

Report

Report to:	South Lanarkshire Council
Date of Meeting:	26 June 2019
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Best Value Assurance Report
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Inform the Council of the Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) published by the Accounts Commission.
- ◆ Provide the Council with an action plan relating to the recommendations contained in the BVAR for consideration

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the contents of the BVAR be noted; and
- (2) that the action plan, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

3. Background

- 3.1. South Lanarkshire Council was audited by Audit Scotland in October and November 2018, with the final report being published by the Accounts Commission on 28 March 2019.
- 3.2. This report provides a summary of the key messages and recommendations contained within the BVAR, and it presents an action plan (appendix 1) to respond to its findings.

4. BVAR scope, messages and recommendations

4.1. The audit covered the following topics within its scope:

- ◆ The council's vision and strategic direction, including how well the leadership of the council works together to deliver priorities that reflect the needs of the community.
- ◆ The effectiveness of the governance, decision-making and scrutiny arrangements.
- ◆ An overall assessment of outcomes and performance and the reporting of these, including the council's public performance reporting.
- ◆ How the council plans its use of resources including asset management, financial planning and workforce planning to support the delivery of its priorities.

- ◆ How the council delivers services through partnership and collaborative working, including progress with health and social care integration.
- ◆ Community engagement and responsiveness and how this impacts on the council's priorities and activities.
- ◆ How effectively the council's self-assessment framework drives continuous improvement in service priorities.

4.2. Following the audit, the BVAR published on 28 March 2019 contained the following key messages:

- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council performs well and since the last Best Value report in 2009 has demonstrated a steady pace of improvement. The council has a comprehensive and structured approach to continuous improvement. There is evidence that service redesign and capital investment are improving outcomes for citizens and resulting in efficiencies that will help ensure financial sustainability.
- ◆ The council benefits from effective leadership and clear strategic direction. Officers and councillors work well together in the interests of the residents of South Lanarkshire.
- ◆ The council demonstrates improved performance in many services but there are other areas where improvement is still required. Service satisfaction survey results from service users differ from those from national household surveys and the reasons for this need to be understood and addressed.
- ◆ The council acknowledges that it needs to review the number and quality of its targets and how it measures progress towards achieving these. This will allow it to provide elected members with a clearer picture of performance against its strategic objectives.
- ◆ The council works well with a range of public-sector, business and academic partners to improve outcomes for citizens. Partners have a shared vision but the links between the Council's Connect Plan and Community Plan could be clearer. The Community Planning Partnership Board needs to take a more active role in driving partnership working.
- ◆ The council needs to improve how it uses community engagement to shape services. It has recently established a Community Empowerment and Participation team to review its approach to community participation and engagement.
- ◆ The council understands its responsibilities under the Community Empowerment Act, and there is a history of transferring assets to community groups. But the council and its partners have been slow to progress elements of this Act, including the preparation of locality plans.
- ◆ The council demonstrates sound financial management. It has a strong track record of delivering ambitious capital projects on time and on budget. The council has a good process in place for long-term financial planning. Future financial plans are challenging but the council is well placed to address projected funding.

4.3. The BVAR made 10 recommendations, as follows:

- ◆ To increase the impact of the council's efforts in achieving its strategic objectives, links between the council plan (Connect Plan) and the LOIP (Community Plan) should be made clearer with a sharper focus on the key areas of activity. Locality plans should be prepared without further delay.
- ◆ Management should carry out the staff survey and use the results to drive improvement and share existing good practice.

