

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 22 August 2024

Best Value Assurance Action Plan

Executive/routine
Wards

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the report.
- 1.2 It is recommended that actions 3, 4, 5, and 7 outlined in the appendix are closed and to note that there is a plan in place to close actions 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9 by June 2025.

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Best Value Assurance Action Plan

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report outlines the progress and target dates for completion of the remaining best value assurance actions.

3. Background

- 3.1 The City of Edinburgh Council Best Value Assurance Audit Report (BVAR) was published by the Accounts Commission on 26 November 2020 and updates were regularly reported to Committee.
- 3.2 The Policy and Sustainability Committee in January 2024 agreed the following:
- 3.2.1 To note the update.
 - 3.2.2 To request that the next report in 6 months' time would set out a high-level action plan including target completion dates for future actions which would address each Best Value Assurance Audit Review recommendation.
 - 3.2.3 To note with regret that over three years since the report was published, and despite the interim monitoring process, the Council:
 - 3.2.3.1 still did not have a Workforce Plan that set out the number and types of posts and skills necessary in different roles to meet its service delivery objectives within budget alongside a transition plan to achieve this.
 - 3.2.3.2 had not yet implemented a strategic approach to self-evaluation.
 - 3.2.3.3 had not provided members with training on delivering strategic change to meet Best Value objectives.
 - 3.2.3.4 had closed actions on Community Engagement without delivering any actions to improve communication of the results and responses to consultations.
 - 3.2.3.5 had not yet ensured the Edinburgh Partnership had a clear performance and progress reporting system working to clear targets.

3.2.4 to agree that these issues should now be considered for urgent resolution with an accelerated delivery programme, and work showing achievement of delivery of the recommendations should be reported to Committee prior to the end of June 2024.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The BVAR for the City of Edinburgh Council focused on five key areas: the Council's vision and strategic direction; performance and outcomes including public performance reporting; effective use of resources; partnership working and community engagement, and continuous improvement.
- 4.2 This report outlines the best value actions, the status of the actions with explanation and target dates if the action is not complete.
- 4.3 **As part of its Adaptation and Renewal Programme, the council should prepare sustainable medium and long-term financial plans, and detailed workforce plans, to support its strategic priorities.**
- 4.3.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was agreed in February 2024 and is regularly reviewed at Finance and Resources Committee. A workforce plan is also planned to be considered in August 2024 and elected member briefings will take place before the committee meeting.
- 4.3.2 Status: Open
- 4.4 **The council should implement a strategic approach to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. This should include better demonstrating how it responds to feedback and scrutiny findings.**
- 4.4.1 Continuous improvement is central to the Council's approach for an integrated planning and performance framework (PPF) aligned to the Council's Business Plan
- 4.4.2 This integrated framework is underpinned by the 'plan, do, check, review/act' model and methodology and is based on an annual cycle of service planning, service plan review and continuous performance monitor through our Dashboards and benchmarking data.
- 4.4.3 The Council has completed market research on self-evaluation models and selected the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) model, developed by the Improvement Service. The Council is working with the Improvement Service to develop a pilot approach for the Council, train

relevant staff as Assessors and undertake a pilot for two service areas. The current proposed start for the first pilot is in July/August 2024.

4.4.4 The Pilot will be used to determine a Council wide roll out plan/approach and identify the resources, capacity and timescales for a rolling programme of service-based assessments.

4.4.5 Status: Open.

4.5 **The council should further improve its performance reporting by making better use of performance measures and targets, particularly to demonstrate the impact of improvement work.**

4.5.1 Key performance indicators and targets are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant and aligned to the Business Plan and the integrated planning and performance framework.

4.5.2 Elected members securitise performance through the quarterly Public Performance Scorecard culminating in an Annual Performance report which are submitted to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee. The business plan is monitored through an annual progress report which is considered by the Policy and Sustainability Committee. A suite of Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) themed reports are also produced and submitted to executive committees and an overview report will also be submitted to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee. All reports identify any improvement actions and/or progress as a result of performance information.

