

# Report

Report to:	<b>Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>18 May 2021</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Improvement Service Strategic Framework</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum (PRSF) with an overview of the recently published Improvement Service (IS) Strategic Framework

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the content of the report be noted.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. On 1 December 2020, the Improvement Service (IS) launched a two-year Strategic Framework for the period 2020-2022. The Framework sets out the Improvement Service's vision, purpose, values and strategic priorities alongside high-level commitments around its three core offers in Transformation, Performance and Improvement; Data and Intelligence; and Digital Public Services.
- 3.2. This report summarises the IS Strategic Framework and notes areas where the work of the IS is relevant to the Council's own priorities across the domains of Transformation, Performance and Improvement, Data and Intelligence and Digital Public Services.

## 4. The Improvement Service Strategic Framework

- 4.1. The Improvement Service is a company limited by guarantee, with 34 members – COSLA, Solace and Scotland's 32 local authorities. Established in 2005, the IS delivers improvement support to help Councils provide effective community leadership, strong local governance and high quality, efficient local services.
- 4.2. The IS positions itself as the "go to" organisation for local government improvement in Scotland. It identifies its purpose as to:-
- ♦ provide leadership to Local Government and the wider system on improvement and transformation
  - ♦ develop capability and capacity for improvement within Local Government
  - ♦ deliver national improvement programmes for Local Government and partners and support councils to improve at a local level
  - ♦ provide research, data and intelligence to inform Local Government's policy-making and decision-making and to drive improvement
  - ♦ deliver national shared service applications and technology platforms

- ◆ broker additional resources from outwith the sector to support the delivery of Local Government's priorities

4.3. The Improvement Service notes that the operating context of Scottish Local Government continues to be challenging and is evolving at pace, not least due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. Table 1 below summarises its PESTLE analysis of key drivers for its strategic priorities.

**Table 1 – the Improvement Service PESTLE analysis**

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scottish Government's Programme for Government</li> <li>▪ COSLA's Blueprint for Local Government</li> <li>▪ Scottish Government elections in 2021 and Local Government elections in 2022.</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financial challenges for Local Government</li> <li>▪ Financial impacts of the pandemic</li> <li>▪ Strategies to cope – use of reserves and reprofiling debt</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impact of the pandemic driving greater socio-economic disadvantage and widening inequality of outcomes</li> <li>▪ At the same time, there has been an increase in sense of community and volunteering.</li> <li>▪ Post-Covid world will be different, which will impact on Local Government.</li> </ul>
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scotland's Digital Strategy</li> <li>▪ A post-Covid world is likely to result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more contactless interfaces and interactions</li> <li>• a strengthened digital infrastructure with greater use of digital services</li> <li>• increased risk of digital exclusion</li> <li>• increased use of data and intelligence to inform decision-making and service delivery</li> <li>• increased reliance on Artificial Intelligence and robotics</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Legislative/regulatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) Bill</li> <li>▪ Budget Bill</li> <li>▪ Domestic Abuse Bill</li> <li>▪ Incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Bill</li> <li>▪ New approaches to inspection/regulation due to Covid-19 restrictions</li> </ul>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ambitious climate change targets have been set for Scotland, with many local authorities also declaring a climate change emergency</li> <li>▪ Local authorities are also looking at recovery and renewal through an environmental and sustainability lens</li> </ul>

4.4. In light of these drivers, the Improvement Service identifies four strategic priorities:-

- ◆ supporting Local Government to live with Covid-19 – which it will do by publishing **research, briefings, thought pieces** and **data dashboards**; **capturing learning and knowledge** gained from local government's response to the pandemic; providing **online application processes for grant applications**; and supporting **elected members** by providing **online coaching** and an **online political mentoring** programme
- ◆ supporting Local Government to re-build post Covid-19 – which it will do by assisting the **redesign and reconfiguration** of services with a **renewed focus on prevention** aligned with the **needs of people and communities**; helping councils to think about the future and **explore scenarios**, given the pandemic and Brexit; and supporting a collaborative **Modern Workplace initiative** (working with the Scottish Local Government Digital Office, the Society of Personnel and Development Scotland and COSLA)

- ◆ supporting Local Government's contribution to the delivery of the National Performance Framework – by working with the Scottish Government and councils to evolve an **employability system** which is **flexible, person-centred and more straightforward** for citizens to navigate; policy and improvement work across a number of agendas including **climate change** and **environmental sustainability, socio-economic disadvantage** and **inequality of outcomes, community resilience** and **better life chances for all children and young people**; improving outcomes in **money advice** and supporting the implementation of the **Fairer Scotland Duty**; and supporting councils to deliver effective **Early Learning and Childcare Expansion**
- ◆ supporting Local Government, working with their communities and partners, to deliver place-based approaches – by partnering with Public Health Scotland to support councils to find new ways of working across national, local, and sectoral and disciplinary boundaries, including collaborating on the links between **planning, place and public health** as part of the **whole system approach** to delivering Scotland's public health priorities; supporting councils to take forward Scottish Government's ambition for **20-minute neighbourhoods**; and setting up a national collaborative group to progress whole-systems work in relation to the **social determinants of health**

