

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Director of Strategic Change and Communities
to Audit and Governance Panel
of 4 October 2023**

Subject: Best Value Action Plan 2023

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for an expanded Best Value action plan.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Panel:

2.1.1 agrees the augmented action plan, noting the additional improvement activity identified through the Best Value Thematic Work in South Ayrshire Council 22/23 [report](#); and

2.1.2 consider the response to the comments made by the Audit and Governance Panel in June 2023 ([Appendix 1](#)).

3. Background

3.1 In a report to Audit and Governance Panel in June 2023, Members:

- considered the draft Audit Scotland report on Best Value thematic work in South Ayrshire Council 2022/23;
- considered the draft improvement action plan included in of the Audit Scotland report; and
- provided feedback on the report and action plan and remitted the draft Audit Scotland report and improvement action plan to Cabinet on 29 August 2023 for approval.

3.2 The comments made by Audit and Governance Panel in June are captured, along with the Council's response, in [Appendix 1](#).

3.3 The Audit Scotland report raises several improvement actions that are not contained Audit Scotland's improvement action plan. In August 2023 Cabinet agreed that officers would present an augmented improvement action plan that captures the wider recommendations to Audit and Governance Panel in October 2023.

4. Proposals

4.1 The augmented action plan is attached as [Appendix 2](#).

4.2 The plan includes 15 additional actions and progress will be reported to Audit and Governance Panel on a quarterly basis. The Best Value Working Group will receive regular updates on progress against the plan.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Not applicable

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Not applicable

8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations*

8.2.1 Rejecting the recommendations would result in reputational damage and criticism from Audit Scotland, the Accounts Commission and the Scottish Government.

9. Equalities

9.1 The proposals in this report allow scrutiny of performance. The report does not involve proposals for policies, strategies, procedures, processes, financial decisions and activities (including service delivery), both new and at review, that affect the Council's communities and employees, therefore an equality impact assessment is not required.

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to delivery of all the Council's strategic objectives and strategic outcomes.

13. Results of Consultation

13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.

13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Martin Dowey, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Strategic, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

13.3 Consultation has also taken place with members of the Best Value Working Group, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

Background Papers **Report to Audit and Governance Panel of 28 June 2023 – [Best Value Thematic Work in South Ayrshire Council 2022/23](#)**

Report to Cabinet of 29 August 2023 – [Best Value Thematic Work in South Ayrshire Council 2022/23](#)

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Date: 20 September 2023

Response to points raised by Audit and Governance Panel

Point raised from A&G Panel	Response
A detailed work and action plan to support tracking of strategic priorities.	Council scrutinised and agreed all Service Plans in June 2023 . Progress against delivery of strategic priorities will be monitored through agreed Performance Management Framework.
Leadership decision making and consultation are supported by robust evidence and rationale.	Current reporting format ensures that members are presented with information and advice on which decisions can be taken. New Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) will encourage informed decision making on key strategic issues. Details of the draft IIA are due to be considered by Cabinet in September 2023.
PI framework is fit for purpose, kept up to date, monitored, evaluated and presented/reported in different formats with particular focus on public reporting	New Performance Management Framework (PMF) agreed by Cabinet in June 2023. The PMF details how performance against key targets will be scrutinised by the Service and Partnerships Performance Panel and the Council's Leadership Team in alternate quarters. In addition, an action to improve the public performance reporting web pages has been included in the Council's 2023 BV Action Plan and is currently in progress.
Consider how Appointments and Appraisal Panel may consider how they monitor officer performance against Best Value.	Chief Officer Appointments and Appraisal Panel are responsible for monitoring the performance of the Chief Executive. The Panel will ensure that performance against Best Value is one of the key objectives for the Chief Executive. Performance of other officers will be monitored through the Council's agreed Performance Development and Review (PDR) process.
BVWG to consider how they monitor contribution of elected members	Recognising that the delivery of Best Value is the responsibility of both officers and elected members, the BVWG have requested that awareness raising and training be arranged in the first instance for the BVWG and then rolled out to all members. The BVWG will meet regularly to consider progress in delivering Best Value and ensure that both officers and members are contributing appropriately

