

Report

Report to:	Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum
Date of Meeting:	29 September 2020
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Self-Assessment and Improvement Activity Annual Update 2019-20
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- provide the Forum with an update on the self-assessment and improvement activity as at 31 March 2020

2. Recommendations

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

- (1) that the improvement activity as a result of Empower and other self-assessment approaches across the Council be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. Self-assessment and the improvements arising from self-assessment are key elements of Best Value. The Council has adopted Empower as its corporate self-assessment methodology and has embedded the approach in all services which do not already benefit from structured self-evaluation activity.
- 3.2. This report provides an update on self-assessment and improvement activity across all Resources. The report covers assessments carried out through Empower and also through other structured self-evaluation activity approaches such as surveys, workshops, data/procedures analysis, questionnaires or engagement.

4. Self-assessment Activity

- 4.1. Appendix 1 provides an update in respect of the self-assessment activity programme for the year ended 31 March 2020. The progress of the activities detailed in the appendix demonstrates the Council's commitment to the delivery of continuous improvement. It should also be noted that self-assessment action plans contain additional improvement actions which are taken forward by the service through their improvement planning and reporting processes.
- 4.2. In preparation for this report, the self-assessment and improvement annual update reports for the previous year were reviewed, to follow up any incomplete actions. Appendix 2 lists outcomes, per Resource, with progress updates on these previous reviews.
- 4.3. Empower is a flexible framework and continues to be adapted and refined to meet the needs of the Council. The new approach to the council-wide self-assessment and improvement programme was developed to be more proportionate and risk-based and was approved by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) in February

2016. The programme of assessments is an annual exercise and draws upon a variety of sources, including the National Scrutiny Plan and other planned inspection visits (carried out by, for example, Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate), performance monitoring, internal service reviews and other relevant information.

- 4.4. As elected members are aware, because of the Covid 19 crisis the Council was forced to suspend or reduce a number of services and was also obliged to redirect resources so that it could deliver vital new services and supports for individuals, communities and businesses. In 2020-21, self-assessment and improvement activity will be aligned with the Covid 19 response and recovery and service reviews, rather than be a stand-alone programme.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. The Forum is asked to note the completed assessments and improvement actions detailed in Appendices 1 and 2.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. Employee implications relate to the ongoing time commitment and training and development as required.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

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

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. The management of risk associated with the outcomes and actions referred to in respect of the self-assessment and improvement activity will be considered as part of each Resource's risk management arrangements as appropriate.

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. Consultation has been undertaken with both officers from the Corporate Improvement Advisory Board (CIAB) and those involved in the self-assessment and improvement activities.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

13 August 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Ambitious, self-aware and improving
- ◆ Achieve results through leadership, good governance and organisational effectiveness

Previous References

- ◆ Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum – 18 June 2019 – Self-Assessment and Improvement Activity Annual Report 2019

