

Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022

Questions for Elected Members

Questions for elected members to consider	Sample answer
Leadership – planning, strategy and improvement	
<p>Does my council have clear plans for recovery and renewal, that outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what it needs to do in the short, medium, and longer term • the outcomes it will achieve • and the investment needed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Resource has a Response and Recovery plan that outlines short, medium and long-term plans and linked to Resource and Service plans. • Each plan takes full account of the continuing or emerging issues which are faced by customers, employees and our services stemming from COVID-19. • We continue to look at what else is happening in Scotland, the UK and further afield, to be guided by good practice, legislation and policy relevant to our activities as well as internal and external pressures that affect the Council with the aim of continuing to provide the best services and value for money. Our approach is informed by, and dependent on, guidance issued by the Scottish Government and therefore subject to continual review and change.
<p>Is my council together with our partners, reviewing and aligning strategic plans and priorities (including Local Outcome Improvement Plans) to deliver recovery and renewal? Has it consulted with communities on these priorities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council has approved a new Council Plan for the period 2022-27 which was developed in tandem with the Community Planning Partnership's (CPP) work on their refreshed Community Plan (LOIP) for the period 2022-32. • Both plans were developed through extensive engagement, dialogue and consultation with communities across South Lanarkshire, involving over 3,500 local residents commenting on their priorities, and aligned to existing community led plans. • Both plans share a common vision to improve the lives and prospects of everyone in South Lanarkshire. • The focus for both Plans is on 3 key areas: People, Progress and Planet. These put sustainable, people-centred recovery and renewal at the core of the strategic plans for both the Council and the CPP • Partners are aligning their strategic plans to the vision and key themes.
<p>Do recovery plans for my council consider key themes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ways of working • Inequalities • Education recovery • Economic recovery • Climate emergency • Health and wellbeing – community and workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources continue to deliver a wide range of services with a key focus on continued Pandemic recovery as well as tackling poverty, deprivation, inequality and measures to help mitigate the effects of rising costs are reflected in Resource and Service plans which link to the Council's Connect Plan.

Has my council considered the Scottish Government National Recovery Plan and Programme for Government as part of the refresh of its strategic plans and recovery plans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's new Council Plan and its refreshed economic strategy take into account the Programme for Government and the National Recovery Plan within the strategic policy context. • Following publication of the Programme for Government in September each year, reports are presented to Executive Committee in November, detailing how the Programme for Government will be taken into account through the work of the Council, including within the annual Resource Plans and relevant strategies.
Does my council have clear plans for restarting paused, closed, or reduced services and dealing with any service backlogs caused by the pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, all Resources have the Response and Recovery plans with status update reports that highlight paused, closed or reduced services and actions being taken to address backlogs.
Do I know how my council is learning lessons from the pandemic response and evaluating new service models to inform improvement and drive recovery and renewal? Am I assured my council is building on innovations made during the pandemic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting vulnerable groups • Working in partnership • Faster decision-making • Delivering services differently – eg digital • Working differently – remote and hybrid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Response and recovery plans include continued implementation of revised service and working arrangements which have been put in place to deliver services, that have been identified as being both efficient and effective and suitable for permanent implementation. • These are linked to both Resource and service planning.
Do I know how well my council uses data and what plans it has to develop data skills, data standards, and data tools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's Digital Strategy, approved in June 2022, describes how improved use of data across the council will facilitate service improvement, efficiencies and digital inclusion. A critical aspect of this strategy is the requirement to upgrade council systems and deliver a data infrastructure which will enhance data quality, availability and security. This, in turn, will enable standard tools such as self-service, management reporting and analytics to be rolled out. The strategy also notes that, to successfully digitally transform, a programme of upskilling of staff will be required.
Leadership – skills	
Is my council clear on what leadership skills are needed to drive forward recovery and renewal, and are there arrangements in place to deliver these?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshed workforce plans, including leadership and succession planning are complete. Plans are going through the committee cycle post recess. • Induction programme for elected members in place.

