

# PERFORMANCE AND REVIEW SCRUTINY FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 19 March 2024

## Chair:

Councillor Joe Fagan

## Councillors Present:

Councillor Maureen Chalmers, Councillor Gerry Convery (Depute), Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Richard Lockhart, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Kirsten Robb, Councillor John Ross, Councillor Margaret Walker (*substitute for Councillor Davie McLachlan*)

## Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor John Anderson, Councillor Davie McLachlan

## Attending:

### Chief Executive's Service

P Manning, Chief Executive; T Little, Head of Communications and Strategy; L Marshall, Finance Adviser; N Reid, Improvement and Community Planning Manager

### Community and Enterprise Resources

A Brown, Head of Enterprise and Sustainable Development; K Carr, Head of Facilities, Waste and Grounds; C Park, Head of Roads, Transportation and Fleet Services

### Education Resources

D Dickson, Education Operations Manager

### Finance and Corporate Resources

J Taylor, Executive Director; M Gordon, Administration Assistant; S McLeod, Administration Officer

### Housing and Technical Resources

L Hayes, Performance and Support Adviser

### Social Work Resources

M McConnachie, Adult and Older People Service Manager

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## 1 Declaration of Interests

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No interests were declared.

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## 2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

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The minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum held on 5 December 2023 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

**The Forum decided:** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

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## 3 Scottish Household Survey Key Findings

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A report dated 29 February 2024 by the Chief Executive was submitted providing a summary of the key findings from the Scottish Household Survey which had been published in December 2023.

The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) was an annual survey of the general population in Scotland which had been carried out since 1999 and aimed to collect reliable and up-to-date information on a range of topics, through a random sample of people in private residencies.

The report provided a summary of the key findings that were particularly relevant to local government in relation to:-

- ◆ housing
- ◆ neighbourhoods and communities
- ◆ finance
- ◆ physical activity and sport
- ◆ climate change
- ◆ internet access
- ◆ volunteering
- ◆ culture and heritage
- ◆ childcare
- ◆ trust in institutions

Approximately 450 households were sampled within South Lanarkshire and a summary of the data from the responses provided was also included in the report.

Officers responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

**The Forum decided:** that the report be noted.

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#### **4 Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2022/2023 Results and Action Plan**

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A report dated 29 February 2024 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking (LGBF) results for 2022/2023.

The LGBF compared spend/cost, performance and customer satisfaction results over several years and between similar councils. It comprised a number of performance indicators across a range of services.

South Lanarkshire Council's performance was summarised in table 1 of the report and further information on the Council's LGBF data and results for 2022/2023, together with comparative data for 2021/2022 and 2020/2021, was provided in Appendix 1 to the report. This information also showed whether the Council's performance in 2022/2023 had improved, remained the same or declined compared to the previous year and how the Council's performance compared with the Scottish average.

Family group analysis for indicators where the Council had lower performance than the Scottish average, based on the 2022/2023 results, was provided in Appendix 2 to the report.

Although the LGBF results were available for all councils in Scotland and could be used to construct league tables, the Local Government Improvement Service (LGIS) cautioned against this approach and emphasised that the purpose of the data was to open discussion about performance and improvement in the context of specific services whilst taking account of geography, demographics and local council priorities. It was, therefore, important to pay attention to the narrative against each indicator when forming a judgement on what the performance meant in a South Lanarkshire context.

At a local level, each council was required to publish its results at the same time as the publication of the national results by the LGIS.

The LGIS would continue to hold benchmarking events where local authorities could share good practice.

**The Forum decided:**

- (1) that the importance of viewing LGBF measures in the local context, as detailed in the report, be noted;
- (2) that the results, narrative, actions and family group analysis identified following scrutiny of the results for 2022/2023 be noted; and

- (3) that it be noted that the Council's LGBF results and explanatory narrative for 2022/2023 would be published on the Council's website, to coincide with the publication of the national results by the Local Government Improvement Service.

*[Reference: Minutes of 21 March 2023 (Paragraph 3)]*

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## **5 Best Value in Scotland**

A report dated 29 February 2024 by the Chief Executive was submitted providing a summary of Audit Scotland's Best Value in Scotland report, published in September 2023, which had reflected on 20 years of auditing Best Value and the next steps for Best Value reporting in Scotland.

The Best Value in Scotland report provided details of how the Best Value audit approach had evolved and assessed its impact in driving improved performance, better governance, better use of public money and use of resources since its introduction in 2003.

The report to the Forum summarised the key messages and areas for further work, identified by the Accounts Commission, which included the following themes:-

- ◆ strategic direction in relation to:-
  - ◆ leadership
  - ◆ governance and accountability
- ◆ use of resources in relation to:-
  - ◆ performance management
  - ◆ financial management and planning
  - ◆ workforce
  - ◆ asset management
  - ◆ information
- ◆ partnership working in relation to:-
  - ◆ Community Planning and wider partnership working
  - ◆ communities
- ◆ continuous improvement in relation to transformation and reform

An officer responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

**The Forum decided:** that the report be noted.

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## **6 Accounts Commission – New Approach to the Audit of Best Value – Initial Reports**

A report dated 29 February 2024 by the Chief Executive was submitted on the Controller of Audit (COA) reports that had been published by the Accounts Commission under its new approach to auditing Best Value.

In terms of the new approach, auditors were required to report progress against previous Best Value audit reports and Accounts Commission findings. The Controller of Audit was required to report on all councils across the audit appointment round, covering the period October 2023 to August 2027.

The new approach consisted of brief COA reports which were accompanied by, and reflected on, published annual audit reports. The COA reports, which would be considered by the Accounts Commission in public and reported publicly, were intended to offer a Best Value focused reflection on each council's annual audit report.

In line with previous practice of reporting Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) findings to the Forum to highlight good practice and place South Lanarkshire Council's activities in context, the findings from the following COA reports were summarised in the Forum report:-

- ◆ South Ayrshire Council (published 2 November 2023)
- ◆ Dundee City Council (published 30 November 2023)
- ◆ Dumfries and Galloway Council (published 11 January 2024)
- ◆ Orkney Islands Council (published 30 January 2024)

Officers responded to members' questions on various aspects of the report.

**The Forum decided:** that the report be noted.

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## **7 Urgent Business**

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There were no items of urgent business.