

Our Performance Framework

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What is performance management?

Effective performance management's core purpose is to improve the lives of the people we service by using high quality information to make decisions.

We believe the impact our services have on our residents, employees, businesses and visitors cannot be demonstrated through charts alone. It requires a balance of quantitative and qualitative information such as real lived experiences and case studies to measure impact, provide context and effectively inform decision making. This approach relies on excellent communication between all teams to share information and is supported by both the Accounts Commission Direction 2018 and the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework.

This Framework outlines how our performance management supports a culture of continuous improvement within our Council to provide the best outcomes for our people. It provides an overview of statutory context and our current performance management arrangements.

Key objectives

Empower and support teams to embed continuous improvement throughout our Council

Establish an effective, dynamic performance management framework that reflects our services and is flexible to respond to changing circumstances

Develop the concept of performance as driving continuous improvement for the people we serve

Focus on efficient, transparent and robust performance management, minimising duplication and embracing innovation

Enhance accessibility through relevant, clearly understood publications, available through a variety of channels for our residents and stakeholders

Collaborate with and learn from teams across our Council, our partners and beyond

Encourage and support effective scrutiny at all levels within our Council as well as by external stakeholders

Establish the corporate Policy & Performance team as the key point of contact for performance management

Statutory Duty and National Context

This section outlines the statutory duty of Best Value and the national context that needs to be considered within our Performance Management Framework.

Best Value

Best Value is about ensuring that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public. The duty of best value applies to all public bodies in Scotland and is a statutory duty set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 for local authorities.

On behalf of the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, external auditors work to ensure that the approach to auditing Best Value continues to improve and reflect the context, different accountability regimes and reporting arrangements across the public sector.

Following a Best Value Audit, a best Value Assurance Report is published which includes recommendations for improvement. The last Best Value Assurance Report on Aberdeenshire Council was published in October 2020. The report outlines the Council's compliance with its statutory duty of Best Value.

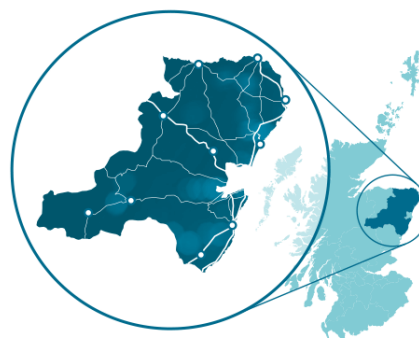
The audit identified a number of areas of improvement and an action plan was developed to deliver these. This will be a key focus of the Council's improvement activity over the life of the Framework. The Council is also required to undertake an annual Best Value self-assessment and submit findings to Audit Scotland to comply with the statutory duty of Best Value. Further development is underway to align the process of assessment to avoid duplication and meeting requirements of the Corporate Governance and Best Value.

The Accounts Commission agreed a new approach to auditing Best Value in Councils in November 2019. This will come into effect in 2022. When supporting guidance is published our Performance Framework will be updated.

The approach to auditing Best Value in Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) such as the Aberdeenshire IJB is currently being developed by the Accounts Commission and Audit

Best Value Assurance Report

Aberdeenshire Council



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

Prepared by Audit Scotland
October 2020

Our most recent Best Value Assurance Report is available by clicking the image above.

Scotland. The new approach is expected from 2022/23 and our performance framework will be updated as a result.

Direction 2018

The Accounts Commission have the statutory power to determine the performance information that must be published by local authorities in order to provide opportunities for scrutiny and benchmarking. The Accounts Commission Direction 2018 on Public Performance Reporting came into force in April 2019 and defines how local authorities can demonstrate that they are achieving Best Value for the people they serve.

This Direction gives us flexibility in determining which performance indicators (PIs) meet the requirements of Best Value. Central to this is demonstrating continuous improvement and self-awareness in terms of our strengths and areas for improvement. The Accounts Commission expects us to ensure balanced reporting as timeously as it is practical.

