>	<p>32. The Council set targets for 16 of the 85 KPIs. Performance improved for 35 of the 63 KPIs (56 per cent) for which trend information was available. Performance declined for 23 indicators (37 per cent) and was maintained in the remaining five (eight per cent)</p> <p>47. The performance reports lack a summary of how many indicators have improved or declined, as a whole or by priority area, making it difficult to get an overall sense of how the Council is doing against each priority. The reports also do not clearly indicate against each KPI whether it has improved or declined. The 2018/19 annual audit report for South Ayrshire recommended that performance should be reported more regularly to Members. In response, the Council has increased the frequency of reports on the actions being carried out against each priority area, but performance is still only reported annually to both CLT and Members. This creates a</p>	1 Explore options for the future iterations of the Council Plan with Members and community planning partners and consider how reporting could be improved	A revised Council plan is published including targets for all KPIs	Mike Newall – Assistant Director - People	December 2022
		2 As part of the development of the new Council Plan a greater emphasis will be on measuring outcomes	Outcomes measures agreed with service leads and published, these measure will be robust and where appropriate targets set	Mike Newall – Assistant Director - People	December 2022
		3 Review the performance monitoring framework to improve public performance reporting	The revised performance monitoring framework is published including guidance on more frequent reporting to Elected Members as well as guidance on executive summaries in performance related papers for panel or Council	Mike Newall – Assistant Director - People	February 2022

	<p>risk that the Council would be unable to respond quickly to areas of concern</p> <p>51. The Council's 2019/20 annual public performance report includes a narrative on performance against the six priority areas and a table of 2018/19 LGBF performance indicators. While the report does highlight some areas of poorer performance, it places more emphasis on positive achievements. It lacks information on why performance has declined in some areas or on actions being taken to address this. Performance reporting is not easily accessible on the Council website, there is no link from the home page and there are broken links to reports within the performance section</p>				
Recommendation 7	Relevant Paragraph	Actions	Key Indicators of Success	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescales
<p>To help them carry out their roles, including their responsibilities under Best Value, Elected Members should take advantage of the learning and development opportunities provided by the Council. The Council should continue to work with Elected Members to understand and address reasons for variable uptake of training (paragraph 30)</p>	<p>30. The Council has a structured approach to training of Elected Members, by using Member training briefings and internal and external training sessions, and Members are happy with the training provided. However, Members have not fully utilised the opportunities offered. The average attendance rate per Member for briefing sessions from 2017/18 to 2020/21 was 47 per cent. To address the low attendance, the Council has emphasised the importance of Members attending briefings and requested feedback from Members to ascertain how</p>	<p>1 Conversion of all training to on-line Coast training courses and production of online Members pack</p>	<p>Forwarding of questionnaire to Elected Members to identify reasons and Elected Members proposed solutions. Consideration of the proposed solutions and inclusion in proposals at point 2,3 and 4 below</p>	<p>Catriona Caves – Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services</p>	<p>January/ February 2022</p>
		<p>2 Consideration of medium for delivery of training – ie by Hybrid training where Members can be both present in person and attending on-line</p>	<p>Develop proposal for delivery of both online and in person training, Available List of Member On-line Coast Training Courses. Availability of online new Members pack</p>	<p>Catriona Caves – Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services</p>	<p>May 2022</p>
		<p>3 Return to PDP and personalisation of training needs with new Members intake</p>	<p>Developed proposal for delivery of personalised training need for each Member</p>	<p>Catriona Caves – Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services</p>	<p>April 2022</p>

	<p>training can be improved. The Council has started recording the sessions and expanded online learning to make training more accessible. The Council is now considering a more personalised development package, which includes developing personal development plans for each Member</p>	4 Further develop new Member induction training	Developed proposal for delivery of new Member induction training	Catriona Caves – Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services	April 2022
		5 Report to Service and Performance Panel on training that is delivered with details of Member attendance	First report to Service and Performance Panel within 6 months of new Members been inducted	Catriona Caves – Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services	December 2022