Am I aware what succession planning arrangements and leadership development arrangements are in place for the council management team? Am I satisfied these are appropriate?	As above
Do I have access to training and learning materials that meet my needs as an elected member? Have I taken up available opportunities that will assist me in being effective in my role?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Members can access a wide range of training and learning materials, including Learn Online courses, Elected Members' briefings, and practical guides to safety, computing and IT topics. Between March 2020 and summer 2022, 78 training/awareness sessions were held with 1,157 attendances and a programme of training events is in place until March 2023 covering topics such as Climate Literacy, social media, and awareness training on use of new technology in the Council Chamber.
Governance	
Do I have access to clear, timely, and sufficiently detailed information that allows me to carry out my governance and scrutiny role?	<p>Yes as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee Chairs have regular 1 to 1s with Resource Executive Directors Chairs and Deputies receive advance copies of agendas and reports and attend agenda meetings with Resource Executive Directors and senior officers at least 7 days before agendas are issued for committee meetings, at which they have the opportunity to ask questions. All agendas and reports issued 5 working days in advance of Committee meetings to allow members time to digest information and ask questions to inform decision making at meetings Executive Committee agendas and reports issued to all Council elected members, who then may submit questions on any report on the agenda for response Standing Order 19 gives members an opportunity to ask a chairperson about any relevant business not on the committee agenda. The question must be submitted to the Chief Executive 10 clear days before the meetings. Committee members may ask the chairperson a question about any matter on the agenda without giving prior notice. All committee meetings etc livestreamed Regular Members Briefings on topics of interest issued Programme of Members Awareness Sessions held on high profile issues to allow members to be briefed and ask questions in advance of committees at which they will be asked to make decisions e.g Budget, National Care Service Councillor Case Management System introduced for use by elected members to send questions to Officers, response times etc monitored

<p>Do I have a clear picture of where my council is in terms of recovery and renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what new service demand, unmet needs, and what backlogs exist? • what changes to services have taken place and what impact assessments have been carried out for changes that have continued or are proposed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We continually review services to ensure they meet the needs of service users which includes recovery and renewal, looking at emerging service demand as well as areas for improvement or further service changes with the aim of continuously improving how we do things. • Resources continue to undertake Equality Impact and Fairer Scotland Duty assessments against new or revised policies and strategies as a means of mitigating inequalities. • Over the course of the last 2 and half years, it has been widely recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact upon vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups within communities. While the majority of restrictions have eased, the impact on these customer groups continues to be a particular focus going forward given the emerging cost of living crisis. • We have a monitoring and performance framework which is continually scrutinised at all levels which links to Resource and Service plans and is aligned to the council plan – Connect.
<p>Am I satisfied that the governance arrangements in place in my council offer sufficient transparency and opportunities for public participation?</p>	<p>Yes as demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Committee agendas, reports and minutes published on the Committee Information Page, Council website • All Committee meetings etc recorded and livestreamed • Public consultations held on relevant areas e.g Budget, Council and Community Plan, South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan, Neighbourhood Plans, Planning and Licensing Policies, Health and Social Care Strategic Commissioning Plan among others • Community Councils are statutory consultees for Planning and Licensing applications • Planning and licensing applications published on planning portal and council website • Neighbour notification for Planning and Licensing applications giving opportunities to object . • Opt in list to receive marches and parades notifications • Participatory Budgeting • School consultations regarding catchment areas or school siting • Annual accounts and governance statement published on the Council website.
<p>Do I understand what my responsibilities are when serving on external bodies (eg, ALEOs) and joint boards or committees?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction training provided for all members • Role specific training provided to ALEO members (South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture, Integrated Joint Boards, Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board and Seemis