Our framework will be refreshed following any new Direction from the Accounts Commission.

The 2018 Accounts Commission Direction is outlined below:

Part 1: Improving local services and local outcomes	Part 2: Demonstrating Best Value
<p>Statutory Performance Indicator 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance in improving local public services, provided by both (i) the Council itself and (ii) by the Council in conjunction with its partners and communities • Progress against the desired outcomes agreed with its partners and communities <p>The Commission requires the Council to report such information to allow comparison (i) over time and (ii) with other similar bodies. The Commission requires the Council to report on information drawn from the LGBF in particular and other benchmarking activities.</p>	<p>Statutory Performance Indicator 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council’s assessment of how it is performance against its duty of Best Value and how it plans to improve against this assessment • Audit assessments of its performance against its Best Value duty and how it has responded to these assessments • In particular how it (in conjunction with its partners as appropriate) has engagement with and responded to its diverse communities.

National Performance Framework

The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework aims to create a more successful country with more opportunities and better wellbeing for the people of Scotland. It looks to create sustainable and inclusive growth and reduce inequalities by giving equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress and aligns to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



The National Performance Framework directly influences our Council priorities and is available using this [link](#).

The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

The [Local Government Benchmarking Framework](#) is administered by the Improvement Service in partnership with [SOLACE](#). It is highlighted with the Direction 2018 and provides an opportunity to benchmark our performance with our local authorities in Scotland.

To understand why variations in cost and performance are occurring, councils work together to drill-down into the benchmarking data across service area. This process has been organised around family groups of councils so that we are comparing councils with similar characteristics, for example, relative deprivation and affluence; urban, semi-rural, rural. The point of comparing like for like is that this more likely to lead to useful learning and improvement.

Local Context

This section outlines local context that needs to be considered within our Performance Management Framework.

Council Plan 2020-2022

This is the main strategic plan for our Council. It is high level and sets out our priorities for two years. It is the core basis of our statutory performance reporting as outlined in the Accounts Commission Direction 2018. All plans sitting underneath the Council Plan must align to it.

Directorate Plans and Area Plans

Directorate Plans translate higher level priorities into Directorate level actions. These plans also outline how each service area will deliver on key functions including national regulatory benchmarking requirements. Directorate Plans help the development of Team Delivery Plans so that teams and individuals understand how they contribute to and are responsible for achieving the Council's strategic priorities.

Progress in relation to Directorate plan priorities is reported to Policy Committees twice yearly.

Area Plans reflect the needs and priorities of the area and its communities and link directly to projects and initiatives planned and delivered by services. The focus of Area Plans is the delivery of Directorate Plans at an area level; they provide a clear performance and scrutiny framework. The plans capture the synergies and relationship with Directorate Plans.

The Recovery Strategy

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our approach to delivering services and the Council reviewed our Plan and refreshed our Priorities as a result. The [Covid-19 Recovery Strategy](#) for Aberdeenshire sets out the Council's response to recovery. The recovery strategy covers the recommencement of service delivery and focuses on addressing the medium and long term social and economic impact of Covid-19.

The quantity and frequency of external data reporting has increased. Additionally we now have access to high frequency data for our Council and other local authorities through dashboards such as the [Local Government Covid-19 Dashboard](#).

Operational Plans and Team Plans

These are not reported in the public domain however they are critical in providing the detail needed to deliver our Council Plan priorities.

Local Community Plans

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gave Community Planning Partnerships a specific duty to improve local priority outcomes and to tackle inequalities across communities in their area. The principles behind Local Community Planning are to empower all sections of the community to participate in decision making, to encourage collective

action and engagement in the political process and to ensure the representation of interests.

To assist in providing services to residents, Aberdeenshire is split into six administrative areas: Banff & Buchan, Buchan, Formartine, Garioch, Kincardine & Mearns and Marr. A variety of diverse and unique communities make up each area, spanning into the Cairngorms National Park in the West, bordering with Angus in the South and the North Sea coastline in the East and North.