Best Value - Action Plan 2023

Follow-up 2021 actions identified by Audit Scotland

Report Reference	Action 2023 report	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Update
<p>Exhibit 7</p> <p>2021 BVAR Recommendation 4</p> <p>The council should make sure that its transformation work is fully aligned and integrated to its Covid-19 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 <p>developing a benefits realisation tracker to assess whether the council has achieved its aims.</p>	<p>Not actioned for the version of the Strategic change programme to June 2023. Recently actioned for the reviewed programme. Refocussed programme with action trackers is due to be discussed by the Cabinet in June 2023. The most recent update to the South Ayrshire Way Strategic Change Programme was considered by the council's Service and Performance Panel in October 2022. This report included an update to the benefits realisation plan and tracker. There are 33 projects within the scope of the programme of which 17 have benefits trackers in place. The council is now planning to review the programme and focus on a smaller number of projects that will be tracked. This is due to be discussed with members in June 2023. We have discussed this at paragraphs 106 to 111 of this report.</p>	Kevin Anderson	100%	20-Jun-2023	20-Jun-2023	Updated and refocused strategic change programme agreed by Cabinet in June 2023 .

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<p>BVAR 2021 Recommendation 5</p> <p>The council should improve performance reporting by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting targets for its Key Performance Indicators (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>Not actioned for the previous Council Plan. To be progressed for the new Council Plan from June 2023 Despite it being reported in the 2021 BVAR as an area for improvement, the council did not effectively measure its performance against targets for priorities in its previous plan. Targets for measuring progress against the new council priorities are laid out in the service business plans to be discussed with members in June 2023. We have discussed this at paragraphs 25 to 32 of this report.</p>	<p>Kevin Anderson</p>	<p>100%</p>	<p>20-Jun-23</p>	<p>20-Jun-23</p>	<p>New Performance Management Framework aligned to the Council Plan 23-28 was approved by Cabinet in June 2023. Improving the accessibility of performance information has been carried over and is a stand-alone action in this plan.</p>

Audit Scotland Improvement Action Plan

Recommendation	Management Response	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Update
1. A balanced view of progress against the council plan priorities should be reported regularly to members. A timetable for performance reporting to elected members should be a priority. Performance reports should include details or links to planned improvement actions. The council should ensure it fully complies with the new Statutory Performance Information Direction.	New Council Plan reporting format for Council Leadership Team reports and Service and Partnerships Performance Panel reports included in Performance Management Framework report to June Cabinet. Officers will review new reporting format to ensure that it reflects the Accounts Commission's Statutory Performance Information Direction.	Kevin Anderson	100%	30 August 2023		Reporting format options to be circulated to CLT. All options under development take cognisance of the Account Commission's Statutory Performance Information Direction.
2. To ensure the effective delivery of local outcomes, the council should publish the remaining Place Plans	Ongoing dialogue with elected members on the details of the Place Plans can be used to advance place-based activity.	George Hunter	55%	31 March 2024		A new officer is being recruited for Place Plans to advance remaining Place Plans/refreshing others as required.
	Further work is required to align Place Plan development with localities and advance participatory budgeting approaches to place via Community Planning Long term ambitions linked with Community Plan for 23/28. A restructured Regeneration team needs considered through our Economy and Regeneration Service, through which, joint work supporting a refresh of older place plans should be advanced. New structure anticipated December 2024, with ongoing Place work over new Council Plan 23/28. Recruitment is underway for an officer within Thriving Communities to deliver remaining Place Plans. In addition,	George Hunter	50%	31 December 2023		Work has been undertaken by the Assistant Director and relevant coordinators to consider restructure and will be presented August 23 for consideration by Director. Place Plan recruitment has identified a candidate and HR checks are progressing to appointment. Discussions to align wider activity with emerging localities approach will be key before December deadline.

