

Report

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Report to:	Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum
Date of Meeting:	4 September 2018
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Review of the Annual Performance Report
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to:-

- advise the Forum of changes to the way in which the council fulfils its Public Performance Reporting duties through the Annual Performance Report

2. Recommendations/Actions

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

- (1) that the intention to move away from the current APR to 'Annual Performance Spotlights' (APSS) is noted; and
- (2) that we continue to update and publish the Public Performance Reports (PPRs) on the Council's website.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council has a statutory duty under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 to undertake Public Performance Reporting (PPR) as directed by the Accounts Commission in Scotland.
- 3.2. Starting in 2003, the Commission required councils to publish a range of Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs), which were published annually and formally audited by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Commission.
- 3.3. Since 2008, the Commission has moved away from the SPI approach and developed a more flexible approach to the performance information that councils must report. Increasingly, the onus is on councils to publish information which is accessible, balanced and meaningful to the public and other stakeholders.
- 3.4. The Annual Performance Report (APR) has been a key component of the council's Public Performance Reporting (PPR) arrangements since 2011/2012. The APR sits alongside a range of other performance information such as web-based topic reports and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF), which together evidence the Council's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in respect of its approach to PPR.
- 3.5. This report presents a proposal to review the APR component of the Council's PPR approach, in light of the continuing evolution of the Commission's expectations and taking into account feedback from Audit Scotland on the APR in particular.

4. Current Position

- 4.1. Since the first version was produced in 2011/2012, the APR has been continuously developed and refined to remain abreast of the Commission's requirements, while taking into account influences from internal and external sources, including feedback from Audit Scotland, customer views, analysis of web statistics and benchmarking with other councils.
- 4.2. In line with the Council's shift towards a digital first approach, the focus has been on the electronic version of the APR, which is uploaded onto the performance pages of the Council's website to allow the public and our partners to browse the information electronically. Consultations in 2013 and 2017 confirmed that accessing information via the Council's website is the preferred option for the majority of people.
- 4.3. Within the Council's annual audit 2016/2017 by Audit Scotland, the APR received praise for its professionalism and balanced approach, however it was suggested that the level of detail within the APR might obscure the Council's key messages. The auditors concluded that: "the council should consider a review of the structure of the report for future years."
- 4.4. Alongside this, it is worth noting that downloads of the APR have been falling in recent years, while the number of hits on the PPR pages (which present additional information on a thematic basis) has been increasing. This would suggest that the single-document approach is less appealing to website users than topic-based web pages which can be browsed directly online.

5. The new approach

- 5.1. Taking the Audit feedback at 4.3 into account, and in light of the falling downloads of the APR in recent years, the Council's approach to the APR will be refreshed and simplified. The intention is to produce the APR in a shorter, more accessible format, which will continue to communicate key performance messages through a mix of case studies, infographics, and links to other key information. This will ensure that performance reporting not only keeps pace with public preferences and the digital agenda but also with Audit Scotland's requirements in terms of Public Performance Reporting.
- 5.2. The new approach will replace the current, lengthy APR document with Annual Performance Spotlights - 'bite sized' web content performance information, one per Council objective. This spotlight on performance will consist of:
 - a short introduction to the Connect objective
 - a case study illustrating the work the Council undertakes relating to that Connect objective
 - approximately 8 infographics to highlight the key achievements for the year (this may be an 'animation' or simply a pdf)
 - links to other reports/other performance information available elsewhere on the council's or external organisations' website.
- 5.3. The Annual Performance Spotlights will be created according to the same timescale as the APR – completion, approval and upload onto the Council's website by the October following the end of the financial year being reported.

5.4. The other key elements of the Council's PPR approach – the PPR reports on the website and the LGBF analysis – will remain unchanged. This will ensure that South Lanarkshire Council continues to comply with the Accounts Commission Direction in terms of the information that must be published to satisfy comparison, benchmarking and Best Value responsibilities.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. There are no employee implications relating to this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. There are no financial implications relating to this report.

8. Other Implications

8.1. The work undertaken in the preparation of the current APR, the proposed APSs and continuing PPRs assists in providing assurance that the Council is responding to its Best Value obligations in terms of continuous improvement and public performance reporting.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

9.1. 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.

9.2. Consultation took place with Resources via the Corporate Improvement Advisory Board (CIAB) on the proposal to update the Council's performance material.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

23 August 2018

Link to Council Ambitions/Objectives

- Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent

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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