

Report

To:	Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum
Date:	16 August 2022
Prepared by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2020/2021 Results and Action Plan
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to:-

- ◆ Provide the Forum with the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) results for 2020/2021;
- ◆ provide the Forum with explanatory narrative for the suite of indicators, including the proposed actions, where appropriate, being taken to address those LGBF indicators where the results are declining and/or are below the Scottish average; and
- ◆ provide a family group analysis of those LGBF indicators where South Lanarkshire Council's result is below the Scottish average.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Forum is asked to note the following recommendations:-

- (1) that the importance of viewing LGBF measures in the local context, as detailed in the limitations and cautions section below (see 4.1- 4.4), be noted;
- (2) that the results, narrative, actions and family group analysis included, following the scrutiny of the 2020/2021 results, be noted;
- (3) that the arrangements for the publication of South Lanarkshire's results, per the statutory requirements, be noted; and
- (4) that the developments and events being undertaken by the Improvement Service/LGBF Board, be noted.

3. Background

3.1. The core purpose of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) is to make comparisons on spend/cost, performance and customer satisfaction results over several years and also between similar councils. It comprises a suite of performance indicators, collated under the following service headings:-

- ◆ Children's Services
- ◆ Corporate Services (ie, support services)
- ◆ Adult Social Care
- ◆ Culture and Leisure Services
- ◆ Environmental Services
- ◆ Housing Services
- ◆ Corporate Assets

- ◆ Economic Development
- ◆ Climate Change
- ◆ Financial Sustainability

- 3.2. These headings represent approximately 70% of local authority spend.
- 3.3. Publication of the LGBF results is a statutory requirement set out by the Accounts Commission in the Direction to local authorities as required by the Local Government Act 1992. It is seen as a key part of councils' commitment to Best Value, public performance reporting (PPR) and continuous improvement.
- 3.4. This report presents the 2020/2021 LGBF results (on a Resource by Resource basis) and sets out commentary and improvement actions against those indicators. Of particular interest, in terms of continuous improvement, are those indicators which are declining and/or falling below the Scottish average. The steps and actions identified in the report will not necessarily show immediate improvements, many are long term plans.
- 3.5. Despite the easing of social distancing and other restrictions, the Council continues to face financial and other impacts resulting from Covid. At times during the pandemic a number of services had to be suspended or reduced due to government advice and the Council was also obliged to redirect resources so that it could deliver vital new services and supports for individuals, communities and businesses. There was an inevitable impact on performance in some areas, with some effects ongoing.

4. Interpreting the LGBF Results: Limitations and Cautions

- 4.1. Although the LGBF results are available for all councils in Scotland and therefore can be used to construct council league tables, the Improvement Service cautions against this approach, emphasising that the purpose of the data is to act as a "can-opener" for discussions about performance and improvement in the context of specific services, taking into account geography, demographics and local council priorities.
- 4.2. Within this report, South Lanarkshire's performance trend for the past 3 years is provided, together with the most recent year's performance relative to the Scottish average. As with the LGBF as a whole, these summary figures are intended to frame a closer examination of the underlying data and context for specific indicators. For this reason, it is necessary to pay close attention to the narrative against each indicator (provided in Appendix 1) when forming a judgement about what the performance means in a South Lanarkshire context.
- 4.3. All statistics require, for correct interpretation, a knowledge of potential limitations. In particular, the following specific points should be borne in mind when reviewing the LGBF results:-
 - ◆ Local policy decisions can impact on the LGBF results and interpretation of the data. This is particularly true for cost indicators in the LGBF suite, where lower costs are generally equated with good performance. In these instances, where the Council has opted to invest resources (for example in roads maintenance or in the school estate), costs will appear higher than the Scottish average or for comparable councils and performance may be assessed as 'worse'.