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	methodologies for Local Place Plans are being progressed by Planning, in coordination with Thriving Communities and Economy & Regeneration Services.					
<p>3. There should be a clear process introduced that is sufficiently resourced to ensure these cross-cutting priorities are given the necessary consideration. Measures should be set for monitoring progress for cross cutting themes. In particular how the council will measure that it is reducing inequalities</p>	Officers continue to develop Integrated Impact Assessment Tool including clear proposals for reporting and analysis. A report will be submitted to Cabinet for approval.	Kevin Anderson	75%	30-September-2023		Paper on Integrated Impact Assessment to be presented to Cabinet in September 2023 to agree process and monitoring framework.
<p>4. The plans to reintroduce a corporate approach to self-evaluation need to be progressed. The council's self-evaluation should include an understanding of its performance in relation to other councils.</p>	Officers and members will re-establish approaches to self-evaluation across the council using How Good Is Our Council (HGIOC) to develop a framework to support ongoing evaluation for improvement.	Kevin Anderson	25%	31- December 2023		Options appraisal underway to identify suitable self-evaluation framework.

Additional actions derived from report commentary

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In future the council is to demonstrate in budget papers how it is aligned to the council's priorities. (Key message 8)	Align future budget papers to the Council Plan.	Tim Baulk	35%	31 st March 2024		Briefings have taken place with members and the Budget Working Group has met on several occasions with a view to wider consultation on budget proposals.
Work will take place during 2023 to refresh the LOIP to identify a new set of priority areas for it from April 2024 onwards. The council's revised priorities and service delivery plans are being considered when developing the new LOIP (Para 24)	Ensure clear strategic links between the new LOIP and existing Council Plan.	Kevin Anderson	25%	31 st March 2024		The new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) is under development. The Community Planning Executive will meet to finalise proposed outcomes in November with a view to consulting with our communities over Jan/Feb 2024.
The council should review the content of the performance section of its website to ensure it meets the requirements of the new SPI direction. (Para 32)	Review content of the Council Performance and Best Value web pages	Kevin Anderson	100%	30 th September 2023		Work has been carried out to complete the refresh of the layout of the public performance reporting webpage – there are now 5 tiles which people can navigate on the following areas: South Ayrshire Council Performance Reporting (this section includes Council performance and Service Performance), Benchmarking (LBGF information and my 'mylocalcouncil' access), External Audit (Audit Scotland Reports), Community Planning Partnership (link to the CPP webpage and access to annual progress reports for the LOIP) and Best Value (Assurance Report, Progress Updates and Self Evaluation).

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South Ayrshire Council should use the LGBF data alongside its engagement with its communities to assess its local performance and priorities. (Para 50)	Update Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) report format to take account of the recommendations from Audit Scotland.	Kevin Anderson	20%	31 st June 2024		Data collection for 22/23 LGBF report has begun. Due to report to Service and Partnerships Performance Panel in June 2024.
As part of the impact assessment approach, it is intended that an increased and ongoing level of climate change expertise and support will be made available to policymakers from an early stage as they develop policies. (Para 82 & 83)	Agree revised structure for Sustainability and Climate Change Team to ensure support is available to policymakers.	Kevin Anderson	50%	31 st December 2023		Draft proposal under discussion at service level.
The council developed a Community Engagement Strategy in 2020, but there is no evidence of the council assessing whether it has improved community engagement Whilst publishing the results of each consultation provides transparency and feedback on the needs of citizens, the council could take this a step further by evidencing how the results of these surveys have impacted on the decisions taken by Council. (Para 56)	Assess the impact of the Community Engagement Strategy noting how feedback has influenced outcomes.	George Hunter	10%	31 st March 2024		The Thriving Communities team will take forward the review of the impact of the Community Engagement Strategy.