- ◆ Elected members need to improve the public scrutiny of key decisions, performance and financial reports.
- ◆ Members should, with the assistance of the personnel service, review their personal training and development needs and agree a plan to ensure that they have the skills required to effectively fulfil their scrutiny and challenge roles.
- ◆ Management should ensure that the indicators used to measure performance provide meaningful information and are appropriate to the reporting level.
- ◆ Management should review arrangements for assessing resident satisfaction, to ensure these are providing meaningful data to help shape future services.
- ◆ The Community Planning Partnership Board should take a more active role in driving partnership working, monitoring outcomes and feeding back to thematic subgroups.
- ◆ The council should review existing governance structures to ensure that they support community-based activity.
- ◆ Management should formulate a digital inclusion strategy to complement the council's digital strategy.
- ◆ Management should implement revised arrangements for community engagement to improve how it is used to shape services. Consistent and high-quality consultation across all services should be part of this.

4.3. An action plan (see Appendix 1) has been developed to respond to the BVAR recommendations. Although the recommendations span a number of themes, such as consultation and engagement, governance and scrutiny, and performance management, for ease of reference the action plan lists the BVAR recommendations separately and in the order they appear in the BVAR.

4.4. For each recommendation the context and proposed approach is given, together with the identity of the lead officer, the specific actions that will be undertaken, and the timescale in which these will be completed. All timescales for completion are within the current financial year.

5. Next Steps

5.1. Council is asked to note the contents of the BVAR and approve the action plan provided at Appendix 1.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. There are no direct employee implications.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. There are no direct financial implications.

8. Other Implications

8.1. Considering the detail of the report and identifying actions as appropriate contribute towards effective risk management.

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. A link to the BVAR was sent to all Elected Members on the morning that it was published by the Accounts Commission, 28 March 2019, and the report was the subject of an Audit Scotland press release and publicised by the council. Copies of

the report are also available for inspection on request to Finance and Corporate Resources. The BVAR can be found at the Audit Scotland website here:
<http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/best-value-assurance-report-south-lanarkshire-council>

- 9.3. As required by the Accounts Commission, a public notice was inserted in local newspapers in advance of this meeting of the Council, advising that the BVAR would be considered by Elected Members at this time.

Paul Manning
Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

10 June 2019

Link(s) to Council Objective

- Promote Performance Management and Improvement

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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BVAR action plan

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
1	<p>To increase the impact of the council's efforts in achieving its strategic objectives, links between the council plan (Connect Plan) and the LOIP (Community Plan) should be made clearer with a sharper focus on the key areas of activity. Locality plans should be prepared without further delay.</p> <p>Paragraph 20 - While the Community Plan's overall objective and the vision of the Connect Plan are not mutually exclusive, it is not immediately obvious how they are connected and what their common focus is...To increase the impact, the links between the two plans need to be clearer with a sharper focus on the key areas of activity.</p>	<p>The mid-term review of Connect will clarify the link between Connect and the Community Plan.</p> <p>The refresh of the Connect Plan will be informed by work to gather lived experience data from those living in the most deprived communities to be carried out by an independent academic from UWS.</p>	<p>Head of Communications and Strategy</p> <p>Head of Communications and Strategy</p>	<p>Action 1.1 Clarify the presentation of the Council Plan and how it links to the LOIP (Community Plan) by developing a "plan on a page" mapping the links between them. This will be used in future engagement and consultation exercises with local people and communities.</p> <p>Action 1.2 Undertake a mid-term review of Connect and in the process ensure that the links to the LOIP (Community Plan) are clearer, with a sharper focus on key areas of activity.</p>	<p>December 2019</p> <p>March 2020</p>

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
	<p>Paragraph 121 - The [Community Empowerment (Scotland) 2015] Act also requires that CPPs identify the areas within the council boundaries that have the poorest outcomes and publish 'locality plans' to improve outcomes for these communities. Statutory guidance required locality plans to be published by 1 October 2017. Although the council and its partners have identified nine priority areas that do less well, locality plans have not yet been produced.</p>	<p>The Council recognises the principles behind the Community Empowerment Act (2015) and the need for improved engagement with communities and devolved decision making. In response to this, a new Community Participation and Empowerment Team (CPET) was established during 2018/19.</p> <p>Locality Plans (known as Neighbourhood Plans in South Lanarkshire) have already been completed with communities in 3 of the identified priority areas. Plans for the remaining priority areas will be produced within the next 9 months.</p>	Community Participation and Empowerment Manager	<p>Action 1.3</p> <p>Locality plans (known as Neighbourhood Plans in South Lanarkshire) will be developed in the remaining 6 identified priority areas in South Lanarkshire through the work of the Community Participation and Empowerment Team (see also action 10.1 below).</p>	March 2020