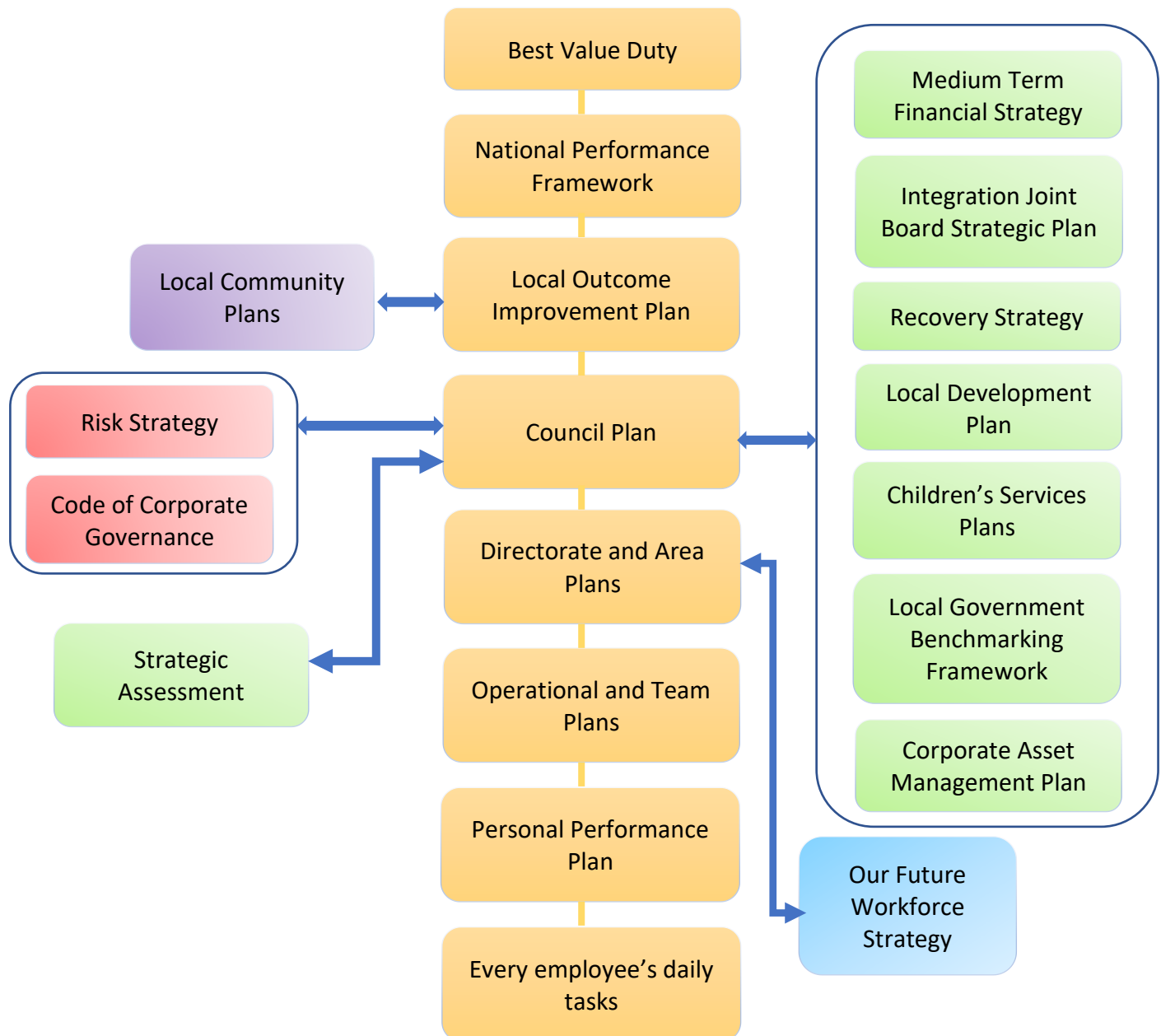
Each administrative area is served by a Local Community Planning Group and various local sub-groups. You can find out more about each area using [this link](#).

