

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 - data and qualitative information such as real lived experiences, case studies, consultations and feedback to measure impact, provide context and effectively inform our decision making. This approach relies on excellent communication between all teams to share information and is supported by both the Accounts Commission Statutory Direction 2024 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 communities. 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

Deliver an effective, dynamic performance management framework that reflects our services and enables flexibility to respond to changing circumstances

Develop a performance culture to drive continuous improvement for the people we serve across Aberdeenshire

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

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 Strategic Performance Group as a key network on performance management

Maximise the use of Benchmarking, as a primary means of facilitating comparisons with our peer councils.

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.

In 2023, the Accounts Commission introduced a new approach to auditing Best Value in Scottish councils. The new approach for each council continues to audit against the statutory duty but is now fully integrated with the annual audit as well as focusing on an annual agreed thematic theme.

[Our last Audit Report for 2022/23](#) was published in March 2024. This can be accessed by clicking on the image below:



Annual Audit Report for
Aberdeenshire Council (Issued
to Audit Committee)

Financial year ended 31 March
2023

Prepared for those Charged with Governance and the Controller of
Audit

December 2023



[Our last Best Value Assurance Report was published in 2020](#) is available by clicking the image below.

[Best Value Assurance Report](#)

Aberdeenshire Council



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Prepared by Audit Scotland
October 2020

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.

An annual overview, summarising the thematic BV findings from all 32 councils, is compiled, and reported by Audit Scotland, on behalf of the Accounts Commission.

Direction 2024

The Accounts Commission has 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 was first published in 2018. With the 2024 Direction is the third iteration of the Statutory Performance Information.

[The Statutory Performance Information Direction 2024](#) sets out requirements on councils to report and publish their performance on how well services are performing, enabling citizens and communities to understand the reasons behind decisions that can have a significant impact on their lives. The better-informed people are, the more they feel able to engage in the decision-making process.

Complying with the SPI Direction is fundamental for councils fulfilling their duty to secure best value – a duty that focuses on improving lives and services for local people alongside using resources effectively. The Direction reinforces the importance of councils being transparent through reporting to their local communities on how well they are meeting this duty.

The Commission recognises that each council has its own strategic priorities, determined in accordance with local needs and appropriate data, and it is expected that these priorities guide decisions and will impact on performance across a range of areas. How councils plan for, manage and report on these impacts is a key area of focus in this direction and in future audits, particularly on best value.

This direction reinforces the importance of a sector-led approach to benchmarking and improvement. The Commission expects councils to maximise the use of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) as a primary means of facilitating comparisons, alongside or in conjunction with other locally appropriate measures of performance. The commission requires Councils to be transparent on why specific measures have been chosen for local benchmarking and performance reporting purposes, particularly where they have chosen not to use LGBF indicators.

Information on performance over time and in comparisons to others is a crucial tool for continuous improvement and transformation. Through our public performance reporting, councils should be able to demonstrate:

- how they are working with partners to achieve shared local outcomes,
- how they are responding to the needs of their local communities,
- how they are learning from best practice elsewhere,
- what factors are impacting on their performance
- how they are using data to inform decision-making, and
- how they measure success.

By being clear and transparent will help communities to understand the reasons for changes in the delivery and performance of local services. Our framework continues be refreshed following further updates on the new Direction from the Accounts Commission.

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.

The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

The [Local Government Benchmarking Framework](#) is administered by the Improvement Service in partnership with [SOLACE](#). It is a high-level benchmarking tool designed to help senior management teams and elected members ask questions about key council services. The LGBF tool provides high-level information designed to encourage councils to examine why variations in cost and performance are occurring between similar councils.

The framework itself does not supply the answers but understand why variations in cost and performance are occurring, councils are able to drill-down into the benchmarking data across service areas. 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 is more likely to lead to useful learning and improvement.

Benchmarking is a priority within the 2024 SPI and the Accounts Commission recommends that The [Local Government Benchmarking Framework](#) is the main benchmarking tool to be used to assess performance for the next four years.

Local Context

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

Council Plan 2024-2029

This is the main strategic plan for our Council. It is high level and sets out our [strategic priorities](#) for the next five years until 2029. It is the core basis of our statutory performance reporting as outlined in the Accounts Commission Direction 2024. All plans sitting underneath the Council Plan must align to it.