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

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

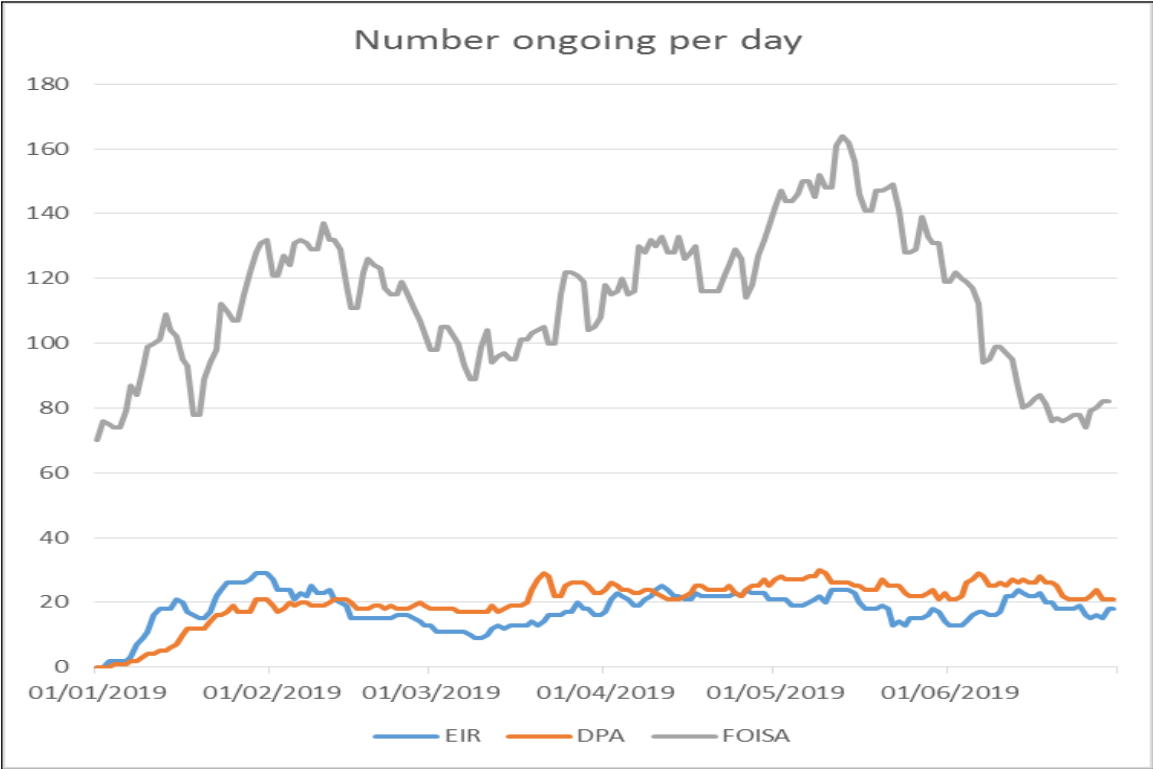
Tom Little, Head of Communications and Strategy

Ext: 845 4904 (Tel: 01698 454904)

Email: tom.little@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Performance: performance@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Self-assessment and improvement activity 2019-20 Programme - Annual Update as at 31 March 2020

Resource: Council wide		
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Progress
Recording and reporting of Freedom of Information (FOI), General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations (EI(S)R) requests on new system Objective (Lead: FCR Admin. and Legal)	Improved processes for recording and reporting of FOI, GDPR and EI(S)R, leading to a reduction in the number of requests which are not completed within target timescales. ONGOING	<p>The project was identified as a possible area for improvement because targets were not being met for completion of enquiries within appropriate timescales.</p> <p>An analysis of performance across the Council was undertaken to better understand the volume of work and the trends in performance across the year and across Resources.</p> <p>A 6-month tranche of enquiries was analysed which illustrated the fluctuation in numbers across the year, and also highlighted variations in approach between different Resources.</p> 

Resource: Council wide		
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Progress
		<p>In addition to the data analysis, an audit of late responses was undertaken to understand in detail the reasons behind late reports, and to investigate any common factors at work or issues which could be addressed within current work practices.</p> <p>A cross-Resource discussion/consensus session was held in January 2020 to assess the findings and explore potential recommendations going forward. Action plans were developed by each Resource based on what they thought needed to be addressed in their own approach to information requests.</p> <p>IMPACT: The latest data shows some improvement in performance, which may be due to the implementation of the actions plans within Resources. The percentage of FOI and GDPR/DPA requests processed within the required timescale increased in the last quarter of 2019-20, exceeding the performance in any previous quarter of the year and also improving on the performance of the same quarter of the year before. This is a positive development in the right direction, however, there has been little change in EI(S)(R) processing in the last quarter of 2019-20. Monitoring of performance over 2020-21 will allow further self-evaluation and review of the action plans if required.</p>
Secondary school letting arrangements (Lead: CER)	<p>Secondary school letting process works efficiently and effectively, with stakeholders involved in the process aware of each other's documented policies and practices</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preliminary meetings were held with all relevant stakeholders (South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC), Education Resources, Facilities Service, SPIE (school PPP contractor)) to record ongoing issues which impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the secondary school letting process. 2. Development Adviser visited SLLC Booking Team and Facilities Service Janitorial Control Centre to observe current practices. 3. The booking system procedure was documented on a process map. 4. Joint meeting of above stakeholders (except SPIE) was held, with agreement reached on improvement actions required. <p>IMPACT: Expected that these meetings will be routinely scheduled to assist with communication on further issues as they arise.</p>