Employee Personal Performance Plan

All employees should be working towards the aims and priorities of the Council, as detailed within the Council Plan, Directorate, Operational and/or Team Plans. To support this the Council's Workforce Strategy commits to every employee having quarterly one-to-one Personal Performance review meeting. PPPs link individual work plans to the Council priorities so that individuals can identify how they are contributing to the delivery of the priorities.

The Golden Thread

Every task of every employee within our Council contributes to achieving better outcomes for the people of Aberdeenshire. This link is called the Golden Thread and is illustrated below



Who does what	
Accounts Commission	The Accounts Commission is the independent public watchdog for local government.
Aberdeenshire Council	Aberdeenshire Council is responsible for approving the Council Plan, vision and direction.
Aberdeenshire Council's Policy Committees	Aberdeenshire Council has four policy committees, each have a critical scrutiny role in relation to the areas within their remits.
Aberdeenshire Council's Audit Committee	The Audit Committee is responsible for internal and external audit matters, financial management and scrutiny of the Integration Joint Board for Health & Social Care.
Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)	Strategic responsibility for performance in relation to the Council priorities. Driving continuous improvement activity by implementing and embedding the Performance Management Framework across the Council. Quarterly review of Council and Directorate Plan performance and agreeing corrective action where performance needs to improve. Twice yearly reporting of Council Plan performance.
Strategic Change Board	The SCB is made up of Strategic Change, Capital Plan, and HRA Capital Board. It consists of the Chief Executive and Directors, which meet on a quarterly basis. They provide a scrutiny and audit role of the portfolio of programmes and projects across Change & Service Transformation Boards, Capital Plan and HRA Capital programmes.
Directors	Strategic accountability and responsibility for leading and directing the performance of their Directorate. Contributing to the setting of the Council priorities by Elected Members. Ensuring performance improvement methods are utilised to improve service delivery where necessary. Quarterly reporting of performance to SLT and Policy Committees twice yearly.
Heads of Service and Area Managers	Accountable for setting objectives, Key Performance Indicators and Targets in their service areas, responsible for the delivery of the Directorate or Area Plan, overseeing the performance of service areas within their remit and contributing to the Council's priorities. Ensuring all staff are encouraged and have the opportunity to engage in performance improvement activity in relation to their service area. Using performance improvement methods to improve service delivery where necessary.
Corporate Performance Team	The Corporate Performance team performs a statutory function within our Council and is responsible for demonstrating the duty of Best Value as set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003. This includes support our Strategic Leadership Team with the creation, management and reporting of our Council Plan and other performance frameworks, contributing to national performance networks

Who does what

	and collaborating with all teams within our Council to achieve continuous improvement.
Service Managers	Setting, monitoring and managing performance against targets and contributing to delivery of the Council and Community Planning Partnership priorities. Communicating expectations in relation to performance and engaging with teams in performance improvement activity. Using performance improvement methods to improve service delivery where necessary.
Team Leaders	Responsible for creating and delivering team plans and monitoring and managing performance and supporting their team to deliver their objectives. Responsible engaging their team in discussions around team performance. Using performance improvement methods to improve service delivery where necessary.
All Employees	All employees have a responsibility to undertake tasks allocated in accordance with their role. Performance is discussed during regular 1:1s with line managers and during annual PPPs and employees are supported to develop the skills and knowledge they have to undertake their role. Everyone should understand how their work contributes to the delivery of the Council's priorities. Engagement in continuous improvement processes is expected and encouraged and employees should feel able to contribute to performance improvement activity.

The Continuous Improvement Cycle - Plan Do Learn Act

Performance management is a continuous ongoing process involving a number of stages. The Plan-Do-Learn-Act cycle shows how we continuously review our performance in order to improve our services.