Strategic Directorate Plans

Directorate Plans translate the high-level strategic priorities that each Directorate must meet to deliver the Council Plan.

The relevant Key Council Plan indicators should be reported within the new Directorate strategic Plans as these will demonstrate how we are delivering the Strategic Priorities and our Statutory Performance Indicators (SPI's). These key indicators are made up of a mix of both local and LGBF indicators and should be reported to relevant Policy Committees on a six-monthly basis.

Head of Service Business Plans

Business plans are internal plans and outline how each service area will deliver on their key functions within the Council and can include national regulatory benchmarking requirements. Business Plans will support the development of the Strategic Directorate Plans as well as giving direction to both operational and team plans and personal performance plans so that teams and individuals understand how they contribute to and are responsible for achieving the Council's strategic priorities.

Operational Plans and Team Plans

Linking to the Heads of Service Business Plans are critical in providing Service teams with their role in delivering services, the Golden Thread and our Council Plan priorities.

Local Community Plans/ Place 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. [Find out more about each area.](#)

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.

At the centre of the framework is a list of plans that move from high-level direction to day-to-day work:

1. SPI Direction – Best Value Duty
2. National Performance Framework
3. Local Outcome Improvement Plan
4. Council Plan
5. Strategic Directorate Plans
6. Head of Service Business Plans
7. Operational and Team Plans
8. Personal Performance Plan
9. Every employee's daily tasks

Each step supports the next one, showing how big priorities become practical actions.

Inputs influencing the Local Outcome improvement plan

Local Community Plans, which connect to Place Plans influence the Local Outcome improvement plan.

Strategic plans aligned with the Council Plan

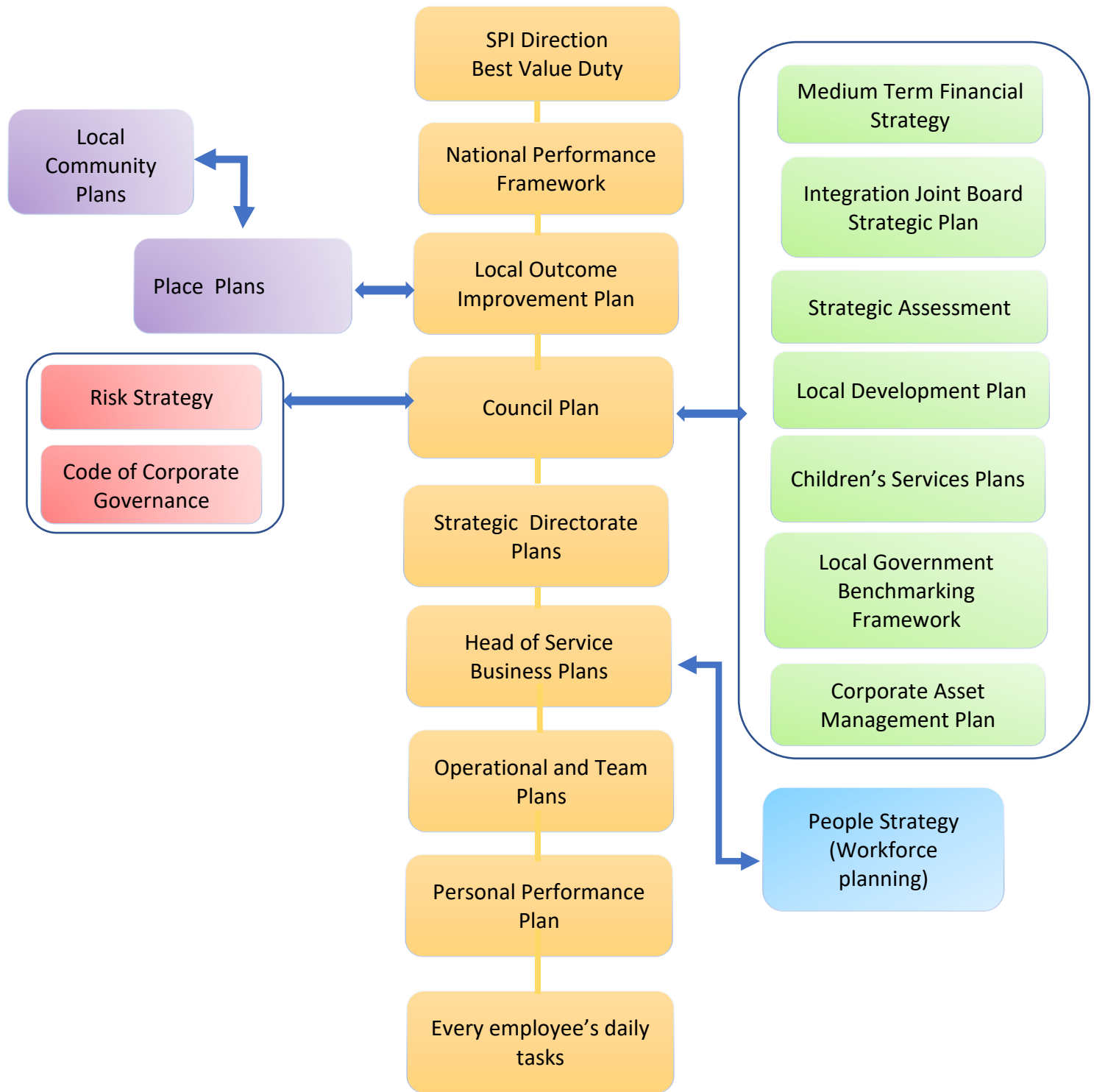
The Council Plan is also aligned with a group of wider strategic and partnership plans, including:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan
- Strategic Assessment
- Local Development Plan
- Children's Services Plans
- Local Government Benchmarking Framework
- Corporate Asset Management Plan
- Risk Strategy
- Code of Corporate Governance

