

Report

Report to:	Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum
Date of Meeting:	8 August 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Annual Performance Spotlights 2022/2023
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- provide the Forum with a draft version of the Annual Performance Spotlights (APSs) infographics for 2022/2023.

2. Recommendations:

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

- (1) that the infographics content of the Annual Performance Spotlights for 2022/2023 be noted; and
- (2) that it be noted that the Annual Performance Spotlights will become live on the Council's website in September 2023, well ahead of the statutory deadline of 31 March 2024.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council's first Annual Performance Report (APR) was prepared based on 2011/2012 information and represented part of the Council's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in respect of its approach to public performance reporting (PPR).
- 3.2. On 4 September 2018, the Forum considered a report which set out plans to review the APR component of the Council's PPR approach, in light of the continuing evolution of the Accounts Commission's expectations and taking into account feedback from Audit Scotland on the APR in particular.
- 3.3. A new approach was developed which replaced the APR document with Annual Performance Spotlights (APSs) – bite sized web content performance information comprising a case study, selection of infographics and links to other related material - one for each Connect objective plus the theme Delivering the Plan and achieving Best Value.
- 3.4. Following extensive consultation and engagement, the new Council Plan, Connect 2022 to 2027 was approved by South Lanarkshire Council at its meeting on 15 June 2022 and the overall structure is now based on six Outcomes and the Best Value theme. In line with this revised structure, an Annual Performance Spotlight is presented for each of the Council's six Outcomes, comprising a case study, selection of infographics and links to other material.

- 3.5. This report now provides the Forum with the opportunity to consider the draft infographics content of the APSs.
- 3.6. The picture of performance presented by the Annual Performance Spotlights must be seen in the context of the unprecedented challenges faced by councils in the aftermath of the pandemic. Audit Scotland, in their latest Local Government Overview report, acknowledge that “councils have never faced such a challenging situation, with demand and workforce pressures deepening after the Covid-19 pandemic and funding forecast to reduce in real terms”. This has had – and will continue to have – an inevitable impact on the ability of councils to deliver services. Audit Scotland notes that “the pandemic has affected performance across all service areas. Some services are showing signs of recovery, but there are also signs of growing backlogs, declining performance in some areas and services at capacity”.
- 3.7. This picture is confirmed by the Local Government Improvement Service (LGIS) in their latest report on the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) results, which notes that “improvements to date...cannot be assumed to continue and maintaining levels of performance in the current environment will be a notable achievement in itself”.

4. Current Position

- 4.1. The Improvement Unit has worked closely with services across the Council to bring together the content of the APSs. The focus, at all times, has been to ensure that the information included is of interest to the public, balanced and readily accessible. These are key requirements of Public Performance Reporting, as set out by the Accounts Commission.
- 4.2. The draft infographics for the APSs 2022/2023, as they will appear on the performance pages of the Council’s website, are attached as Appendix 1. As intimated at paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7, the results should be interpreted in the context of the unprecedented challenges faced by councils during Covid-19 and the continuing recovery. Further explanatory narrative for those measures where targets were not met or where performance was not improving in 2022/2023 is attached as Appendix 2.
- 4.3. In line with the Council’s shift towards a digital first approach, the focus has been on providing performance information as content on the web. The performance pages of the Council’s website allow our customers and residents to browse the information electronically.
- 4.4. The spotlights use infographics to present information about the Council’s performance. The infographics show performance against certain measures for each of the Council’s six strategic Outcomes. In response to points made by the Accounts Commission in the Best Value Assurance Report 2019 (BVAR) the following improvements were made:-
- for each infographic, trend information is included with a clear indication whether or not performance has improved and if the target has been met
 - a link has been added directly below the infographic on the website to supporting data or further reports or more detailed information

- 4.5. In order to gather feedback which will help us to continue to improve our public performance reporting material, the 'Did you find?' response box at the bottom of each of the APS web pages is monitored.
- 4.6. To complement the APSs, we will continue to prepare the suite of 'public performance reports' which focus on key areas of council business. Each report includes a clear presentation of data; targets and narrative to introduce and explain the performance indicators and results; comparisons, customer feedback, satisfaction statistics and links or signposts to further relevant information. These reports were praised by Audit Scotland in their Public Performance Reporting (PPR) assessment in 2015 and by the public in our web testing exercise. Since they were first uploaded (at the end of March 2015) they have attracted thousands of visitors to the performance pages of the website indicating that there is an audience for the performance information, and that the web pages provide us with a platform on which to report and highlight our performance to the public.
- 4.7. The 2022/2023 Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicator results are not due to be published by the Local Government Improvement Service until January 2024. These results are analysed and included in our public performance reporting material which is completed by the statutory deadline of 31 March 2024.

5. Public Performance Reporting Assessment

- 5.1. The Accounts Commission (the Commission) has a statutory responsibility to define the performance information that councils must publish for performance comparisons and benchmarking purposes. This is closely linked with the Commission's Best Value audit responsibilities.
- 5.2. Since 2008, the Commission has taken steps to develop a more flexible approach to its statutory responsibility to define the performance information that councils must publish.
- 5.3. The 2015 Direction sets out a streamlined and more flexible set of performance information for the 2016/2017 financial year and each year through to the financial year ending March 2019. The Accounts Commission published their most recent refresh of the Direction in December 2021 (for reporting the results for financial years 2022/2023 to 2024/2025). The additional requirements and implications have been taken into account in South Lanarkshire's Public Performance Reporting material.
- 5.4. As noted at 3.2 and 3.3 above, the APSs and the Council's approach to Public Performance Reporting generally continue to evolve in response to user feedback and changing legislative requirements. It is intended that the format of the APSs will continue to be reviewed to ensure the documents keep pace with public expectations and also with Audit Scotland's requirements in respect of Public Performance Reporting, continuous improvement and Best Value. The APSs will continue to be complemented by a full suite of performance information on the Council's website.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. The Forum is asked to note the infographics content of the APSs for 2022/2023.
- 6.2. Looking forwards, council officers will continue to review the presentation of the Annual Performance Spotlights, and Public Performance Reporting generally, to take account of changes arising.

7. Employee Implications

- 7.1. There are no employee implications relating to this report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. There are no financial implications relating to this report.

9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 9.1 There are no climate change, sustainability or environmental implications relating to this report.
- 9.2. The Council acknowledges the serious and immediate threat of climate change and is committed to accelerating the pace of action in response to the climate emergency and in Scotland's transition to a net-zero and climate resilient society and economy.

10. Other Implications

- 10.1. The work undertaken in the preparation of the APSs assists in providing assurance that the Council is responding to its Best Value obligations in terms of continuous improvement and public performance reporting.

11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 11.1. 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.
- 11.2. Consultation took place with Resources on the plans to update our PPR material as well as the content of the APSs through the Corporate Improvement Advisory Board officers.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

20 July 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

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

Previous References

- Report to Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum - 16 August 2022 - Annual Performance Spotlights 2021/2022

List of Background Papers

- None

Contact for Further Information

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

Tom Little, Head of Communications and Strategy

Ext: 4904 (Tel: 01698 454904)

E-mail: tom.little@southlanarkshire.gov.uk