

PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 SEPTEMBER 2017

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK 2015/16

Report by the Depute Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer

This report presents a summary of Perth & Kinross Council's performance during 2015/16 against the Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicators, for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee. The report was approved by Council on 28 June 2017.

1. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) was developed by the Improvement Service (IS), on behalf of SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives), in 2012. The purpose of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework is:
- to help councils and their services better understand why they achieve their current performance levels;
 - to build our understanding of where and why council performance varies; and
 - to help identify and share good practice across councils.
- 1.2 All Scottish local authorities have worked together to report information on the services they provide which can be compared across councils and year-on-year. This information takes the form of specific 'indicators' that measure aspects of performance. The indicators cover seven service areas which together account for over 60% of local government spending. These service areas are: children; corporate; adult social care; culture and leisure; environmental; housing and economic development. The data is gathered from a number of sources including the Local Financial Return (LFR) for each council, previous Audit Scotland Statutory Performance Indicators, the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and Skills Development Scotland.
- 1.3 LGBF data for 2015/16 was published by the IS on 24 February 2017 via an online tool called '[MyLocalCouncil](#)' and a [National Overview Report 2015/16](#). Updated figures for certain areas were released on 19 May 2017. The national overview report provides analysis and interpretation of key performance trends within a national context. It also provides statistical information on how we have performed across all the data sets compared to the national average and other councils in 2015/16, and compared to the national average since 2010. The online tool is published on the Council's website. It provides data for Perth and Kinross from 2010/11 to 2015/16, and allows members of the public to compare performance between all 32 Scottish Local Authorities as well as compare our performance within our family groups.

- 1.4 The Improvement Service has led the development of 'Family groups' of Councils, based on factors such as population density and deprivation, to provide a structure for similar Councils facing similar challenges to provide the same services, to come together to drill-down into the benchmarking data, share good practice and work together to improve their services.
- 1.5 The data is intended to be used as a tool to support decision making to better understand factors that each Council can control in improving its costs against its performance achievements. The benchmarking data on its own does not identify how to improve a service. Within each section of the National Overview Report, a summary of factors has been compiled that the family groups have identified as important in understanding the variation between Councils performance. Ranking data gives the Council a sense of how it is performing in comparison to other local authorities. However, it is necessary to take into account that legitimate variations in data will exist across councils due to local policy choices and demographic profiles. For cost indicators, ranking is not useful as reduced costs do not necessarily mean improved outcomes for local communities and as a result, the cost indicators have not been ranked.
- 1.6 While recognising these issues, Perth and Kinross Council is committed to the LGBF and using benchmarking information to prompt and promote progressive improvement. However, it is also important to note that the LGBF is only one source of benchmarking data, and the Council uses many sources to compare performance with other authorities which can often show different trends and patterns.
- 1.7 This year we have taken a new approach to reporting the LGBF data. This report provides an overview of the information that is contained within the IS [National Overview Report 2015/16](#) and the [online toolkit](#), taking account the national and local trends and highlights for Perth & Kinross Council. This report is intended to be used alongside the toolkit. The online tool allows members of the public and Elected Members to easily and quickly pick the areas they are interested in, rather than being presented with a detailed corporate report, which was the case in previous years.
- 1.8 To support this new approach a [video demonstration](#) on how to navigate online was created, and a drop in session was held with Elected Members and the Council's Performance, Planning and Risk Group in June 2017. This gave Elected Members the opportunity to ask questions, and for the group to provide support in navigating through the online toolkit.
- 1.9 This report was approved by Council on 28 June 2017.
- 1.10 The following sections summarise the key results for the Council in relation to each of the seven service areas.

2. CHILDREN'S SERVICES

2.1 Key highlights

2.1.1 We are ranked in the top quartile (fifth) for average tariff scores; and we have remained in the top quartile (sixth) for the percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6 and are also in the top quartile (eighth) for the percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5.

2.1.2 We continue to be ranked in the top quartile (fifth) for the percentage of children looked after in a community setting.