Be SMART

SMART objectives and indicators are

Specific – precise in what we are trying to measure

Measurable- Realistic in terms of how we can measure the indicator and how practical it is to source this data when needed. If the effort of sourcing the data outweighs its value then an alternative measure could be a better choice

Achievable -the target is realistic

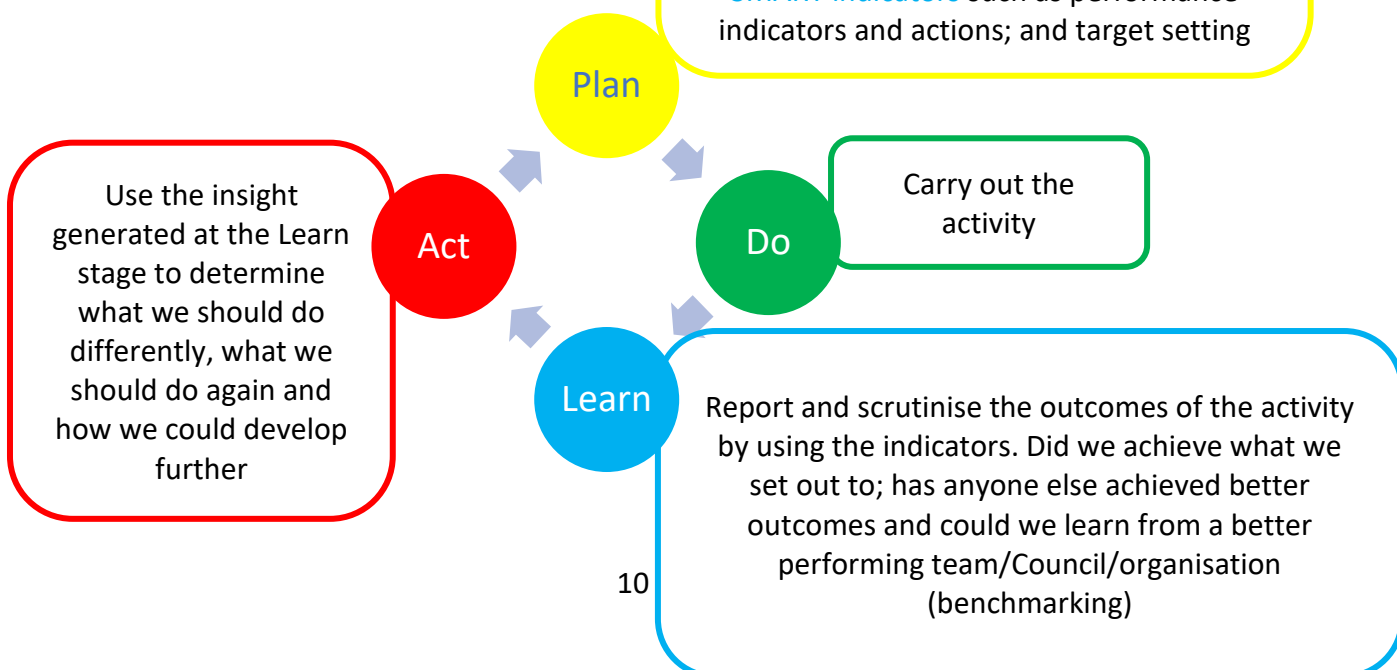
Realistic – the measure will tell us what we need to know to make a decision and relates to the overall aim

Time-bound- there are timeframes for achieving goals

It is important to be aware of the distinction between SMART indicators and other sources of information such as real lived experiences which are invaluable in informing and demonstrating impact.

Performance management and performance reporting are very different things. Performance management is using the information available to us to effectively plan, undertake activities, learn from the results and then act on our learning to inform future planning to meet the needs of the people of Aberdeenshire. This is known as the Continuous Improvement Cycle or Plan, Do, Learn, Act.