Workforce and people planning

A People Strategy (Workforce Planning) supports delivery at the operational level and connects to Head of Service Business Plans.

This 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 and implementing 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 Policy 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)	SLT has 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. SLT consider quarterly review of Council and Directorate performance reports and agreeing corrective action where service performance needs to improve.
Strategic Change Board	The Strategic Change Board (SCB) has oversight of strategic change and transformation across the Council and is made up of Chief Exec, Directors, Head of Finance and Head of Legal and People. The SCB provides scrutiny on the portfolio of programmes and projects across change and transformation.
Directors	Directors have strategic accountability and responsibility for leading and directing the performance across their Directorates. Directors will contribute to the setting of the Council priorities by Elected Members, ensuring performance improvement processes are implemented to improve service delivery where necessary. They will provide Directorate performance reporting to SLT on a quarterly basis and biannually to Policy Committees.
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 Head of Service 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. Identifying performance improvement methods to improve service delivery where necessary.

Who does what	
Performance Strategic Group	The Performance Strategic Group provides oversight in relation to performance management and performance reporting under the Council Plan. The Performance Strategic Group agree the strategic direction and provide oversight in relation to performance in alignment with the Council Plan, political landscape, external auditors and statutory reporting requirements. The Strategic group will provide direction to the Performance Officer Network in the delivery of performance and continuous improvement for the benefit of residents and communities in Aberdeenshire.
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 supporting our Strategic Leadership Team with the creation, management and reporting of our Council Plan, Local Government Benchmarking Framework and Performance management , contributing to national performance networks 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 for 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