2.1.3 We are ranked in the lower quartile (26 and 25 respectively) for the percentage of pupils from deprived areas gaining 5+ awards at level 5 and 5+ awards at level 6, and are below the Scottish average. However, last year we were in the top quartile for both measures and this demonstrates that due to small numbers major fluctuations can occur. This also applies to the Leavers' tariff score measure for these areas (SIMD quintile 1). An average over 5 years shows our performance in these measures is broadly in line with the Scottish picture but also showing a steady improvement. The Council's 2016 attainment report sets out a range of measures for the same 2016 results. As well as clearly showing our recognised attainment 'gaps', it also shows that generally Perth and Kinross Council is at or above its virtual comparator 'authority', an approach developed within the Insight National Benchmarking tool.

2.2 Local and national trends

2.2.1 Across Scotland over the last year, there have been increases in real term costs in pre-school, primary and secondary education, after year-on-year reductions in previous years. This trend has been reflected locally within Perth and Kinross.

2.2.2 Nationally, senior phase attainment has shown strong improvement. Overall attainment (average tariff score) has improved for all and the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ passes at SCQF levels 5 and 6 (or above) has also increased. However, there is still a very substantial "gap" between the most deprived and the average, reflecting a wide range of factors including the different choices different pupils make and the qualifications necessary to pursue them. Within Perth and Kinross, pupils achieving 5+ passes at SCQF level 6 is consistently above the national results, and shows improvement over 5 years. These results reflect the dedication of pupils and staff to success across a broad range of subjects, and demonstrate the effectiveness of the ongoing work to raise attainment for all. But, we fully recognise the challenges around the attainment 'gaps' and other inequities in outcomes for children and young people. These were set out clearly in the Council's [Raising Attainment Strategy 2016-2019](#) which reflects priorities identified in the National Improvement Framework.

2.2.3 Satisfaction with schools across Scotland has fallen for the third year in a row. However, the LGBF satisfaction data is drawn from the Scottish Household Survey and represents satisfaction levels for the public at large, rather than specifically for service users. Satisfaction with our schools remains high and consistently above the national average and matches our family group average. We use a variety of techniques to gather views and actively engage with the parents of children in schools. Parents are involved in extended learning and achievement visits and also in locality evaluations around the learning community.

3 CORPORATE SERVICES

3.1 Key highlights

3.1.1 We have been ranked first in Scotland for council tax collection rates for the past 3 years and made further improvement during 2015/16 with a rate of 98.5%; and

3.1.2 We are in the top quartile (seventh) for sickness absence rates for all non-teaching employees.

3.2 Key areas of focus

3.2.1 We are in the lower quartile for sickness absence rates for teachers. The increase is explained by more medium and long term sickness absences, with the largest increase within secondary schools. Staff are returning to fitness for work as they recover from longer term and chronic conditions. Proactive wellbeing measures and support for employees who have sickness absence are being reviewed. In 2016/17, the sickness absence rate reduced from 7.9 to 7.8 days per teacher (based on full time equivalent staff numbers).

3.3 Local and national trends

3.3.1 Nationally, absence figures have decreased for both teachers and all other staff in the past 12 months (2.6 and 1.5% reduction). This is not reflected within Perth and Kinross as both have increased over the past 12 months. Teacher absence rates have increased to 7.9 days and all other employees to 9.7 days. Sickness absence rates were previously reported in the Council's Annual Performance Report as 8.7 days for teachers and 9.6 days for all other employees. These figures have been revised. Council staff and then teachers moved onto our new Leave Management Module within Resourcelink for recording sickness absence. This change required new reports to be written to analyse the information which had very complex conditions. It was only after the Council's Annual Performance Report was published that factors were identified that incorrectly increased the figure.

3.3.2 While sickness absence levels have increased slightly over the period 2014/15 and 2015/16, the longer term trend for both staff groups shows an overall reduction in sickness absence levels back to 2009/10.

