

Agenda Item	7
Report No	<b>RDB-12-23</b>

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Redesign Board

**Date:** 30 August 2023

**Report Title:** Public Sector Reform

**Report By:** Chief Executive

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 11 May 2023, Members considered a report which provided an update on the Local Governance Review ('LGR') being led by COSLA and the Scottish Government ('SG'). Members agreed this workstream would be progressed through the Redesign Board. This report sets out potential areas that Members may wish to consider to inform a Council position on the LGR.
- 1.2 The report also provides Members with an overview of the New Deal with Local Government signed by the SG and COSLA and known as the Verity House Agreement.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Note the update;
  - ii. Consider the three competencies and develop views on what "asks" the Council should make of SG;
  - iii. Consider how Members could help facilitate individual and community engagement in Democracy Matters 2 when it is launched; and
  - iv. Agree to hold a Member workshop to take this workstream forward.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – Potentially there are opportunities for greater fiscal flexibility.
- 3.2 Legal – Whilst there is nothing currently being proposed by the Scottish Government that has legal implications, the development of proposals under the Verity House Agreement could require legislative change in the future. In connection with this, Members are asked

to consider whether there is merit in seeking a change in the law to establish a Power of General Competence for local authorities in Scotland. See paragraph 6.3 for more details.

- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) – There are no specific community implications from this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – There are no direct Climate Change implications arising from this report. However, the work being taken forward by COSLA and the Scottish Government in relation to the New Deal has three shared themes, one of which is to “transform our economy through a just transition to deliver net zero, recognising climate change as one of the biggest threats to communities across Scotland”. Consequently, it is highly likely that there will be climate change implications arising as the work on the Agreement progresses.
- 3.5 Risk – There are no specific risk implications arising from this report.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) - There are no specific Health and Safety implications arising from this report.
- 3.7 Gaelic – There are no specific Gaelic Implications arising from this report.

#### **4. Local Governance Review**

- 4.1 At the Council meeting on 11 May 2023, Members considered a report which provided an update on the LGR being led by COSLA and the SG. Members agreed this workstream would be progressed through the Redesign Board. This briefing sets out potential areas that Members may wish to consider which would inform a Council position on the LGR.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1 The LGR was launched jointly by COSLA & SG in December 2017 to explore how power, responsibilities and resources are, and might better be, shared across spheres of government and with local communities. The objective was to look at how more power could be devolved to the local level. It sought to identify opportunities and alternative models which could be used to strengthen local decision making and democratic governance in ways that improve outcomes in local communities.
- 5.2 The LGR invited public bodies to submit proposals for alternative governance arrangements at local, regional, and national level. COSLA & Scottish Government have agreed that Single Island Model proposals together with all other proposals should be reviewed and considered.

#### **6. Competencies**

- 6.1 Central to COSLA’s submission to the LGR was the need to deliver three inter-related empowerments at the local level, which the SG has acknowledged are fundamentally important to the LGR:
  - **Community Empowerment:** This refers to the process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives.
  - **Functional Empowerment:** This refers to institutions and processes best capable of delivering services; addressing competences, scale, partnership, and integration.
  - **Fiscal Empowerment:** This aligns with ‘Functional Empowerment’ and refers to the transfer of financial responsibility to the sub-national bodies that will deliver the services.

- 6.2 The Redesign Board may wish to consider looking at each of these competencies and develop views on what each of these competencies would look like in a Highland context.
- 6.3 In addition, Members are asked to consider whether to seek a change in the law to establish a Power of General Competence for local authorities in Scotland. Currently Scottish councils are only able to take forward activities that are directly provided for in legislation. Whilst there is a degree of flexibility and interpretation regarding the Power of Wellbeing, there are still constraints, especially in relation to commercial activities. A General Power of Competence would enable councils to engage in all activities unless otherwise prohibited by other legislation. This is already a flexibility afforded to English councils and a case could be made as part of the Verity House Agreement as this fits well with two of the three Empowerments noted under 6.1 above.

## **7. Democracy Matters 2**

- 7.1 Democracy Matters 2 seeks to recommence the engagement with individuals and communities across Scotland. The intention is to develop further the SG's understanding of the type of local democratic systems and institutions required to place power and resources in local people's hands. The proposed joint launch with COSLA & SG is expected to take place later this year.
- 7.2 The Redesign Board may wish to consider how Members could help support and facilitate individual and community engagement in this process.