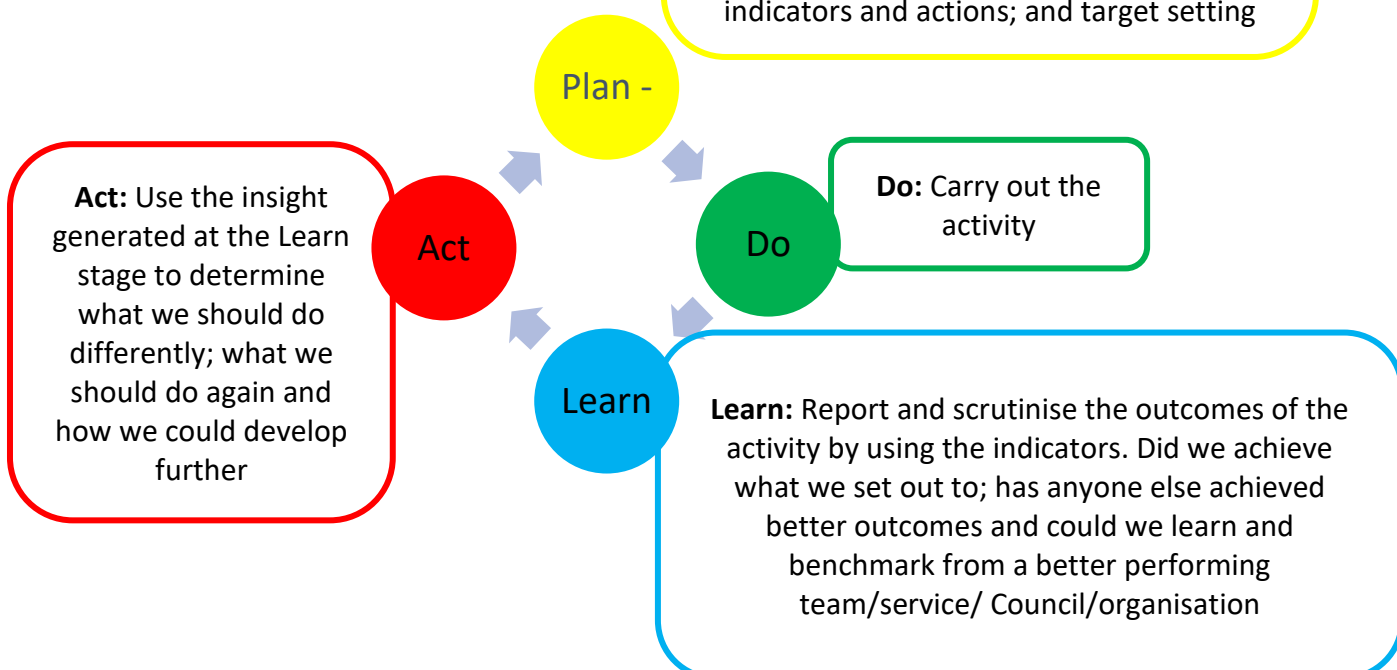
Realistic – the measure will tell us what we need to know to make a decision and relates to the overall aim

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 is different from performance reporting. 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.

Plan: Focus on: the outcomes we are wanting to 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



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Do: Carry out the activity

Learn: Report and scrutinise the outcomes of the activity by using the indicators. Did we achieve what we set out to; has anyone else achieved better outcomes and could we learn and benchmark from a better performing team/service/ Council/organisation

Act: Use the insight generated at the Learn stage to determine what we should do differently; what we should do again and how we could develop further

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.

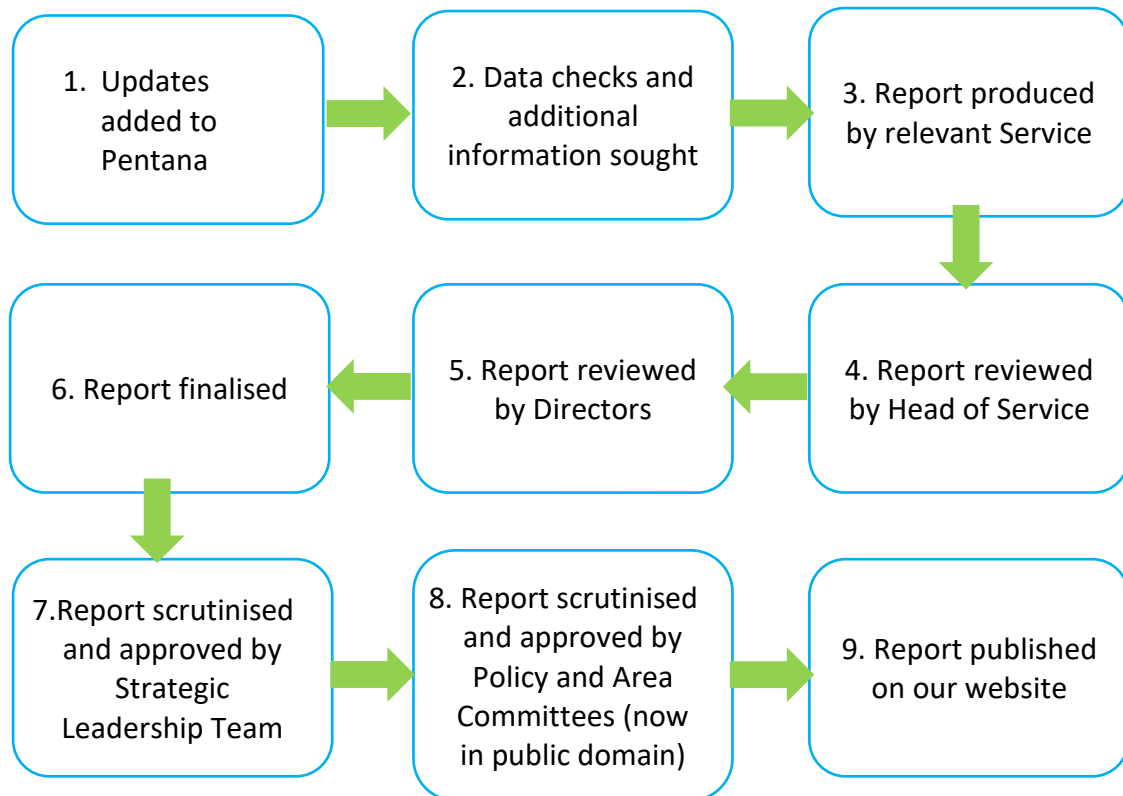
We need to compare our performance through several routes, many of which are specialised such as [APSE](#).