Resource: Council wide		
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Progress
Tracking developer contributions (Lead: CER Community Infrastructure Assessment Group)	<p>Process for tracking developer contributions works efficiently and effectively and provides transparency for all stakeholders</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>	<p>Aim of the activity was to improve procedures for monitoring the collection and distribution of Developer Contribution funds.</p> <p>Outcome of the self-assessment was presented to Planning Managers on 11 March 2019 and Community Infrastructure Group on 23 April 2019. Improvement actions were approved at the latter meeting and Planning Service has now identified Planning Officer to implement the actions.</p> <p>IMPACT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-introducing spreadsheets for tracking Developer Contributions, ensuring ongoing use by all relevant stakeholders • Ensuring shared access to spreadsheets via Objective allowing for real-time updates • Improved layout and content of spreadsheets and collation of supporting information

Resource: Finance and Corporate		
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Progress
Finance (Transactions)	<p>Deliver improved integration and customer self-serve facilities for Council Tax, Benefits Admin, Customer Service Centre and Q and As.</p> <p>ONGOING</p>	<p>Northgate Council Tax project underway to expand the use of online customer forms for Council Tax including change of address. This development will provide updated functions for self-service comprising Council Tax direct debit, single person discount and change of address with improved accuracy expected through a substantial reduction in manual handling. The original planned date for go live was May 2020. However, this has been delayed due to the impact of Covid-19. Discussions are now taking place with a view to re-starting the project later in 2020.</p> <p>11 integrated forms for waste, grounds and pest control went live in May 2019 allowing council staff to process internal requests for service more efficiently (previously done by free text email).</p> <p>IMPACT: The introduction of the integrated online forms has seen a reduction in the number of free text e-mails received by the service, thus making more efficient use of staff resources.</p>
Finance (Transactions)	<p>For services that benefit from more effective contact methods, expansion of SMS text messaging solution</p> <p>ONGOING</p>	<p>For the distribution of cash for kids payments SMS is being used to advise recipients of their forthcoming payment, to be received via paypoint.</p> <p>Council Tax is now using SMS more frequently and use it as a means to encourage uptake of Council Tax reduction (CTR). This initiative started at the beginning of December 2019 and will be ongoing. Two promotional runs to encourage CTR uptake have taken place thus far, in December 2019 and February 2020. These promotional runs comprised a total of 1,412 SMS text messages.</p> <p>IMPACT: Although the impact may not be wholly attributable to the SMS activity, CTR uptake increased by 0.37% in the final 3 months of 2019-20. This compares to an increase of 0.16% over the same period in 2018-19.</p>

Resource: Finance and Corporate (continued)		
Service area	Key outcome/ benefit	Key outcome/ benefit
Administration and Legal	<p>Review the Council's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policies, documentation and training material</p> <p>ONGOING</p>	<p>All substantive GDPR/DPA 2018 policies and advice are now in place. Upon leaving the European Union (EU), the GDPR will become the UKGDPR. This replacement of legislation will result in further work with related changes in documents and policies etc. Work will start with a view to be in place by Exit Day (the day that the UK leaves the EU – prospectively 31 December 2020) is clear. In addition, all policies and documentation will be reviewed again as and when further guidance is issued by the Information Commissioner.</p> <p>IMPACT: There is no direct impact at this time. The work would form part of the Council's preparations for leaving the EU.</p>

Resource: Housing and Technical		
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Progress
Housing	<p>Customer feedback/engagement to inform service delivery and improvements</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>	<p>All customer feedback and engagement programmes for 2019-20 completed in line with agreed requirements for both recurring and one off surveys. Quarterly reports analysed and issued to Management Teams and improvement actions identified and progressed if required. Annual presentation to Management Team scheduled for later in 2020.</p> <p>IMPACT: Customer feedback and engagement programmes have allowed the Resource to improve the services and procedures, as appropriate.</p>