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
2	<p>Management should carry out the staff survey and use the results to drive improvement and share existing good practice.</p>	<p>Staff are kept informed of good practices across the council through news items and notifications on the intranet, myWorks, and through communications via the Chief Executive's Update, Executive Director Team Briefs and through management team briefs/talks. The council is examining alternative methods of communication for staff who do not have direct access to the IT network. Employees are also being encouraged to sign up to access the council's People Connect facility and Learn on Line at home.</p>	Head of Personnel Services	<p>Action 2.1 An employee survey will be developed and carried out by the end of September 2019. The survey will explore opportunities for sharing good practice more widely, and seek suggestions for more employee engagement.</p>	September 2019
	<p>Paragraph 60 - A staff survey was due to be completed in 2018 but has not yet been undertaken. It is expected to be carried out early in 2019. Specific attention should be given to staff engagement, which was highlighted by staff focus groups as an area of concern.</p>		Head of Personnel Services	<p>Action 2.2 Based on the findings of the employee survey, an action plan will be developed in consultation with the workforce and their representatives, with the results and action plan being reported to Elected Members by March 2020.</p>	March 2020
	<p>Paragraph 24 - Some staff felt that the CMT are not as visible to front-line staff as they would like. The council should ensure that existing good practice is shared across all resource directorates.</p>		Head of Personnel Services/Head of Communications and Strategy	<p>Action 2.3 An online good practice hub will be developed to share good practice across the council, drawing from a range of sources including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nominations for internal/national awards - External audits and inspections - Service review content (including Team Based Mini Reviews) 	August 2019

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3	<p>Elected members need to improve the public scrutiny of key decisions, performance and financial reports.</p> <p>Paragraph 32 - Members need to ensure that all key decisions are seen to be subject to an appropriate level of challenge and scrutiny at public meetings. This includes sufficient discussion and scrutiny of performance and financial reports.</p>	<p>The Council has commenced work on the mid-term review of standing orders on procedures, standing orders on contracts, Terms of Reference for Committees and Scheme of Delegation. The Review will be driven by and overseen by the Standards, Procedures and Advisory Forum chaired by the Leader of the Council.</p>	<p>Head of Administration and Legal Services</p>	<p>Action 3.1 Complete the ongoing review of the council's governance arrangements. Develop and implement an action plan based on the findings of the review.</p>	<p>May – December 2019</p>

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
4	<p>Members should, with the assistance of the personnel service, review their personal training and development needs and agree a plan to ensure that they have the skills required to effectively fulfil their scrutiny and challenge roles.</p> <p>Paragraph 34 - Members should, with the assistance of the personnel service, review their personal training and development needs and agree a plan to ensure that they have the skills required to effectively fulfil their scrutiny and challenge roles.</p>	<p>The scope of the training currently available to Elected Members could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Conduct briefings • Good governance training • Risk and audit training (CIPFA) • Masterclasses on a range of topics, including Community Empowerment Act, Community Engagement, Scrutiny and Participatory Budgeting • Specific SLC awareness sessions on, e.g., council budgets and various Resource policy updates • Role and responsibilities of members on the South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board. • Training for Planning Committee members. • Human Trafficking Awareness Raising • Media & Social Media Training – for Committee Chairs and those with public roles • Bring Your Own Device – bespoke training to support pilot programme • Language & Diversity training 	<p>Head of Administration and Legal Services</p> <p>Head of Administration and Legal Services</p>	<p>Action 4.1 Elected Members will be offered the opportunity to discuss training requirements with Personnel Services, which will inform an individual training plan for the forthcoming year.</p> <p>Action 4.2 Deliver the 2019/20 Elected Members Training Programme to equip Members with skills and knowledge to effectively fulfil their scrutiny and challenge roles.</p>	<p>October 2019</p> <p>Training delivered from March 2019 onward</p>