4.5.3 The business plan and the Planning Performance Framework (PPF) are part of a wider ecosystem of strategic planning and performance scrutiny where both progress on strategies (e.g. Poverty Plan, Net Zero) and detailed service specific performance reports (e.g. routine Homelessness, finance and HR) are submitted to relevant executive committees

4.5.4 The Council is currently further enhancing/improving the Public Performance Scorecard through a public consultation and workshop on the format and content with elected members to ensure the scorecard meets the needs of those stakeholders.

4.5.5 Status: Closed – the framework has been approved by committee.

4.6 **The council should further improve its performance reporting by publishing easily accessible, up-to-date performance information on its website.**

4.6.1 The Council has improved the layout and content of its performance pages which include not only performance but also data products such as Edinburgh By Numbers and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation reports.

4.6.2 The webpages will include all performance reports including the Quarterly/Annual Public Performance Scorecard, the Annual Business Plan

progress report and LGBF reports. The Planning and Performance Framework report has also been published.

4.6.3 The Council has developed the Public Performance Scorecard – produced quarterly and culminating in an Annual Performance report. The scorecard is focused on the day-to-day performance of the services that matter to/impact citizens the most.

4.6.4 The Council has undertaken a consultation with the public and workshop with elected members on the format and content of the Public Performance Scorecard to ensure that the report meets the needs of those stakeholders.

4.6.5 Alongside the standard reports the Council is also working to produce accessible versions of the reports which presents the data in a tabular rather than a graphical format. This tabular format supports the use of screen readers. In addition, the public are invited to contact the Council if they require the report in a language other than English.

4.6.6 Status – closed.

4.7 To help them carry out their best value responsibilities, elected members should take advantage of the learning and development opportunities provided by the council.

4.7.1 An initial 8 week training programme was developed for elected members following the local government elections. Each training session was delivered twice with an online and in-person option to allow members the best opportunity to attend at a convenient time. Sessions were also recorded and stored for future viewing on the member's section of myLearning Hub.

4.7.2 An ongoing training programme was established to build on the induction training and ensure that continuous learning is available for elected members throughout the five years term. External organisations such as the Improvement Service, Consultation Institute and Scottish Women's Budgeting Group have all delivered sessions, alongside subject matter experts within the council.

4.7.3 Status: Closed as integrated into business as usual.

4.8 In order to make community engagement an integral part of service improvement and delivery, the council should embed the lessons from effective community engagement activity and clearly communicate the results of, and the council's response to, community consultation.

4.9 The Council introduced and updated the Consultation and Engagement Policy and process which requires that all consultation and engagement owners provide an update on progress of their activity within one month of closing, and then also provide a summary of the outcome" we asked, you said, we did" within one year of closing.

- 4.10 The Council communicates individually to all consultation/engagement owners the process for reporting updates/outcomes before the launch their activity. The Council also monitors high level consultation and engagement activity to check on outcome reporting and will remind owners to provide this if it has not been carried out already.
- 4.11 An approach will be piloted in the next quarter to directly email individuals who have participated in consultation or engagement activity and given permission for recontact. This approach will use a UK government solution for mass emails.
- 4.12 If the pilot is successful, colleagues who regularly conduct consultation and engagement activity will be trained, and the Council will brief colleagues through the Consultation Network, and I change reported performance information to include the percentage of services who are closing the loop with participants through direct contact.
- 4.13 Status: open and target completion of actions fully implemented is April 2025
- 4.14 **In order to make community engagement an integral part of service improvement and delivery, the council should support community groups to complete asset transfers.**
- 4.14.1 Maintaining, promoting and managing Community Asset Transfers is a statutory responsibility and is now well established throughout the Council via officer knowledge and elected member awareness. This action is now closed as is integrated into business as usual.
- 4.14.2 Status: Closed as integrated into business as usual.
- 4.15 **The council should work with the Edinburgh Partnership Board to implement its new governance arrangements, effectively involve community representatives and deliver improved outcomes for communities.**
- 4.15.1 During the partnership meeting in June 2023, the board committed to a Transformation and Improvement Programme. The programme is based on the Service Design model and involves broad engagement with stakeholders to discover and define issues before developing and delivering the improvements. A critical aspect of the programme is defining clear roles and responsibilities within the new governance structure to ensure a unified approach and commitment to community planning among all partners. The board in June 2024 considered the work undertaken so far including a framework for the next phase of community planning. Engagement on a new approach has taken place between May and September, and an implementation and monitoring plan is set to be to be considered at the Board meeting on 18 March 2025.
- 4.15.2 On December 7, 2023, the Culture and Communities Committee approved an evaluation of the Neighbourhood Networks (NNs) and community grant funding models. This evaluation will identify necessary improvements and