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role specific training provided on roles and duties of charitable trustees
Am I familiar with the Councillors Code of Conduct for elected members?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors Code of Conduct, associated guidance and Standard Commission Advice Notes issued to all elected members. • Number of training sessions held on the Code of Conduct to which all members invited. • Standard Commission newsletters issued to all elected members • Members encouraged to contact Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer for advice on interpretation/application of the Code to particular circumstances • All of above also applies to Model Code of Conduct and Members of Integration Joint Board.
Finance	
Am I clear about the financial challenges facing the council and how they are being managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers provide 4-weekly monitoring reports to the Council's Executive Committee detailing the current year position and highlighting any financial issues arising and how they can be managed. This keeps members informed of the current financial position. • The Council received a budget strategy report for 2023/2024 in June 2022, with further updates in September and November 2022. These further updates also included information on the Budget Gap for future years, which allowed members to see the scale of the financial challenges moving forward. • The November paper also included information on accounting for Service Concessions, and the use of the benefit arising. This advised members of how they could manage/reduce the Budget Gap in the coming years.
Has my council developed longer term financial plans that clearly link to recovery plans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's 2022/2023 budget includes the residual impact of the pandemic, with funding carried forward to manage the costs. Any permanent repercussions are built into the longer term financial strategy including the higher than average inflation hikes in utilities and pay. • The Council has a programme of transformational reviews, including learning from required service changes through Covid. The financial benefit from these reviews is assisting in the longer term financial strategy.
Does my council have clear and robust plans in place for the management of reserves?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's accounts provides details of the reserves held by the Council and the reasons for holding these sums. • Financial strategies also provide an update on the strategy for reserves.

Workforce	
Does my council have detailed corporate and service workforce planning in place? Have these plans been updated to reflect the impact of Covid-19? Do these include plans for managing impact of pandemic on staff wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshed workforce plans, including leadership and succession planning are complete. Plans are going through the committee cycle post recess. • Induction programme for elected members in place.
Does my council understand any specific areas of skills shortages that risk delivery of its objectives? Eg social care, facilities management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshed workforce plans, including leadership and succession planning are complete. Plans are going through the committee cycle post recess. • Induction programme for elected members in place.
Meeting local needs	
Does my council understand the changing demographic profile, poverty levels, and cost of living increases in our council area and how this will impact on demand for council services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council monitors a range of demographic and socio-economic indicators for South Lanarkshire, including poverty and cost-of-living indicators. • Fact-sheets were prepared to inform the development of the new Council Plan and the Community Plan. • Key facts about South Lanarkshire can be accessed through the council's website and statistical profiles for small areas (data zones, communities, wards) can be generated via an online tool. • These data sources are used extensively by Resources in planning and delivering services.
Does my council have data and an understanding at a local level of the impact of the pandemic on different groups, in particular how inequalities have been exacerbated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is keeping abreast of current research to ensure our response is timely and effective. The changing labour market/employability needs and possible methods of addressing these are examples of using local data to improve understanding and supports.
Does my council have plans in place to address these unequal impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Impact Assessments underpin key decisions and consultation takes place regularly. • Putting people first and tackling inequality is one of the priorities within the Council Plan 2022-27 and this is translated into specific actions at Resource level through the annual Resource Planning process.
Does my council have plans in place to address key priorities and areas of reform, including social care and climate change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council Plan articulates the Council's priorities (People, Progress and Planet) and what it will do to improve outcomes that matter to the people of South Lanarkshire. Key areas of reform are taken into consideration through the annual Resource Planning process, which identifies the actions Resources will take in the coming year to progress the aims of the Council Plan and respond to changes in the external environment. • Action on climate change is embedded within the Council Plan and fully articulated in the Council's Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy 2022-27.

Community empowerment and collaboration

How well is my council involving communities and citizens in driving recovery plans and reshaping services? What needs to improve?

- The Council is leading on the development of community led plans, and community (locality) partnerships on behalf of the community planning partnership, to support the redesign of service delivery for the Council and partners. These groups allow for greater connection with communities, accountability by partners and scrutiny of progress being made. Work is under way to identify how services can be planned and delivered at locality level. This is an area of work which is progressing at pace, but engagement across South Lanarkshire can still be strengthened and more communities encouraged to become involved in planning.

How well is my council collaborating with local partners, including the third sector in planning, and delivering services?

- Through the Community Planning Partnership, the Council collaborates robustly with local partners from the public, private and third sectors on the planning and delivery of services. Work is also under way through the Community Wealth Building strategy to engage partners, in particular from the third sector, in planning and designing services that support the inclusive economy and plural ownership.