## **8. Influence and Engagement Opportunities**

- 8.1 COSLA is seeking to re-establish a Joint Political Oversight Group and associated programme management and is developing potential proposals for the establishment of a COSLA Special Interest Group to cover a number of interdependent areas including and related to LGR.
- 8.2 To ensure there is a Highland voice in shaping this agenda, the Council may wish, where possible, to seek representation on these groups.

## **9. New Deal with Local Government – Verity House Agreement**

- 9.1 On 30 June 2023 COSLA and the SG agreed a new Partnership Agreement, setting out the way they will work together, how they will approach shared priorities, and how they will engage.
- 9.2 They have agreed three shared priorities: -
- tackle poverty, particularly child poverty, in recognition of the joint national mission to tackle child poverty
  - transform our economy through a just transition to deliver net zero, recognising climate change as one of the biggest threats to communities across Scotland, and
  - deliver sustainable person-centred public services recognising the fiscal challenges, ageing demography and opportunities to innovate.

9.3 This agreement is a high-level statement of intent upon which will be built the following:

By end September 2023:

- Improved engagement on budgetary matters will be well underway, in preparation for the Scottish Budget in December.
- Conclude a Fiscal Framework between SG and Local Government, of which regular budget engagement will be a key part.
- Develop and agree a shared programme of activity underneath each of the three priorities, which will focus on the period between now and the next Scottish Council Elections in 2027.

By end October 2023:

- A first joint review of Specific Grants and In-Year Transfers to Local Government will be undertaken with a view to identifying those which can be baselined into the General Revenue Grant or General Capital Grant from financial year 2024-25, creating more freedom and flexibility for Councils to address our shared priorities in locally appropriate ways.

By end August 2024:

- Jointly consider the first year of implementation of the Verity House Agreement and the Fiscal Framework as a whole, and agree any alterations or addendums required to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of these two key documents.

9.4 Appendix 1 sets out the specific commitments contained in the Verity Agreement.

9.5 This August, COSLA and the Scottish Government have jointly held three in-person workshops to start to draw up the programme of activity sitting beneath each of the three priority themes. These were attended by senior Government officials, COSLA and local Government Senior Officers and a range of other public sector representatives. The Highland Council's Interim Chief Executive was able to attend two of these workshops – Sustainable Public Services; and A Just Transition to Deliver Net Zero - as a representative of SOLACE. The Council will continue to look to engage at every level as this work progresses. The background briefing for the workshops is attached at Appendix 2. Once the feedback from these sessions has been received, it will also be shared with the Redesign Board to help inform Members' consideration of the issues to take forward through COSLA as well as direct with the SG.

## **10. Summary**

10.1 In summary, Members are asked to consider the following as further work for Redesign Board: -

- How the three empowerments may be delivered in a Highland context, including whether to ask COSLA/SG to establish a Power of General Competence;
- Whether Members wish to encourage and facilitate individual and community engagement with Democracy Matters 2;
- Seek Highland political and officer representation on COSLA Groups; and
- Agree to hold a Redesign Workshop to take these matters forward and agree next steps.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 16 August 2023

Author: Gordon Morrison, Policy Manager

Attachments:

Appendix 1: Commitments within the Verity House Agreement

Appendix 2: Background Information for SG/COSLA Workshops

## **Appendix 1 – Commitments within the Verity Agreements**

### A: The way we will work together

1. A positive working relationship should be based on mutual trust and respect, recognising the need for effective and responsible joint leadership as we work on our shared priorities.
2. We will focus on the achievement of better outcomes locally for individuals and communities, and jointly develop simple structures for assurance and accountability that recognise local difference but reduce burdensome reporting.
3. Scottish Government and Local Government, through COSLA and its network of professional networks including SOLACE, will work together to consult and collaborate as early as possible in all policy areas where Local Government has a key interest, has a significant place-based leadership locus and/or is the key delivery mechanism.
4. Powers and funding for Local Government will be reviewed regularly to ensure adequacy and alignment with effective delivery of outcomes. The powers held by local authorities shall normally be full and exclusive. They may not be undermined or limited by another, central or regional, authority except as provided for by the law.
5. From this point onwards, the default position will be no ring-fencing or direction of funding, unless there is a clear joint understanding for a rationale for such arrangements for example where quantum needs to be assessed over a transitional period to ensure the costs are accurately understood. Additionally, current funding lines and in-year transfers will be reviewed ahead of the draft 2024-25 Budget Bill, with a view to merging into General Revenue Grant funding (more details will be set out in the Fiscal Framework).
6. Community Planning Partnerships will be recognised as a critical mechanism for the alignment of resource locally, focussed on prevention and early intervention, and delivering our shared priorities. Scottish Government will ensure that those public bodies that can contribute to community planning, play their part, including in involving local third sector and community bodies in promoting and improving wellbeing.
7. Where we disagree, we will seek to deal with these matters constructively in the spirit of cooperation, through the engagement mechanisms described in Section D of this agreement
8. Established negotiating arrangements for pay will be recognised and respected, and we will work jointly to ensure better strategic alignment on workforce issues across the public sector, including fair work

### B: How we will approach our shared priorities

9. At the heart of the decisions we take nationally and locally will be a commitment to the realisation of human rights for all.
10. Scottish Government will recognise and value the roles and responsibilities of Local Government and as such, will work to incorporate into Scots Law the European Charter of Local Self-Government as soon as possible.
11. In keeping with the Charter, both parties agree the maxim “local by default, national by agreement”. This recognises that public responsibilities shall generally be exercised, in preference, by those authorities which are closest to the citizen. Allocation of responsibility to another authority should weigh up the extent and nature of the task and requirements of efficiency and economy.

- 12.** Where Ministers seek to explore national delivery models for matters which directly concern Local Authorities, Local Authorities should be fully involved in the policy development process from the outset and appropriately involved in the decision making, and the rationale for considering national delivery be clearly evidenced and outcomes focussed.
- 13.** Where national approaches are being progressed, insofar as is possible and effective, there will be a presumption in favour of local flexibility, unless evidence of meeting outcomes dictates otherwise.
- 14.** Local Government will respect and value the roles and responsibilities of the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament, and all parties will act in good faith in discussions where there is clear rationale for national approaches, recognising the benefits these can bring for people and communities.
- 15.** Scottish and Local Government will work together to conclude the Local Governance Review by the end of this parliamentary term, with an equal focus on the fiscal, functional and community empowerment that will enable public service reform, innovation and collective, whole system improvement.
- 16.** Scottish and Local Government will work together strategically to advance public service reform, building on the joint work under the Covid Recovery Strategy. This will include working constructively and quickly to remove barriers which hinder flexibility focusing initially on those common challenges identified through the Covid Recovery Strategy, and to enable the design and delivery of services for and around people.
- 17.** Scottish Government and Local Government commit to evidence-based policy making, using data to understand issues and to then identify the most appropriate means of tackling them.
- 18.** Any required reporting and data collection will be proportionate, fit-for-purpose and will support transparency, accountability and future decision-making at both a local and national level.
- 19.** Through the development of a robust Fiscal Framework, which will include meaningful early budget engagement, the Local Government Settlement will be simplified and consolidated, clear routes to explore local revenue raising and sources of funding will be established, and wherever possible multi-year certainty will be provided to support strategic planning and investment.

#### C: Accountability and Assurance

- 20.** Scottish Government and Local Government will jointly agree a monitoring and accountability framework, drawing on proportionate reporting and data collection, to provide evidence and visibility over progress towards agreed outcomes.
- 21.** Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission Scotland will be invited to support and provide independent evaluation of progress.
- 22.** Existing strategic and service level plans and associated reporting will be streamlined and refined to be utilised within this assurance process without creating duplication. This will include but not be limited to Local Outcome Improvement Plans, Children's Services Plans, Child Poverty Plans and Climate Change Plans.

#### D: Engagement

- 23.** The First Minister and COSLA President will meet twice a year to discuss progress towards shared priorities, achievement of better outcomes for people and communities, and other key issues.