- ◆ A number of satisfaction measures within the LGBF are derived from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). There are important limitations to this data which the Council has highlighted for several years now. First, the number sampled is very small relative to the population. In 2019, interviews were carried out with 423 adults in South Lanarkshire, equating to less than 0.2% of the adult population. Second, survey respondents are asked how satisfied they are with services even if they have not used the service in question. Third, for these indicators, the Council conducts its own surveys of service users so that it can closely monitor and respond to user experiences. These surveys, of people who have used the services, invariably rate the services more highly than the SHS.
- ◆ The figures within the LGBF are the result of a wide range of service provision models and data collection processes carried out in each of Scotland's 32 councils. While the LGBF endeavours to achieve high standards of completeness and consistency, there are inevitably differences between councils and between indicators in terms of what is counted and how it translates into LGBF performance.

4.4. These points are not intended to undermine the LGBF results. Rather they serve to emphasise the importance of looking individually at each service and each indicator to understand the local drivers and determinants of performance.

4.5. The Improvement Service (IS) hosted its annual Learning event on 22 January 2022. The Improvement Service analyses the LGBF results and using information and intelligence gathered from benchmarking performance officers from across Scotland, identifies the key national expenditure and performance trends to populate its National Overview Report which is published at the same time as the actual results. Key general points emerging from this analysis include:-

- ◆ The pre-Covid improvements are slowing down. This is likely to continue as the long term impact from continued financial pressures is beginning to show in the results.
- ◆ It is estimated that in real terms, the local government gap between actual and required spend is £1.8 billion or 15% leading to increasing reliance on savings/reserves/charges and income generation by councils.
- ◆ Coupled with ring-fencing in service areas like social care, education and looked after children, this creates growing pressure on other services, for example, culture and leisure, roads, environmental services, etc

Note that SLC specific analysis and narrative is included in the 'comments/progress' column in Appendix 1.

5. Results and Key Messages

5.1. The report attached as Appendix 1 summarises the recent results for South Lanarkshire Council, indicating whether performance in 2020/2021 has improved (↑) or declined (↓) compared with 2019/2020 results and if performance is better (✓) or worse (X) than the Scottish average in 2020/2021. It also includes explanatory narrative for the movements in performance between 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.

5.2. The table below summarises South Lanarkshire Council's performance, which should be considered in the context of the impact of responding to Covid 19.

Table 1 – Summary of performance of LGBF Results

KEY:		Number (%) of indicators		
		2018-19	2019-20*	2020-21**
South Lanarkshire performance				
↑	improving performance in SLC	34 (38%)	35 (39%)	36 (38%)
↓	declining performance in SLC	34 (38%)	45 (49%)	36 (38%)
↔	No change in performance in SLC	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)
---	Results/trends not available	18 (21%)	10 (11%)	21 (22%)
Comparison with Scottish average				
✓	SLC results better than Scottish average	44 (49%)	42 (46%)	37 (39%)
X	SLC results worse than Scottish average	28 (32%)	39 (43%)	37 (39%)
↔	SLC results same as Scottish average	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
--	Results not available	14 (16%)	10 (11%)	21 (22%)