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<p>Capital investment has also been committed, including £1 million in each of the 8 wards across South Ayrshire over the next four years to make infrastructure improvements to benefit communities. These investment decisions have been influenced using the information collated as part of the council's engagement with its communities as part of its place planning. The identified projects have been linked to the new Council Plan's priorities. The proposed projects will be considered by the Council in June 2023. The council has committed to regular monitoring of the projects to ensure transparency with its investment decisions. (Para 94)</p>	<p>Agree monitoring process for Ward Capital Investment Process and outcomes.</p>	<p>Chris Cox</p>	<p>100%</p>	<p>30th September 2023</p>		<p>Paper presented to Cabinet in September 2023</p>

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The council has committed to updating the MTFP annually, with the next review due to take place in October 2023 (Para 100)	Review the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	Tim Baulk	25%	30 th November 2023		Agreement has been reached with External Auditors to replace the 3-year MTFP and 10-year LTFO with a 5-year Financial Plan. Auditors have agreed that this is a more robust approach given the changing funding situation. The plan will be presented to members in November 2023.
The next update of the LTFO is due to take place in October 2023. The council has committed to updating future iterations of both the MTFP and LTFO in line with the financial environment it is operating in at the time, together with the council's priorities. (Para 105)	Update Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP)	Tim Baulk	25%	30 th November 2023		Agreement has been reached with External Auditors to replace the 3-year MTFP and 10-year LTFO with a 5-year Financial Plan. Auditors have agreed that this is a more robust approach given the changing funding situation. The plan will be presented to members in November 2023
As the Strategic Change programme progresses with delivering projects, officers from the team will be developing ways for council staff to suggest and bring forward project ideas. The use of corporate communication channels to promote examples of good practice will be considered to help publicise how officers and project teams have worked collaboratively to deliver change. (Para 110)	Develop method to encourage council staff to suggest project ideas and promote successful projects.	Kevin Anderson	10%	31 st March 2024		Discussion underway at service level.

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<p>The council has in place an ICT Strategy 2021-2023 and a Digital Strategy 2019-2022. Going forward there will be one combined strategy, originally planned for March 2023.</p> <p>Both current strategies have an action plan to be delivered over their lifecycle. A final report on the outcomes of the strategies will be provided to elected members in due course to allow visibility and scrutiny of the actions taken over this timeframe. (Para 124 & 125)</p>	<p>Provide elected members with a final report on the outcomes of the ICT Strategy 2021-23 and the Digital Strategy.</p>	<p>Tim Baulk</p>	<p>75%</p>	<p>30th November 2023</p>		<p>Paper to be presented to members in November 23.</p>
<p>Members should look for opportunities for further cross-party collaboration to help in the delivery of projects crucial to achieving the council's vision and priorities as set out in its Council Plan 2023-28. (Para 136)</p>	<p>Consider opportunities for further cross-party collaboration to help deliver on the Council Plan</p>	<p>Best Value Working Group</p>	<p>Not started</p>	<p>31st March 2024</p>		<p>Action to be discussed at the next meeting of the BVWG.</p>
<p>The council should now monitor the effectiveness of the new governance structure to ensure that the openness and transparency of decision making, and scrutiny is maintained. (Para 149)</p>	<p>Arrange training with members of Audit and Governance and Service and Partnership Performance Panel</p>	<p>Catriona Caves</p>	<p>50%</p>	<p>31st October 2023</p>		<p>The Improvement Service has confirmed that the Scrutinising business cases workshop will take place on Tuesday 3rd October at from 10.00a.m – 12 noon, and the Scrutiny Foundations workshop will take place from 10.00a.m – 12 .30p.m on Wednesday 25th October.</p>

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<p>From review of the update to Panel, on average 45 per cent of members were noted as attending the 11 briefings since August 2022. There is a need to improve the accuracy and relevance of the attendance figures. (Para 168)</p>	<p>Improve accuracy of recording attendance figures at member briefings.</p>	<p>Catriona Caves</p>	<p>25%</p>	<p>31st March 2024</p>		<p>Service Lead for Legal and Democratic is working with ICT to develop a solution that helps capture attendance more accurately.</p>