Resource: Social Work Resources		
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Progress
Money Matters	<p>A wider review to include welfare reform, Scottish Welfare Fund, Benefits are Changing Team, citizens advice as well as Money Matters is underway.</p> <p>ONGOING</p>	<p>The review is progressing with the completion of customer journeys for key council services and a staff survey. The development of a customer survey is in progress. Each of the four Citizens Advice Bureaus will now be represented on the review group to ensure opportunities for improvement can be considered with the other main provider of financial advice in South Lanarkshire. The terms of reference have been updated to reflect this.</p> <p>IMPACT: The Review of advice services is currently in abeyance due to the COVID-19 crisis and will not conclude in May. A re-assessment of the key milestones will be required following resumption of normal working but it is not possible to predict when this will take place.</p>

Resource: Social Work Resources (continued)		
Customer Service Excellence (CSE award)	The CSE Award assesses services in the following areas: customer insight; culture of the organisation; information and access; delivery; timeliness and quality of service against a set standard. In addition to meeting the standard, Services can be awarded “compliance plus” status. The compliance plus awards demonstrate that services exceed the standards set and are examples of national best practice.	
Adult Mental Health Services	Continued compliance, and advancement of awards within the CSE framework for Adult Mental Health Services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 6 compliance plus awards in 2013-14 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 7 compliance plus awards in 2014-15 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 8 compliance plus awards in 2015-16 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 8 compliance plus awards in 2016-17 ○ Fully compliant in 2017-18 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 9 compliance plus awards in 2018-19 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 10 compliance plus awards 2019-20
Older People day care services	Continued compliance and advancement of awards within the CSE framework for Older Peoples Day Care services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 9 compliance plus awards in 2013-14 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 11 compliance plus awards in 2014-15 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 11 compliance plus awards in 2015-16 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 15 compliance plus awards in 2016-17 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 19 compliance plus awards in 2017-18 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 22 compliance plus awards in 2018-19 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 22 compliance plus awards in 2019-20
Older People residential care	Continued compliance and advancement of awards within the CSE framework for Residential Care Homes for Older People.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 9 compliance plus awards in 2013-14 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 10 compliance plus awards in 2014-15 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 14 compliance plus awards in 2015-16 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 15 compliance plus awards in 2016-17 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 20 compliance plus awards in 2017-18 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 23 compliance plus awards in 2018-19 ○ Fully compliant against the standard and 23 compliance plus awards in 2019-20*

*This service was due to be inspected on 21 and 22 April but was cancelled due to Covid19 crisis – so they still remain at 23

Resource: Education		
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Progress
Engagement	<p>The views of employees, children and young people will be actively sought to help shape and influence the Education Resources priorities to create wider ownership and empower employees to be active contributors in the planning and delivery of positive outcomes for all learners</p> <p>ONGOING</p>	<p>Learning Pathways Recognising and understanding the pathways individual learners choose is part of what we call their 'learner journey'. This is one of the ways in which schools actively engage with young people to support them in achieving a wider breadth and range of successful and positive outcomes more readily linked to employability, higher and further education. Schools and establishments throughout this year have been actively engaging with young people to set learning pathways designed to more readily meet their needs which is reflective in the positive destination statistics (96%).</p> <p>Education Resources Priorities Through our 'wee blether' activities (August 2019) nearly 300 people gave their views which helped to shape and influence the priorities for 2019-20 and beyond. A pupil event planned for the early part of 2020 designed to empower young people to be active participants and contributors in the 'wee blether' about priorities and what matters to them including their views on climate change and sustainability planned for April 2020 was postponed.</p> <p>IMPACT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of the Covid19 pandemic with the closure of schools in March has been significant with no decision taken on when they will return with planning assumptions intimating that it will be on a phased basis as yet to be determined • Active engagement with learners and the means of doing this in a dynamic and different way in 2020-21 is part of the revised strategy entitled 'Continuity of Learning'. The learning goals and targets will still be determined through bespoke learning pathways for learners depending on their age, stage, knowledge and skills. With no exam diet the professional assessment of teachers on individual learners' progress will be a key factor in determining the outcome of pupils in the senior phase. • The means and mechanisms of reaching out to hear the voice of young people and stakeholders to help influence and shape the priorities for Education Resources for 2020-21 has had to be put on hold.