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 communities, peers and Elected Members. The basic process is shown below.

1. Updates added to Pentana
2. Data checks and additional information sought
3. Report produced by relevant Service
4. Report reviewed by Head of Service
5. Report reviewed by Directors
6. Report finalised
7. Report scrutinised and approved by Strategic Leadership Team
8. Report scrutinised and approved by Policy and Area Committees (now in public domain)
9. Report published on our website









An Illustration 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 a RAG status due to the colour coding used to show progress (red, amber, green). Within our performance reporting system, 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

Schedule of Corporate Performance Reporting

This calendar gives indicative months when performance reporting will be submitted to either Aberdeenshire Council, Audit Committee or Policy Committees

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 (Thematic Theme) Action Plan Progress Report	April November	February September
Corporate Improvement Plan Progress Reports	April November	February September
Local Outcome Improvement Plan performance report	September	
Strategic Directorate Plan – Business Services and 6-month progress reports	June November	
Strategic Directorate Plan – Communities (Housing, Live Life Aberdeenshire, and Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership) and 6-month progress reports	June November	
Strategic Directorate Plan – Education & Children’s Services and 6-month progress reports	June November	
Strategic Directorate Plan - Environment & Infrastructure Services and 6-month progress reports	June November	
Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board	March, June, August, October	
Aberdeenshire Child Poverty Report	March	
Strategic Leadership Team – Quarterly Performance Reporting	July November January May	

Performance Measurement Recording Template

This Template allows officers to set out new Performance Indicators that are required for Performance Reporting

Key/Directorate/Service/Team	
<p>PI Title: <i>(The title should summarise what is being measured)</i></p>	
<p>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></p>	
<p>Plan: <i>(link to Council Priorities)</i></p>	e.g., Council Plan
<p>Strategic Priority: <i>Which strategic priority does the measure relate to?</i></p>	e.g., Resilient Communities
<p>Council Plan Key Indicators: Links to Strategic Priority Key Indicators</p>	
<p>Targets: <i>Which performance targets should you set and by when?</i></p> <p><i>Please advise of monthly, quarterly, and annual targets as appropriate</i></p>	<p>Quarterly target: e.g., Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</p> <p>Annual target: 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28, 2028/29</p>
<p>Rationale for target: <i>(How is the target set? Aim to improve by 5% on last year? Aim to close gap with peers?)</i></p>	
<p>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></p>	
<p>Frequency: <i>Decide how often you will measure and how often you will review the measure itself.</i></p>	<p>How often is the data collected?</p> <p>How often is the data reported?</p>

<p><i>Details both the frequency of collection (daily, weekly, monthly etc.) and reporting frequency) (weekly, monthly, quarterly etc.)</i></p>	<p>Is there a time lag between period recorded and data availability?</p>
<p>Area: <i>Can the PI be reported at an Area level? If not, is there an alternative at that level?</i></p>	
<p>Responsible persons: <i>(Identify the persons responsible for the measure)</i></p>	
<p>Benchmarking: <i>(Is the measure benchmarked or reported anywhere: e.g., LGBF, APSE, SOCTS, SHBVN, Scottish Social Housing Charter? 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>	
<p>Form completed by:</p>	<p>Authorised by Head of Service:</p>
<p>Date:</p>	<p>Date</p>
<p>Review date:</p>	
<p>Review undertaken by:</p>	<p>Review Authorised by Head of Service:</p>
<p>Date:</p>	<p>Date:</p>