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
5	<p>Management should ensure that the indicators used to measure performance provide meaningful information and are appropriate to the reporting level.</p> <p>Paragraph 42 - The council acknowledged the need to review the number and quality of measures and targets included in IMPROVe and is carrying out a review... A revised approach is expected to be fully implemented for the 2019/20 reporting year.</p>	As part of the Resource Planning process, measures and targets have already been reviewed for inclusion in the 2019-20 Resource Plans.	Head of Communications and Strategy	<p>Action 5.1</p> <p>A comprehensive audit of performance reporting will be completed by December 2019. This will build on work to date on performance information requirements and reporting arrangements with a view to removing duplication, closing gaps, and improving the consistency and relevance of the performance reporting framework across the council.</p>	December 2019

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
6	<p>Management should review arrangements for assessing resident satisfaction, to ensure these are providing meaningful data to help shape future services.</p> <p>Paragraph 58 - The council carries out its own customer satisfaction surveys with service users, and the results from those surveys show higher satisfaction rates. However, the council accepts that there should be a wider focus, beyond service users, that considers views from other residents who may not currently be using those services, to provide meaningful data to help shape future services.</p>	The council already undertakes a wide range of consultation and engagement activity, however it is recognised that this needs to be more effectively co-ordinated and the standard made more consistent. The council recognises the need to improve its approach to community engagement by developing a place-based approach. To facilitate this, a new Community Participation and Empowerment Team (CPET) was established during 2018/19.	Head of Personnel Services Head of Personnel Services	<p>Action 6.1 Review consultation activity within the Council in order to rationalise and capitalise on the information which is being collected. This will ensure that decision making is shaped in the most effective manner by the information provided by residents.</p> <p>Action 6.2 Review current approaches to assessing resident satisfaction (see also action 10.1 below)</p>	June 2019 December 2019

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
7	<p>The Community Planning Partnership Board should take a more active role in driving partnership working, monitoring outcomes and feeding back to thematic subgroups.</p> <p>Paragraph 116 - While it is acknowledged that there are positive and effective relationships at group level, the CPP should build on these effective relationships and take a more active role in driving partnership working, monitoring outcomes and feeding back to groups.</p>	<p>A self assessment was undertaken by the CPP Board in spring 2019, facilitated by the Improvement Service. This included an examination of the Board's strategic role and objectives.</p>	<p>Head of Communications and Strategy</p>	<p>Action 7.1 Having completed an initial self-assessment facilitated by the Improvement Service, the CPP Board will now review the output from this exercise alongside the findings of the BVAR through a facilitated discussion which will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities within the CPP • Links to thematic groups • Monitoring and governance arrangements • Community engagement and the structures required to support community-based activity 	<p>March 2020</p>

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
8	<p>The council should review existing governance structures to ensure that they support community-based activity.</p> <p>Paragraph 126 - As part of the council's efforts to encourage communities to participate across South Lanarkshire, it should review existing governance structures to ensure that they support community-based activity. This should include consideration of whether these arrangements help to build community capacity and support people to be more active in their community. The review should include a consideration of whether further changes are required to the role and remit of area committees.</p>	<p>The new Community Participation and Empowerment Team (CPET) are leading the roll out of a new place-based approach to community based activity. Building upon the pilot work of neighbourhood planning, the team are engaging communities in community led planning activity which will result in locality plans being produced, delivered and monitored in a co-production model with communities.</p> <p>The work of CPET will focus on supporting communities facing the greatest inequalities to participate in the process and on ensuring that there is consistency and coordination of the work going on.</p> <p>In recognition of the diversity of the Council area, this work will then help shape future plans for local structures to allow communities to participate in decision making in ways which suit their needs and aspirations. These structures will be co-designed at locality levels. This will support the Council to deliver appropriate transformational services for each community.</p> <p>Work is required to examine options for Elected Member involvement in agreeing methods and structures by which SLC will increase community engagement/ involvement</p>	Community Participation and Empowerment Manager	<p>Action 8.1</p> <p>Linked to the review of CPP governance (action 7.1), the council will undertake a review of existing governance structures to ensure they support community-based activity.</p> <p>The review will be wide-ranging in scope and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New approaches to community-based activity, including people and place based work • The role and remit of area committees • The role of the CPP in supporting community-based activity 	March 2020