* Results at May 2021 refresh

** Results at May 2022 refresh

- 5.3. Across the 95 indicators in the 2020/2021 suite, South Lanarkshire Council's performance improved against 36 (38%) indicators, remained the same against 2 (2%) indicators and declined for 36 (38%) indicators. There are 21 (22%) indicators for which the results or trend information is not yet available for 2020/2021.
- 5.4. In terms of South Lanarkshire's figures relative to the Scottish results, performance was better than the Scottish average for 37 (39%) indicators and was worse than the average for 37 (39%) indicators. There are 21 (22%) indicators for which the 2020/2021 results are not yet available.
- 5.5. Following an Audit Scotland recommendation, the Forum (at its meeting on 26 November 2019) agreed to introduce a family group analysis in the annual reporting of the Council's LGBF results. The family group analysis focuses on those indicators where the Council is performing worse than the Scottish average. Based on the 2020/2021 results, this relates to 37 (39%) indicators. This analysis is attached at Appendix 2.
- 6. Publication of the Data**
- 6.1. The Improvement Service, along with the LGBF Board, the Directors of Finance sub group, Scottish Government and other organisations, has been working to tighten up the information gathering process. To this end, the 2020/2021 data released initially in February 2022 and refreshed in May 2022 is considered final. In line with previous years, the Improvement Service has uploaded the latest data to the online LGBF visualisation tool which enables anyone, including members of the public, to explore the results for themselves - [mylocalcouncil](https://mylocalcouncil.org.uk/).
- 6.2. Aside from this, at a local level, each council is required to publish its own results. As in previous years, the LGBF results information for South Lanarkshire Council is uploaded on to the Council's website, together with contextual information and explaining the indicators.
- 6.3. To coincide with the official release of the latest data in February 2022, a national overview report was published by the Improvement Service, which looks at trends and results across Scotland as a whole.

- 6.4. The impact of Covid has affected data collection for some indicators, notably in education and the satisfaction data. These are noted below for information:-

♦ **Education**

CHN 13a, CHN 13b, CHN14a and CHN14b – Broad General Education (BGE) Numeracy/Literacy: data from Teacher Judgements was not collected this year due to Covid, therefore these indicators will not be included in this year's publication. CHN19b and CHN20b school attendance and exclusion rates for looked after children are not available.

♦ **Satisfaction Data**

Some comparability issues need to be resolved before satisfaction data will be available for inclusion at local authority level

7. Next Steps

- 7.1. The actions identified in the comments column in Appendix 1 will be taken forward.

- 7.2. As noted at 6.1 above, these results are to be considered final, however, a further refresh of the data may be released following completion of the final Scottish Government validation process on the financial data or to allow inclusion of any, as yet unavailable results. Updates will be made to the performance data and narrative uploaded onto the Council's website, as appropriate.

- 7.3. Forum is asked to note that the Improvement Service continues to review and develop the suite of indicators. For example:-

♦ **Children's Services:**

CHN24 was introduced in 2020-21 and measures the percentage of children living in poverty (after housing costs), however, data is not currently available and will be updated in the 2021-22 LGBF framework

♦ **Economic Development**

New measures introduced;

Econ11 Gross value added (GVA) per capital (data is not currently available and will be updated in the 2021-22 LGBF framework)

Econ12a - Claimant Count as % of Working Age Population

Econ12b - Claimant Count as % of 16-24 Population

- 7.4. The Improvement Service organises annual benchmarking events, in which colleagues from specific services representing all local authorities are invited to attend, to come together to learn and share good practice for their particular area of operation. The Improvement Service aligns these events with existing networks/forum wherever possible, minimising duplication of discussions and bringing together relevant expertise. During the Covid crisis in 2020, these events did not take place but were reintroduced in an online format during 2021. The Council will continue to support these events.

- 7.5. Forum will be aware of engagement with the Improvement Service to develop our approach to using, analysing and reporting the LGBF results going forwards. In December 2021, the IS provided an initial "bespoke analysis" of indicators from the LGBF and the Community Planning Outcomes Profile, aligned with the emerging themes from engagement on the new Council Plan and Community Plan. This analysis was the basis of engagement with Resources and an update report with recommendations will be brought to Forum later in the year.

8. Employee Implications

- 8.1. There are no employee implications.

9. Financial Implications

9.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

10. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

10.1. There are no climate change, sustainability or environmental implications as a result of this report.

11. Other Implications

11.1. There are no risk or other implications associated with the content of this report.

12. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

12.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore, no impact assessment is required.

12.2. Consultation has taken place with Resources in gathering the information and explanations included within this report and appendices.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

27 June 2022

Link(s) to Council Values

- Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- Ambitious, self-aware and improving

Previous References

- None

List of Background Papers

- LGBF results 2020-21

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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