Resource: Council wide			
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Associated improvement actions	Overall progress
Best Value	<p>Self-evaluation and gap analysis against the duties of Best Value, in preparation for Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) in 2018.</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>	<p>Undertake self-evaluation against Best Value requirements.</p> <p>Report the outcome of this exercise to CMT in order to contribute to wider preparations for the BVAR in 2018.</p>	<p>Three cross-Resource self-assessment sessions were held in 2018, facilitated by the Improvement Service, focussing on three specific areas of work: Audit Scotland's Strategic Audit Priorities, previous audit findings, and performance and self-assessment. The results were reported to CMT on 9 August 2018.</p> <p>The Council's BVAR was published by the Accounts Commission on 28 March 2019. An action plan has been developed to respond to the recommendations of the report.</p> <p>IMPACT: The self-evaluation sessions helped prepare the Council for the BVAR and assisted in collating the evidence required to demonstrate the achievement of Best Value. The self-evaluations also ensured that the Council was well-placed to target the most important actions when developing the action plan in response to the BVAR recommendations. The BVAR action plan has been progressed through 2019-20 and a progress report was presented to the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum on 18 February 2020.</p>

Resource: Council wide			
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Associated improvement actions	Overall progress
Internal Audit	<p>Improve communication within the team</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Full team meetings to be scheduled twice-yearly. Team briefs every eight weeks. ○ Review and update the intranet page. ○ Establish a process for ongoing review and refresh. 	<p>Team briefs are now scheduled throughout the year. Updated various fraud policies in 2018-19 and uploaded to intranet/internet. Internal Audit page created. Actions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Separate review of risk management/best practice bulletins ongoing in 2019-20. ○ Populate/maintain Internal Audit pages in 2019-20 <p>IMPACT: There are open lines of communication with Advisers and Manager and regular team briefs are now taking place with the team, scheduled every 8 weeks. Additional team briefs are also held if necessary to communicate urgent information, so the planned improvements in regular, scheduled team briefs are now taking place. The impact of this should now be that staff are content that they are receiving all feedback that should be communicated with them.</p> <p>Discussions have taken place with Risk Management and work has started to update the risk management/best practice bulletins. The Graphics section has prepared these bulletins in a corporate format. The impact of this will be a consistent methodology being used to present these bulletins to staff. It is the intention that, as these bulletins are updated, they will be added to the intranet. The first bulletin due to be uploaded is Cash Controls.</p> <p>Intranet page reviewed again early 2020-21 and now part of routine refresh at year-end and throughout the year, as required. Further forms to be uploaded to allow, for example, frauds to be notified via an online form. The impact of this is to provide a central source of information to which Services can refer and a more efficient way of working, moving forward.</p>

Resource: Council wide			
Service Area	Key outcome/ benefit	Associated improvement actions	Overall progress
	<p>Develop more effective audit feedback process within Resources</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review options of gathering customer feedback and implement solution that is effective and manageable. ○ Deliver formal feedback from clients to team at team meetings. 	<p>Head of Service questionnaire issued on an annual basis. Out with this, feedback gathered as part of meetings with Executive Directors or on an informal basis should a specific issue arise. Feedback provided to specific employees, if appropriate, or as part of team brief.</p> <p>IMPACT: Steps have been taken to gather feedback from Resources (Executive Directors and Heads of Service) during face to face meetings (principally the annual audit planning meetings) as it is deemed that better feedback is received using this channel rather than the issue of questionnaires which tend to have low response rates. The impact of this change is that Internal Audit can address concerns at the time they are being highlighted and provide context to the reasons behind concerns, where relevant. Positive feedback is also shared with Internal Audit during these meetings. Feedback is then provided back to the Internal Audit team, both in terms of positive feedback and any areas where improvement is required. The impact of this is improved morale and, following adjustments, when possible, improved working practices.</p>