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
9	<p>Management should formulate a digital inclusion strategy to complement the council's digital strategy.</p> <p>Paragraph 155 - Our public focus group identified some concerns related to digital exclusion as more services move online. Research in this area has found that a significant proportion of people who cannot access digital services come from the most deprived and vulnerable groups (referred to as the 'seldom heard' in the council's Community Engagement Framework). Tackling this issue could be helpful in addressing the CPP's objective of 'tackling deprivation, poverty, and inequality'. The council's digital strategy makes no mention of the problem of digital exclusion. Although the council has some arrangements in place to address digital exclusion, there is no overarching strategy and corporate approach to tackling this issue. The council should prepare a digital inclusion strategy to complement its digital strategy.</p>	<p>The Digital Inclusion Strategy addresses the needs of those who could be in danger of being "left behind", or digitally excluded. As such, it is a counterbalance to our Digital Strategy which aims to put more Council services online.</p> <p>There are two main strands to this. Firstly, to ensure that we retain traditional means of interacting with the Council, including face to face (eg Q&As), telephony and correspondence. Secondly, to look at how we can assist citizens to use the internet, not just to access Council services, but also to get the economic and social benefits of being online (e.g., job applications, social media, etc.)</p>	Head of IT	<p>Action 9.1</p> <p>A strategy will be prepared outlining a programme of work to look at causes of digital exclusion and consider how the Council and partners can address these. This will be informed by, and support, other council initiatives including neighbourhood planning, tackling poverty, economic development and employability.</p>	February 2020

Ref	BVAR Recommendation	Context and council approach	Lead officer	Proposed action	Timescale
10	<p>Management should implement revised arrangements for community engagement to improve how it is used to shape services. Consistent and high-quality consultation across all services should be part of this.</p> <p>Paragraph 160 - The council has recognised that while current arrangements have some strengths there is a need to fundamentally revise its approach to community participation and engagement. This should include a focus on the different needs of rural and urban communities across South Lanarkshire.</p> <p>Paragraph 162 - There is variability in the quality of consultations, including some instances where the timing of the consultation and the type of questions being asked limited the quality of the results. The council accepts that they need to improve the consistency of consultation quality and advised us that this is a key priority for the new Community Participation and Empowerment Team.</p>	<p>The Community Empowerment Act (2015) placed a duty upon the council to involve local communities facing the greatest inequalities in the creation of local plans. The Council recognises that principles behind the act and the need for improved engagement with communities and devolved decision making. In response to this, a new Community Participation and Empowerment Team (CPET) was established during 2018/19.</p> <p>The team is leading the development of a new approach to engaging with communities. The team is working across council services to identify ways in which communities can be involved in shaping services.</p>	Community Participation and Empowerment Manager	<p>Action 10.1</p> <p>Recognising the need for improved engagement with communities and devolved decision making, the council established a new Community Participation and Empowerment Team (CPET) during 2018/19.</p> <p>The Team is undertaking a range of work, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of consultation activity across the council • Development of a new engagement strategy • Implementation of a place based approach to community engagement, including the further development of neighbourhood plans. • An awareness raising campaign which will include social media, web content and targeted communications. <p>A review of the progress made under the first year of this activity will be undertaken and reported to elected members by March 2020.</p>	March 2020