suggest potential solutions. It will assess the effectiveness of NNs and explore ways to enhance community engagement by removing obstacles and simplifying processes for greater accessibility. The findings will be shared with the committee and the Edinburgh Partnership in the summer of 2024.

4.15.3 The Council and the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils have established an improvement plan focusing on their relationship, aiming to enhance communication and engagement.

4.15.4 Status: Open — target completion of actions fully implemented is March 2025.

4.16 **The Council should work with the Edinburgh Partnership Board to produce progress reports with clear targets, accountable leads and links between the actions taken and the impact on performance.**

4.17 In March 2024, the Edinburgh Partnership committed to developing an integrated performance framework that will include outcome indicators, delivery plans, and SMART targets for the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and related strategic partnership plans. Essential components of this framework will be the creation of case studies and processes for self-evaluation and improvement. Quarterly reports on LOIP priorities will continue, with significant action points escalated to the Board as needed. The LOIP annual report will be presented to the Culture and Communities Committee in Autumn 2024.

4.18 Status: Open – Work is underway to develop an integrated performance framework, with completion targeted for March 2025. This framework will equip the Edinburgh Partnership and its associated strategic and Locality Community Planning Partnerships with clear targets, accountable leads, and a direct correlation between actions taken and performance impact. Target setting and milestone establishment will be guided through the Transformation and Improvement Programme.

4.19 It is recommended that actions 3, 4, 5, and 7 outlined in the appendix are closed and that there is a plan in place to close actions 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9 by April 2025.

5. Next Steps

5.1 An update will be provided in winter 2024/25 to update on whether progress with closing the actions is on track.

6. Financial impact

6.1 All financial impacts are being contained within directorate budgets. Any additional budget or resource needed to close the actions, that are not already contained within directorate budgets, will be reported to committee.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 Any equalities or poverty impacts are considered as part of the different workstreams.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There are no climate or nature emergency implications as a result of this report.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 Each workstream has differing compliance, governance and consultation requirements. Further information can be provided on these matters if requested.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Best Value Assurance Audit – [City of Edinburgh Council, 10 December 2020](#)
10.2 Best Value Review Update – [Policy and Sustainability Committee 9 January 2024](#)

11. Appendices

11. Appendix one - Action Plan

Appendix 1 - Action Plan

	Action	Status	Target Date
1	As part of its Adaptation and Renewal Programme, the council should prepare sustainable medium and long-term financial plans, and detailed workforce plans, to support its strategic priorities.	Open	August 2024
2	The council should implement a strategic approach to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. This should include better demonstrating how it responds to feedback and scrutiny findings.	Open	April 2025
3	The council should further improve its performance reporting by making better use of performance measures and targets, particularly to demonstrate the impact of improvement work.	Closed	
4	The council should further improve its performance reporting by publishing easily accessible, up-to-date performance information on its website.	Closed	
5	To help them carry out their best value responsibilities, elected members should take advantage of the learning and development opportunities provided by the council.	Closed	
6	In order to make community engagement an integral part of service improvement and delivery, the council should embed the lessons from effective community engagement activity and clearly communicate the results of, and the council's response to, community consultation.	Open	April 2025
7	In order to make community engagement an integral part of service improvement and delivery, the council should support community groups to complete asset transfers.	Closed	
8	The council should work with the Edinburgh Partnership Board to implement its new governance arrangements, effectively involve community representatives and deliver improved outcomes for communities.	Open	March 2025
9	The Council should work with the Edinburgh Partnership Board to produce progress reports with clear targets, accountable leads and links between the actions taken and the impact on performance.	Open	March 2025