

Report

To:	Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum
Date:	18 May 2021
Prepared by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) 2019-2020 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 LGBF results for 2019-2020
- ◆ 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
- ◆ provide a family group analysis of those LGBF indicators where the Council's result is below the Scottish average

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendations:-

- (1) that the importance of viewing LGBF measures in the local context, as detailed in the limitations and cautions section below (4.1-4.4) be noted;
- (2) that the results, narrative, actions and family group analysis identified following the scrutiny of the 2019-2020 results be noted;
- (3) that the Council's publication of these results, per 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 (new)
- ◆ Financial Sustainability (new)

- 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 2019-2020 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. As the Forum is aware, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the Council was forced to suspend or reduce a number of services that could not be continued in full due to government advice, including adhering to physical distancing requirements for residents and staff. The Council was also obliged to redirect resources so that it could deliver vital new services and supports for individuals, communities and businesses. There has been an inevitable impact on performance in some areas.

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 (e.g., 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.

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 2019-2020 has improved (↑) or declined (↓) compared with 2018-2019 results, and if performance is better (✓) or worse (X) than the Scottish average in 2019-2020. It also includes explanatory narrative for the movements in performance between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.
- 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. The Forum is also asked to note the indicators for which data collection has been disrupted due to Covid – noted at 6.4 below.

Table 1 – Summary of performance of LGBF Results

KEY:		Number (%) of indicators		
		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
South Lanarkshire performance				
↑	improving performance in SLC	32 (40%)	34 (38%)	32 (35%)
↓	declining performance in SLC	35 (44%)	34 (38%)	41 (45%)
↔	No change in performance in SLC	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)
----	Results/trends not available	11 (14%)	18 (21%)	17 (19%)
Comparison with Scottish average				
✓	SLC results better than Scottish average	39 (49%)	44 (49%)	36 (39%)
X	SLC results worse than Scottish average	28 (35%)	28 (32%)	38 (42%)
↔	SLC results same as Scottish average	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)
----	Results not available	11 (14%)	14 (16%)	17 (19%)

(All data correct as at January 2021 release of results)

- 5.3. Across the 91 indicators in the 2019-2020 suite, South Lanarkshire Council's performance improved against 32 (35%) indicators, remained the same against 1 (1%) indicator, and declined for 41 (45%) indicators (list of declining indicators is at Appendix 2). There are 17(19%) indicators for which the results or trend information is not yet available for 2019-2020.

- 5.4. In terms of South Lanarkshire's figures relative to the Scottish results, performance was better than the Scottish average for 36 (39%) indicators and was worse than the average for 38 (42%) indicators. There are 17 (19%) indicators for which the 2019-2020 results are not yet available.
- 5.5. Following an Audit Scotland recommendation, the Forum (at its meeting on 26 November 2019) noted the introduction of 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 2019-2020 results, this relates to 38 (42%) 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, have been working to tighten up the information gathering process. To this end, the 2019-2020 data released in February 2021 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 at the same time as the official publication by the Improvement Service. As in previous years, the LGBF results information for South Lanarkshire Council has been uploaded on to the Council's website, together with contextual information about and explaining the indicators.
- 6.3. To coincide with this release of the data, a national overview report is 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 social care and in education. These are noted below for information.

Social Care

SW1 Care at Home hours delivered, SW3 Balance of Care and SW5 Residential Care Home residents: Scottish Government has paused its Quarterly Monitoring Return this year due to Covid, therefore, Social Work Scotland have agreed to facilitate a separate return to gather key social care data to avoid a gap in this important time series. The data request was circulated to Chief Social Workers and Social Work Resources has confirmed that all the data can be provided.

SW6 Readmissions within 28 days: due to data availability issues, this year the data will be presented as calendar year, rather than financial year.

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.

CHN4-CHN7 and CHN12a-12f - Senior Phase Attainment Data: The Scottish Government has not yet confirmed timescales due to this year's methodological issues, but the Improvement Service is working with them to try and ensure data is available within the above timescales. Caveats will be included to reflect that changes in methodology this year will have an impact on trend data.

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 refresh of the data will be released by the end of May 2021 following completion of the Scottish Government final validation process on the financial data, and to allow inclusion of any as yet unavailable results. Updates will be made, as appropriate, to the performance data and narrative uploaded onto the Council's website.
- 7.3. The Forum is asked to note that the Improvement Service continues to review and develop the suite of indicators. For example, there are new measures within the suite for Financial Sustainability (FINSUS1 to FINSUS5) and Climate Change (CLIM1 and CLIM2).
- 7.4. The Improvement Service organise 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 align these events with existing networks/forums wherever possible, minimising duplication of discussions and bringing together relevant expertise. During the Covid crisis during 2020, these events have not taken place. The Council will continue to support these events when they resume.

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.

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5 May 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ♦ Achieve results through leadership, good governance and organisational effectiveness
- ♦ Ambitious, self-aware and improving

Previous References

- ◆ Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum - Local Government Benchmarking Framework – Family Group Analysis – 26 November 2019
- ◆ Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum - Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) 2018-2019 Results and Action Plan – 18 February 2020

List of Background Papers

- ◆ LGBF results 2019-2020

Contact for Further Information

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

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