3.3.3 Nationally the cost of council tax collection across Scotland continues to decrease whilst collection rates continue to improve in the past 12 months. These trends have been seen in Perth and Kinross also. Costs have decreased in the past 12 months and collection rates have increased slightly and we still maintain our position as the highest performing authority in terms of collecting council tax. This has been difficult to achieve in the context of continuing hardship, inward migration and the consequential benefit processes, the administration of Discretionary Housing Payments and the Scottish Welfare Fund in preparation for Universal Credit.

4 ADULT SOCIAL CARE

4.1 Key highlights

4.1.2 We have been consistently ranked in the top quartile (eighth for 2015/16) for self-directed support spend on adults 18+ as a percentage of total social work spend.

4.2 Local and national trends

4.2.1 Across Scotland Self-Directed Support has grown steadily over the past 5 years. Within Perth and Kinross it also continues to be a focus for the Council, ensuring people are given more choice and control over their health and social care support. Our latest figures indicate that there has been a steady shift in the number of clients choosing to access their support in a way that is individualised to their needs.

4.2.2 Nationally, spending on care for older people across Scotland has grown in real terms since 2010/11 (+6%) but not at the level necessary to keep up with demographic change (2-3% per annum). The balance of care has shifted in line with policy across the period, with a growth in home care and a relative decline in residential places. As importantly, the number of people receiving home care has decreased over time and the hours of care they receive on average has increased, i.e. in shifting the balance of care, as greater resource has become targeted on a smaller number of people with higher needs.

4.2.3 Both our home care cost and residential care costs have decreased over the past year. The categorisation of care at home services within the Social Care Return for 2015/16 has resulted in an increase which sees the Council almost on a par with the Scottish average. There has been an increase of care at home with people with intensive care from 23.7% to 33% over the past 12 months.

4.2.4 We have increased the flexibility of home care provision to ensure people receive care at the appropriate times. However the success of Re-ablement has had an impact on the achievement of the target we set in relation to people with intensive care needs, as well as people no longer requiring ongoing services. For those who do require ongoing support, the number of hours required is also less. This is in the context of an increasing demographic where people's needs are more complex. Since 2013/14 the

average care package per client has risen from 7.4 hours per week to 8.9 per week a 20% increase.

5 CULTURE AND LEISURE SERVICES

5.1 Key highlights

5.1.1 We are ranked second in Scotland for satisfaction with parks and open spaces.

5.2 Local and national trends

5.2.1 Across Scotland, culture and leisure services, costs per visit/attendance have significantly reduced since 2010/11. Substantial increases in visitor numbers for sports (16.8%), libraries (29.8%), and museums (36.6%) have been achieved against a backdrop of a 12% reduction in net expenditure. However, the growth in visitor numbers has slowed in the past 12 months. Public satisfaction rates for all culture and leisure facilities have fallen in the last 12 months.

5.2.2 Within Perth and Kinross Council, costs for all measures have reduced over the past 12 months, like the national trends. In the previous year, costs for parks and open spaces increased significantly to £36,532 when Perth and Kinross hosted the Ryder Cup and associated community events (September 2014). This has reduced considerably in 2015/16 to £32,709 yet our national ranking did not change. Our satisfaction rates across all measures have either improved or stayed the same over the past year apart from museums and galleries which has seen a small decrease.

5.2.3 This data predates the significant investment in the area's cultural offer, as reported to Council in October 2016 ([Report no 16/444](#)), with the redevelopment of Perth Theatre nearing completion; proposals for the transformation of Perth Concert Hall and Perth Museum & Art Gallery; and the submission of the bid for Perth to become UK City of Culture 2021.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

6.1 Key highlights

6.1.1 We are ranked consistently in the top quartile for the percentage of waste recycled (sixth in 2015/16) and over 10% higher than the Scottish average; and