Focus on: the outcomes we are wanting achieve; who else can we potentially compare to and learn from (benchmarking); resources available and how will carry out activity; how we measure progress and effective using SMART indicators such as performance indicators and actions; and target setting



Benchmarking

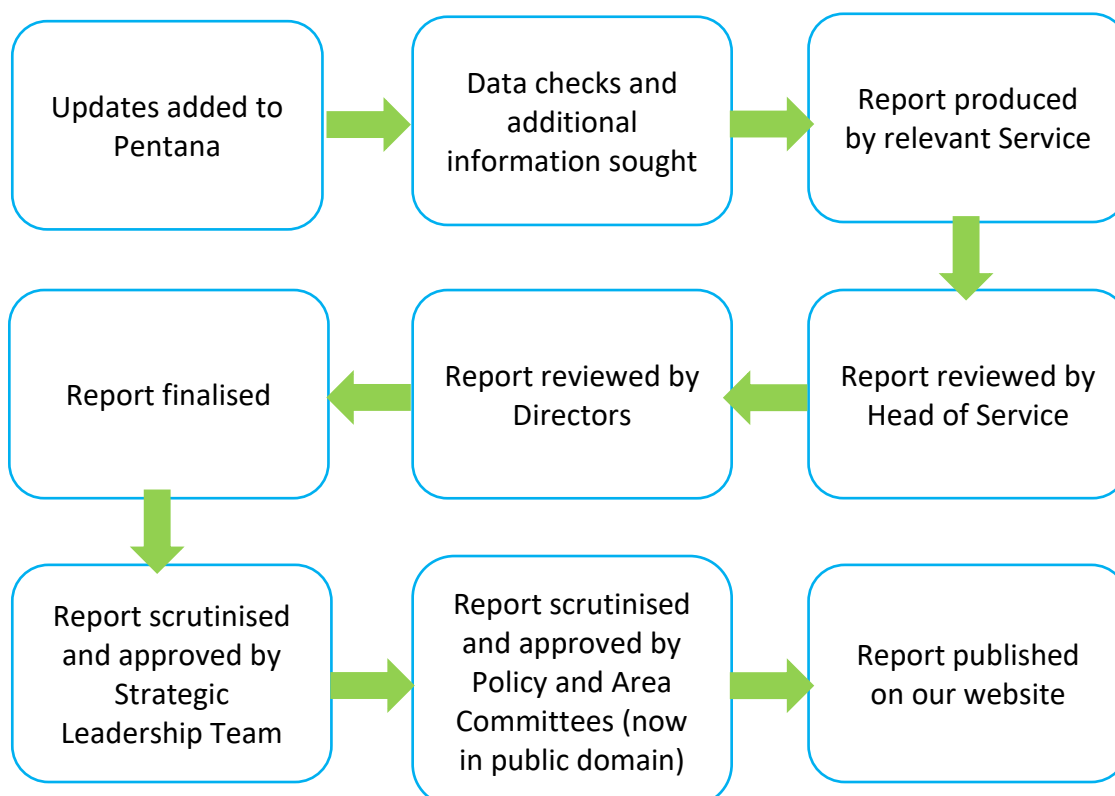
Benchmarking is comparing ourselves to others (not just in the public sector) and learning how to improve as a result. This is not limited to comparing performance indicators; we need to actively benchmark by comparing different approaches to tackle the same issue or achieve similar outcomes.

The LGBF brings together a wide range of information about how all Scottish councils perform in delivering services to local communities. The information takes the form of specific indicators that measure aspects of performance, for example, how much a service costs per user or how satisfied local people are with a service. The indicators cover several service areas. These services areas are children, corporate, adult social care, culture and leisure, environmental, housing and economic development.

We need to compare our performance through several routes, many of which are specialised such as [APSE](#).

Performance reporting and scrutiny









We have a statutory duty to report our performance in a balanced and timeous way. In addition, the process of reporting our performance ensures effective scrutiny by peers and Elected Members. An overview of the basic process is shown below.



Effective time management is crucial to ensure reports are scrutinised and in the public domain while the data is still as relevant as possible.