## 5. Council Engagement with the IS

- 5.1. South Lanarkshire Council has engaged regularly with the IS since its inception – examples include adapting the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) to become Empower in South Lanarkshire; liaison with other councils through the Improvement Manager's Network; and the continuing support for the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF).
- 5.2. From time to time the Council has approached the IS to provide critical friend support or facilitation services, with recent examples including self-assessment sessions in the run-up to the South Lanarkshire Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) in 2018; development sessions with the Community Planning Partnership Board in 2019 and 2020; and support in looking at how money advice is provided in South Lanarkshire.
- 5.3. The IS Strategic Framework comes at a time when the IS has developed a closer relationship with COSLA and positions itself – as noted above – as the “go to” organisation for local government improvement in Scotland. As well as links to SOLACE and COSLA, the IS has collaborative and other working relationships with a wide range of public sector bodies, including Health Scotland, the Local Government Digital Office, the Society of Personnel and Development Scotland, Audit Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Government.
- 5.4. The IS's relevance is increased by the financial and resource constraints facing councils, which over time have reduced the number of specialist personnel across local government as well as constraining the ability to purchase the range of consultancy services that was previously possible.
- 5.5. Taken together, these factors suggest that the IS may continue to be a useful resource for the Council in future, not only in terms of accessing knowledge and expertise, but also in terms of participating in emerging collaborations and joint work in relation to performance, improvement, data and intelligence and digital public services across the local government sector.

- 5.6. In terms of the Council engaging with the IS in the immediate future, table 2 below outlines a range of topics which have been identified as presenting opportunities. These will be taken forward by the appropriate Head of Service within the next 18 months, depending on the nature and scale of IS support at the local authority level.

**Table 2: Areas of work and possible council engagement**

Topic and description	How the council will engage	Lead
<b>Data collection, data dashboards and sector-wide intelligence.</b> The IS has taken on a key role in analysing and presenting dashboards for data around the impact of and response to the coronavirus pandemic; it is likely they will continue this work and the Council could benefit from continued involvement in this stream of work, which may inform its own approach to intelligence gathering and dissemination. The overall direction of this work may realise longer-term benefits for local government as a whole by pooling resources and reducing the burden of reporting to the Scottish Government and regulators.	The Council will continue to contribute to data collection and dashboard analysis work.  Good practice and lessons learned by the IS and the Digital Office will be applied by the Council in its own approach to data collection and presentation.	Head of Communications and Strategy
<b>Support for elected members including online coaching and mentoring.</b> Audit Scotland recommended in the Council's BVAR that the quality of scrutiny should be improved, and any resources which assist elected members to meet the requirements of their role should be explored.	The Council will take advantage of training materials and masterclasses run by the IS.	Head of Administration and Legal Services
<b>Service redesign.</b> The IS's work on the redesign and reconfiguration of services, particularly in the post-Covid environment, will be worth monitoring for examples of good practice and innovation. The digital public services aspect of this will be of particular interest.	The Council will learn from good practice and success stories elsewhere in Scotland. The Council will contribute to debate and consultations on digital public services, particularly where these have a Scotland-wide component.	Head of Personnel/ Head of Information Technology Services
<b>The collaborative Modern Workplace initiative.</b> This initiative, which the IS will develop with the Scottish Local Government Digital Office, the Society of Personnel and Development Scotland and COSLA may help the Council deliver on its employability ambitions.	The Council will contribute to this initiative as appropriate and look to adopt identified good practice.	Head of Personnel

<b>Money advice.</b> The work the IS has done and will continue to do around money advice and advice services in general will continue to be of interest as the Council looks to redesign this area of service provision – particularly in light of available technology and public expectations post-Covid.	The Council will contribute to this workstream as appropriate and look to adopt identified good practice.	Head of Finance (Transactions)
<b>Planning for place.</b> The IS's work around place-based planning together with the focus on the social determinants of health has relevance for strategic planning for the Council and CPP, and may be of interest when looking at the new Council Plan and Community Plan, as well as our sustainability, Community Wealth Building and neighbourhood planning ambitions.	The Council will draw upon IS expertise in this area when considering place-based approaches to planning. The Council will share its own experience as it moves forward with this agenda over the next 18 months.	Head of Communications and Strategy

- 5.7. The Forum is asked to note these topics as potential areas for engagement with the IS over the period of its Strategic Framework. Updates on the progress of such engagement will be brought as appropriate to future meetings of the Forum.

## 6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. There are no direct employee implications.

## 7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. There are no direct financial implications.

## 8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. There are no direct climate change, sustainability and natural environment implications arising from this report.

## 9. Other Implications

- 9.1. Considering the detail of the report and identifying actions as appropriate contribute towards effective risk management.

## 10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. 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.

- 10.2. No consultation was required in terms of the information contained in this report.

**Paul Manning**

**Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)**

5 May 2021

## Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ♦ Ambitious, self-aware and improving

### **Previous References**

- ◆ None

### **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ None

### **Contact for Further Information**

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

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