6.1.2 We are ranked in the top quartile (fifth) for both street cleanliness and for satisfaction with street cleaning.

6.2 **Key areas of focus**

6.2.1 We are in the lower quartile for both the percentage of A and B roads that should be considered for treatment (29 and 25) respectively and are higher than the national average in both categories. In 2014/15 Perth & Kinross Council had one of the lowest levels of spend across Scotland on road maintenance. Subsequently to this, the Council approved an additional £6 million of investment in roads maintenance and structures over three years when setting the 2016/17 Revenue Budget in February 2016. We are also currently undertaking a review with Dundee City and Angus Councils to potentially build on existing partnership working and develop our collaborative approach to the management and maintenance of the local roads network. The approved Roads Maintenance Strategy allows for a managed reduced level of investment in B Class and C Class roads to facilitate the prioritisation of investment in the Council's A Class roads network. However, it is not anticipated to be fully reflected in the roads condition survey data for a number of years.

6.3 **Local and national trends**

6.3.1 Nationally, whilst spending on environmental services reduced by 4% from 2010/11 to 2014/15, it has grown in the past 12 months by 3%. This is partly due to a 9% growth in waste disposal expenditure and a 5% growth in roads expenditure since 2014/15. During this time, both road conditions and recycling rates have improved. There have been significant reductions in spending on street cleansing (-25% since the base year). Street cleanliness scores have reduced slightly in the past couple of years although they are still above 90%. Public satisfaction rates for refuse collection and street cleaning have fallen since 2014/15, by 2% and 1% respectively, although they are still well above the Scottish average.

6.3.2 The national trends are not reflected within Perth and Kinross where waste disposal and street cleaning costs have been decreasing slightly. Street cleanliness has increased over the past year by 1% and satisfaction with street cleaning has also increased by 1% despite a steady reduction in street cleaning costs. Whilst satisfaction with waste disposal has dropped slightly by 0.8%, costs have reduced over the past year for both collection and disposal but recycling rates have decreased slightly from 56.5% in 2014/15 to 54.2% in 2015/16 but overall have still increased since 2011/12 (49.9%).

7 **HOUSING**

7.1 **Key highlights**

7.1.1 We are consistently ranked in the top quartile and second within our family group for having the lowest levels of rent due that was lost due to voids; and

7.1.2 We are ranked in the top quartile (eighth) for percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient.

7.2 Key areas of focus

7.2.1 We are ranked in the lower quartile (25) and are above the Scottish average (6.25%) for gross rent arrears, with 10.4% rent due. However, preventing and reducing rent arrears remains a priority and we have been undertaking benchmarking with other councils to compare and improve processes and approaches. We have put in place an improvement plan which includes regular scrutiny meetings, redesigned processes and regular rent payment campaigns. For those experiencing debt we are also working in partnership with the Credit Union and Welfare Rights.

7.2.2 Although we are not ranked in the lower quartile our average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs has significantly increased from 9 days to 13 days which is an increase of 44% and is higher than the Scottish average (9 days). A revised and new Responsive Repairs Policy has been implemented and aims to ensure the Council meets its legislative obligations as a landlord. The new policy is more customer-friendly and sets out clearly our responsibilities as a landlord and the responsibilities placed on tenants in respect of repairs. Our Service User Review and Evaluation (SURE) Team carried out an evaluation of the delivery of our Repairs Service and made a number of valuable recommendations on how parts of this service could be improved. As a result, the housing management team prepared an improvement plan and presented it to the SURE team, committing to making a range of key improvements which they will monitor.

7.3 Local and national trends

7.3.1 Councils across Scotland continue to manage their stock well, with a reduction in rent lost to voids since 2010/11, and consistent and significant improvements in terms of housing standards and energy efficiency standards. However, at the same time, the growth in tenants' arrears from 5.6% in 2013/14 to 6.2% in 2015/16 reveals evidence of the increasing financial challenges facing both housing residents and councils alike.