Performance status (RAG status)

The performance status is also known as RAG status due to colour coding used to show progress (red, amber, green). Within our performance reporting the status of a PI or action is determined as follows:

Performance indicator status and trend key	
	A red octagon means that the indicator is significantly adrift of target
	A yellow triangle means it is slightly adrift of target
	A white tick in a green circle means it is on target
	An icon showing a graph means that we have data only (PIs only) this is where a target has intentionally not been set, usually due to the indicator being a new indicator or one that is being monitored for context rather than actively focused on
	A blue arrow pointing up means shows an improving trend
	A blue horizontal line means no change
	A blue line pointing down shows a worsening trend
	A question mark means that the data not yet available /status unknown – PIs only the status is not available either due to data not being available or no target being set

Performance status thresholds should be specified within performance reports.

Schedule of Corporate Reporting

Council Performance Reporting Calendar	Parent Committee	Audit Committee
Annual Performance Report	September	
Local Government Benchmarking Framework and Improvement Plan (all Services)	April	June
Best Value Action Plan Progress Report	April November	February May August November
Corporate Improvement Plan Progress Reports		February May August November
Local Outcome Improvement Plan performance report	September	
Business Services Directorate Plan then 6-month progress reports	June November	
Communities Committee Directorate Plans (Housing, Live Life Aberdeenshire and Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership) then 6-month progress reports	June November	
Education & Children's Services Directorate Plan then 6-month progress reports	June November	
Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan then 6-month progress reports	June November	
Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board	March, June, August, October	
Aberdeenshire Child Poverty Report	March	
Banff & Buchan Area Plan and 6-Month Progress Report	June November	
Buchan Area Plan and 6-Month Progress Report	June November	
Formartine Area Plan and 6-Month Progress Report	June November	
Garioch Area Plan and 6-Month Progress Report	June November	
Kincardine & Mearns Area Plan and 6-Month Progress Report	June November	
Marr Area Plan and 6-Month Progress Report	June November	

Performance Measurement Recording Sheet

Directorate/Service/Team				
PI Title <i>The title should summarise what is being measured</i>				
Purpose <i>Consider the purpose of measuring this aspect of performance. If there is no good reason, do you really need to measure it? How are we using performance information to identify areas for improvement?</i>				
Relates to (which) Plan <i>(link to Council Priorities) Which strategic priority does the measure relate to?</i>		Plan	e.g., Council Plan	
		Priority	e.g., Estate modernisation	
Targets 2021/22 <i>Which performance targets should you set and by when? This communicates precisely what you are trying to achieve. Please advise of monthly, quarterly and annual targets as appropriate</i>				
Quarterly target				
Q1		Q2	Q3	Q4
Annual target				
2020/21		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Rationale for target <i>How is the target set? Aim to improve by 5% on last year? Aim to close gap with peers?</i>				
Formula for calculation/collation <i>Written procedures – step by step guide is an audit requirement. How do you calculate the performance measure? Outline source of data. Be precise: the formula must include exactly what you are wanting to measure to avoid any confusion</i>				
Frequency <i>Decide how often you will measure and how often you will review the measure itself. Details both the frequency of collection (daily, weekly, monthly etc.) and reporting frequency) (weekly, monthly, quarterly etc.)</i>		How often is the data collected? How often is the data reported? Is there a time lag between period recorded and data availability?		
Area <i>Can the PI be reported at an Area level? If not, is there an alternative at that level?</i>				
Responsible persons <i>Identify the persons responsible for the measure</i>				
Benchmarking				

<p><i>Is the measure benchmarked or reported anywhere: e.g. LGBF, APSE, SOCTS, SHBVN, Scottish Social Housing Charter?</i></p> <p><i>How has benchmarking been used to improve performance? Why are other councils performing better than we are? Why is performance deteriorating over time?</i></p>	
Form completed by:	Authorised by Head of Service:
Date:	Date
Review date:	
Review undertaken by:	Review authorised by Head of Service:
Date:	Date: