

**South Ayrshire Council**

**Report by Depute Chief Executive and Director of Education  
to Audit and Governance Panel  
of 29 May 2024**

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**Subject: Best Value Action Plan – Progress Update**

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**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress toward delivering the Council's Best Value Action Plan.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Panel:**

**2.1.1 scrutinises the content of the Best Value Action Plan update report;**

**2.1.2 considers the progress through the narrative set out within [Appendix 1](#); and**

**2.1.3 notes the additional actions added following the 2023/24 thematic audit on [Workforce Innovation](#).**

**3. Background**

3.1 The Accounts Commission's approach to Best Value has evolved since Best Value was introduced 20 years ago and is now fully integrated within annual audit work. Best Value at the Council will be assessed comprehensively over the period of the audit appointment and will include an annual evaluation of the Council's approach to demonstrating improvement in the effective use of resources and public performance reporting.

3.2 In addition to the annual work on Best Value, thematic reviews as directed by the Accounts Commission are undertaken. In 2022/23 the focus was on the effectiveness of Council leadership in developing new local strategic priorities following the elections in May 2022 and the 23/24 report focused on workforce innovation.

3.3 This action plan includes actions for both thematic reviews.

**4. Proposals**

4.1 Progress towards the actions and the accompanying narrative is attached as [Appendix 1](#).

4.2 In summary, 19 of the 24 actions are complete, and a revised due date is noted for 2 actions.

## **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 2022/23](#)**

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

**Report to Audit and Governance Panel of 4 October 2023 – [Best Value Action Plan 2023](#)**

**Report to South Ayrshire Council of 7 December 2023 – [Accounts Commission's Findings on Best Value in South Ayrshire](#)**

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**Date: 17 May 2024**

## Best Value Improvement Action Plan

Generated on: 13 May 2024

**Recommendation 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**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Officers will review new reporting format to ensure that it reflects the Accounts Commission's Statutory Performance Information Direction.	Kevin Anderson	100%	30-Aug-2023	30-Aug-2023	30-Oct-2023 Reporting format options to be circulated to CLT. All options under development take cognisance of the Account Commission's Statutory Performance Information Direction. new status update --

**Recommendation 2 - To ensure the effective delivery of local outcomes, the council should publish the remaining Place Plans**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Ongoing dialogue with elected members on the details of the Place Plans to be used to advance place-based activity.	George Hunter	100%	31-Mar-2024	31-Mar-2024	13-Mar-2024 The role of Team Leader Place Planning was fulfilled on the 11th of September 2023. The actions from the existing place plans for Ayr North and Girvan were reviewed and present to the elected members. Thriving Communities (place planning) is working in collaboration with Planning and Development team in view of creating support material and guidance for community led bodies to develop Community led Action Plans and Community led Local Place Plans. Progress depends on community council groups capacity and resources.

**Recommendation 3 - There should be a clear process introduced that is sufficiently resourced to ensure these crosscutting 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**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Continue to develop Integrated Impact Assessment Tool	Kevin Anderson	100%	30-Sep-2023	30-Sep-2023	24-Nov-2023 New Integrated Impact Assessment agreed by Cabinet in September 2023. IIA to be rolled out to the Strategic Change and Communities directorate over Nov/Dec 23 with full rollout to the Council and HSCP during 2024

**Recommendation 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**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Officers and members to 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	100%	31-Dec-2023	31-Dec-2023	24-Nov-2023 Following an options appraisal of the tools available, The Best Value Member/Officer Working group has agreed to adopt the Improvement Service's Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) and integrate self-evaluation into the service planning process. The Improvement Service have agreed to support the Council to do this and a series of meetings and training sessions are planned in the run up to service plans being updated in Spring 2024.

**Recommendation 4 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: • 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. (paragraphs 123 and 124)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
The council should make sure that its transformation work is fully aligned and integrated to its Covid-19 recovery planning	Kevin Anderson	100%	20-Jun-2023	20-Jun-2023	30-Oct-2023 Updated and refocused strategic change programme agreed by <a href="#">Cabinet in June 2023</a> . The Strategic Change Programme has since been replaced by the

work and improve its approach to its strategic change programme					Transformation Portfolio, Fund and Board with new governance arrangements approved.
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**Recommendation 5 The council should improve performance reporting by: • 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**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
The council should improve performance reporting	Kevin Anderson	100%	20-Jun-2023	20-Jun-2023	30-Oct-2023 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

**Recommendation The council should develop performance measures and targets to monitor the impact of its workforce planning approach with data on future skills and capacity projections or any plans for various scenarios detailed. Additionally, workforce data such as the number of casual staff, age profile of staff and staff turnover should also be reported regularly to members. Paragraph 14 "Workforce Innovation - how councils are responding to workforce challenges Best Value thematic work in South Ayrshire Council 2023/24"**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
As part of the Council's revised Transformation Process, specific workforce targets and expectations will be set, cascaded, and reported against.	Lyndsay McRoberts	15%	31-Dec-2024	31-Dec-2024	13-May-2024 A senior responsible officer for corporate workforce planning will be confirmed, and ELT will provide strategic direction/clarity around high-level workforce targets (which will inform the development of the next iteration of the corporate workforce plan.) Aspects of reporting and delivery will be supported by the new Transformation service. The Transformation Board now considers proposed projects based on their alignment to strategic priorities, including workforce planning.

**Recommendation The council should measure and report on the impact that digital technology has on its service delivery and outcomes, including how this can shape its workforce of the future. Paragraph 37 "Workforce Innovation - how councils are responding to workforce challenges Best Value thematic work in South Ayrshire Council 2023/24"**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Value added/benefits realisation to become embedded into revised Transformation Process and associated structure	Louise Reid	100%	31-Dec-2024	31-Dec-2024	The Transformation Benefits Realisation Plan was approved by the Transformation Board on 1 May 2024. The 4 stage benefits process is being implemented across the portfolio and projects, including roles and responsibilities, and reporting arrangements. L&D sessions for staff on the implementation of a benefits-led approach to delivery is being developed in the context of the Transformation Communications Plan.

**Recommendation The council should prioritise the development of workforce planning reporting tools in Oracle Fusion to aid managers in decision making. Paragraph 39 "Workforce Innovation - how councils are responding to workforce challenges Best Value thematic work in South Ayrshire Council 2023/24"**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Projects and procurement activities related to Fusion enhancement will be required to consider workforce planning data and reporting, and how they improve the development of future workforce plans.	Louise Reid	10%	31-Mar-2025	31-Mar-2025	The Oracle support contract was awarded early May 2025. Work will now progress (led by ICT with input from HR, Payroll, Finance, Procurement, Transformation, OD) with the supplier to define and develop a range of reports that will inform corporate workforce plan updates (and the development of the 2025-28 plan), and provide meaningful workforce data to managers to aid their service workforce planning.  Note - development and progression of reporting requirements will also be aided by the confirmation and input of a senior office responsible for workforce planning - as detailed in the 2nd action within recommendation 5.

**Report Reference - 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**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Agree revised structure for Sustainability and Climate Change Team to ensure support is available to policymakers.	Kevin Anderson	90%	31-Dec-2023	31-Mar-2024	13-May-2024 Action paused due to Council restructure and change of Directorate. New deadline requested.

**Report Reference - 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)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Develop method to encourage council staff to suggest project ideas and promote successful projects.	Stewart McCall	100%	31-Mar-2024	31-Mar-2024	26-Mar-2024 On 6th March the Council approved new proposals for 'Shaping Our Future' Council, in response to the need to improve the pace of change and transformation. This includes changes at a Chief officer and senior management level, with updated responsibilities and re-allocation of resource to drive change activity forward and realise benefits that will ensure the sustainability of the council. The Strategic Change Programme and Change Executive is being replaced with a wider Transformation Portfolio and Transformation Board chaired by the Chief Executive. The Council approved the establishment of the Transformation Fund – a capital and revenue fund available to support delivery of activity and focussed on achieving long term benefits and efficiencies. A Service Leads session was held to communicate changes to staff and seek buy in to move the agenda forward with services. Communications were issued to all staff on the fund launch – email comms targeted to CLT/ Service Leads, and discussed at staff meetings. Comms were issued and distributed to all staff via a staff bulletin and SWAY. This has resulted in staff across the organisation coming forward with ideas and projects that can progress to business case. A Transformation Communications Plan is in development for wider implementation to staff and stakeholders.



**Report Reference - 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)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Agree monitoring process for Ward Capital Investment Process and outcomes.		100%	30-Sep-2023	30-Sep-2023	31-Oct-2023 Paper presented to Cabinet in September 2023

**Report Reference - 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)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Improve accuracy of recording attendance figures at member briefings.	Catriona Caves	100%	31-Mar-2024	31-Mar-2024	28-Nov-2023 Attendance figures are reviewed as to subject matter and appropriate audience, and online training access is recorded

**Report Reference - In future the council is to demonstrate in budget papers how it is aligned to the council's priorities. (Key message 8)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Align future budget papers to the Council Plan.	Tim Baulk	100%	31-Mar-2024	31-Mar-2024	13-Mar-2024 The 2024/25 budget was approved by council on 29 February 2024. The budget proposals included information on which Council Priority investment decisions and savings proposals were linked to ensure decisions makers were aligning decision to Council priorities.

**Report Reference - South Ayrshire Council should use the LGBF data alongside its engagement with its communities to assess its local performance and priorities. (Para 50)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Update Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) report format to take account of the recommendations from Audit Scotland.	Kevin Anderson	75%	30-Jun-2024	30-Jun-2024	<p>28-Mar-2024 New data packs which include longitudinal data on each indicator have been supplied to Service Leads. The packs show.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. South Ayrshires individual performance over 3 and 5 years</li> <li>. South Ayrshires performance in relation to our Family Group and National average over 3 and 5 years</li> <li>. The performance of our Family Group for the current year for which data is available.</li> <li>. An abbreviated commentary on the performance of the indicator nationally</li> </ul> <p>Guidance of using the information in the packs is also given to encourage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. More scrutiny on the variations in cost and performance which are occurring between the councils in our family group.</li> <li>. Using LGBF data alongside other local data Interpreting the data against SAC's strategic priorities</li> </ul>

**Report Reference - 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)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Assess the impact of the Community Engagement Strategy noting how feedback has influenced outcomes.	George Hunter	100%	31-Mar-2024	31-Mar-2024	<p>13-May-2024 Thriving Communities continue to engage with local communities to help influence keys decisions in their local community. The Thriving Communities Team Leader is currently updating the 'Placemaking' South Ayrshire <a href="#">Placemaking in South Ayrshire</a> - website and is currently supporting communities to develop community led action plans or support groups who are interested in developing a local Place Plan. Examples include Ayr East where both Community Councils have joined together to engage with the local</p>

					<p>community to identify local priorities. Work in North Ayr is ongoing and includes engagement activity in Wallacetown, Dalmilling and Lochside. The Consultation on priorities in Prestwick are currently live and this will influence how regeneration funding will be allocated. In the villages of Monkton, Symington and Tarbolton the number of people engaged continues to increase.</p> <p>In addition to work to develop local plans, Thriving Communities are working alongside the HSCP to organise Participatory Budgeting events during 2024. Funding from HSCP and Thriving Communities will provide opportunities for local groups and organisations to influence where funding should be allocated.</p> <p>Thriving Communities have also launched the empowering communities fund (£30,000) that offer groups the opportunity to apply for funding that will assist them to build capacity or enhance capital assets.</p> <p>The Council's leadership team have agreed that responsibility for community engagement should move to the corporate performance team to ensure consistency among services. This action will be closed off and an updated action will be added to reflect the change.</p>
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**Report Reference - The council has committed to updating the MTFP annually, with the next review due to take place in October 2023 (Para 100)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Review the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	Tim Baulk	100%	30-Nov-2023	30-Nov-2023	05-Dec-2023 The MTFP was approved at Cabinet on 28th Nov 2023. The budget strategy contained in the document will be used as the basis of the budget setting process for 2024/25 and beyond.

**Report Reference - 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. 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)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Provide elected members with a final report on the outcomes of the ICT Strategy 2021-23 and the Digital Strategy.	Tim Baulk	100%	30-Nov-2023	30-Nov-2023	18-Dec-2023 New Strategy approved by Council on the 7th of December.
Consider opportunities for further cross-party collaboration to help deliver on the Council Plan		100%	30-Nov-2023	30-Nov-2023	18-Dec-2023 The Best Value Working Group have agreed to encourage all Member Officer Working Groups to align to the Council Plan. The annual ward capital funding will be agreed collaboratively with all ward members.

**Report Reference - 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)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Arrange training with members of Audit and Governance and Service and Partnership Performance Panel	Catriona Caves	100%	31-Oct-2023	31-Oct-2023	27-Nov-2023 Training was completed and very well received-consideration will be given to the same workshop being incorporated in Members Training to assist with scrutiny each five year terms because of the importance of this role in the Council and the number of new members. The training provided foundation training for less experienced members and the business training a very good level of more detailed training.

**Report Reference - 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)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Review content of the Council Performance and Best Value web pages		100%	30-Sep-2023	30-Sep-2023	30-Oct-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)

**Report Reference - 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)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Update Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP)	Tim Baulk	100%	30-Nov-2023	30-Nov-2023	24-Nov-2023 The three year Medium Term Financial Plan and ten year long term financial plan have been combined in to one five year Medium Term Financial Plan. This 5 year MTFP will be presented to Cabinet for approval on 28th Nov 2023.

**Report Reference - 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)**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Ensure clear strategic links between the new LOIP and existing Council Plan	Kevin Anderson	100%	31-Mar-2024	31-Mar-2024	24-Nov-2023 Similarly to the Council Plan 23-28, the draft LOIP priorities use Place and Wellbeing as high level strategic themes. These themes have been used to develop priority

					areas for each Strategic Delivery Partnership to advance. The draft priorities were agreed by the Community Planning Executive in November 2023 and consultation is planned during the first quarter of 2024. The new LOIP will be presented to the Community Planning Board in April 2024 for approval
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**Cannot group these rows by Desired Outcome**

Action	Managed By	Progress	Original Due Date	Current Due Date	Latest Note
Align Place Plan development with localities and advance participatory budgeting approaches to place via Community Planning	George Hunter	80%	31-Dec-2023	31-Jul-2024	<p>04-Apr-2024 The role of Team Leader Place Planning was fulfilled on the 11th of September 2023. The actions from the existing place plans for Ayr North and Girvan were reviewed and present to the elected members. Thriving Communities (place planning) is working in collaboration with Planning and Development team in view of creating support material and guidance for community-led bodies to develop Community-led Action Plans and Community-led Local Place Plans. An elected members' briefing is being held on the 17th of April 2024 to report on progress. Twenty-four localities (via community councils or other community-led bodies) were approached in relation to place planning and developing a community action plan. Localities are at different stages with the majority contacted and given information how to proceed forward. Up to date, approximately 1,110 individuals were approached and participated to some degree in place planning.</p> <p>A participatory budgeting event was held in Girvan on the 21st of February at 7pm. The PB event was intended for the Girvan and South Carrick area only. 18 groups were in attendance, and 12 local groups were funded with the total sum of £30,917.</p>