7.3.2 In keeping with the national trend, the quality of our housing stock has improved, but our rent lost in voids has increased from 0.5% to 0.6% but is still significantly less than our family group average. Similar to the national picture our rent arrears figures have increased over the three year period from 7.6% to 10.4%.

8 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

8.1 Key highlights

8.1.1 We are ranked third in Scotland in terms of assisting 27.2% unemployed people into work from council operated / funded employability programmes, the Scottish average is 13.9%; and

8.1.2 We are ranked in the top quartile (eighth) for how many Business Gateway supported start-ups are in the Council (20.3), the Scottish average is 16.9.

8.2 Local and national trends

- 8.2.1 Nationally, there has been a slight reduction in the number of people assisted into work from employability programmes after steady increases since 2012/13. Business Gateway start up rate fell from 19% to 17% in the past 12 months. Procurement spend on local SME's has remained constant across the period at 20%. In planning services costs have shown an increase of 6% in past 12 months after showing a period of reduction. In parallel, the time taken to process commercial planning applications reduced by 13.6% between 2012/13 and 2014/15, however they have increased slightly in the past 12 months.
- 8.2.2 Within Perth and Kinross, the national trends have not all been reflected. The number of people assisted back to work from employability programmes has increased from 20.9% to 27.2%. However, Business Gateway start up rates did fall by 1% over the past 12 months. Procurement spend on local SME's has increased from 17.9% to 20.4% and now back in line with the Scottish average. Like the national trends planning costs have shown an increase of 11.6% in past 12 months after a period of reduction, however the average time taken to process an application has steadily reduced.

9. **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 This last year has seen councils across Scotland improve the quality and performance of the services covered by the LGBF while continuing to manage pressures to reduce costs. There is significant variation in both cost and performance which exists between councils and it is these variations which provide the opportunities for learning.
- 9.2 The majority of data provided by the Council for the LGBF indicators have already been reported in the Council's [Annual Performance Report 2015/16](#). This Report provides comprehensive information on our overall performance and how this translates to tangible outcomes for our communities in case studies. Our [Business Plan](#) sets out what our whole organisation is going to work on together, and how we are going to adapt, to ensure our organisation is fit for purpose to face the changes, challenges and opportunities over the next three to five years. This will allow us to continue supporting the delivery of our [Community Plan](#) strategic objectives.
- 9.3 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:
- i) Considers the LGBF results for 2015/16; and
 - ii) Notes that the LGBF results will be used to inform the development of Service Business Management and Improvement Plans, the Council's Transformation Programme, Council's wider performance management and planning framework, and budget preparations.

Author

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Approved

| Name | Designation | Date |
|---------------|---|---------------|
| Jim Valentine | Depute Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer | 7 August 2017 |

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

| Strategic Implications | Yes / None |
|---|-------------------|
| Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement | Yes |
| Corporate Plan | Yes |
| Resource Implications | |
| Financial | None |
| Workforce | None |
| Asset Management (land, property, IST) | None |
| Assessments | |
| Equality Impact Assessment | None |
| Strategic Environmental Assessment | None |
| Sustainability (community, economic, environmental) | None |
| Legal and Governance | None |
| Risk | None |
| Consultation | |
| Internal | Yes |
| External | None |
| Communication | |
| Communications Plan | None |

1.1 Strategic implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement.

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 The Council's Corporate Plan 2013 – 2018 lays out five outcome focussed strategic objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. The report supports all the strategic objectives.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 None.

Workforce

- 2.2 None.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 None.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

3.2 None.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.3 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

3.4 None.

Sustainability

3.5 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.

3.6 None.

Legal and Governance

3.7 None.

Risk

3.8 *None.*

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 The Executive Officer Team, the Head of Finance and Support Services, the Head of Performance and Resources and the Corporate Research and Information Manager, have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

External

4.2 None.

5. Communication

5.1 None.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2.1 The background papers referred to within the report are:

- Report by Improvement Service: National Benchmarking Overview Report 2015/16 and the LGBF data made available to councils by The Improvement Service at <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/tool.html>.