- 24.** COSLA's Leadership Sounding Board and a group of key Cabinet Members led by the Deputy First Minister will meet quarterly - at least two of these meetings will be informal.
- 25.** A robust and regular process for early budget engagement will be embedded in the Fiscal Framework, with an underlying principle of "no surprises".
- 26.** Through a refreshed role and remit, Scottish Government's Place Directors will act as ambassadors for Local Government and Community Planning Partnerships across portfolios and programmes and will build a strong understanding about place-based leadership and the local plans that focus on our shared priorities.
- 27.** The Strategic Review Group (SRG)<sup>ii</sup> will provide assurance that Scottish and Local Government are maintaining all commitments set out in this agreement.
- 28.** Portfolio and programme level engagement (both official and political e.g. COSLA Spokespeople and Cabinet Secretaries/Ministers) will support this overarching governance through regular and meaningful joint oversight, reporting to the SRG.





**Verity House Agreement – August 2023 Workshops  
Briefing for Local Government Representatives**

**BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Many thanks for agreeing to attend the first set of workshops on either the 1<sup>st</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> August at Verity House. This will be the first of a series of engagements on how we work together, what we prioritise to deliver on the 3 shared priorities in the [Verity House Agreement](#), and how we develop joint accountability and assurance arrangements. Given the evidence, our collective thinking needs to focus on **what we need to do**

**KEY POINTS**

- These workshops are the first step- we will not complete a programme of work at these sessions!
- COSLA will be facilitating engagement sessions with wider LG stakeholders and professional associations over the next few months;
- The breakout themes are just for organising the discussion – we all need to think holistically across all aspects of e.g. poverty, and challenge the status quo, being honest about what is working and what is not within LG, and between SG and LG;
- Local Government has well established principles that we should use to guide the discussion– COSLA Plan and SOLACE/IS transformation work;
- Local Government already has a large range of well-established outcomes and indicator frameworks – we need to select the best of what we have and be positive and proactive about using these, and be willing to be held to account locally;
- Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission have a key role to play in relation to accountability and assurance.

**differently/change/join up in order to make more progress across the 3 really challenging areas of poverty, economy/net zero; and public service reform.**

**WORKSHOP FORMAT**

At each workshop, a short overview will be jointly provided by Scottish Government and COSLA but the most important part of the day is the discussions at the breakout sessions- proposed themes are listed in the table below. Although you will be asked to sign up to 2 themes (one for each of the two breakout sessions), it is vital to consider each theme holistically, and in relation to how it relates to the other 5.

**WORKSHOP THEMES**

<b>Poverty (1<sup>st</sup> Aug AM)</b>	<b>Person-centred public services (1<sup>st</sup> PM)</b>	<b>Economy/Net Zero (10<sup>th</sup> AM)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximising household resources (debt management/reduction, fair work and employability)</li> <li>• Education &amp; Skills (inc Digital)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investing in prevention ( moving away from crisis intervention)</li> <li>• Using digital and data</li> <li>• Cross organisation partnerships (including maximising the impact of CPPs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating NZ equality (opportunity, affordability, skills)</li> <li>• Local Economic development</li> <li>• Education and Skills</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole family support (including care experienced)</li> <li>• Improving outcomes in early years</li> <li>• Preventing health and wellbeing inequality</li> <li>• Housing and homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint responses to future service provision (Place based services - barriers and opportunities)</li> <li>• Levers and enablers (incl fiscal)</li> <li>• Putting “Local by default, national by agreement” into practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built environment and public sector decarbonisation (housing, public buildings etc)</li> <li>• Fiscal incentives and innovative use of NZ public sector funding</li> <li>• NZ transport</li> </ul>
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## LOCAL GOVERNMENT’S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

COSLA’s aspirations for Local Government are set out in [Our Plan](#) that was signed off by Convention for the period 2022- 2027, and contained the following core principles:

- Strong local democracy
- Delivery outcomes
- Community focus
- Local choice
- Local Partnership working

SOLACE and Improvement Service have outlined their ambitions for transformation of Local Government and agreed the following guiding principles:

<b>Guiding Principle</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
Family First	Our starting point will always be to look within the local government family for opportunities to share resources and services. We will consider external service delivery options (including from public service partners) in areas where we do not have the necessary expertise or capacity within the family, where it makes sense locally to deliver place-based models or where we need to quickly procure a service from the market.
Parity of Esteem	All local authorities will participate on an equal footing and have the same opportunity to contribute as part of the family i.e. our work is not based on an assumption that larger local authorities will do more for smaller local authorities. Instead, we will seek to exploit the capability and capacity wherever it rests.
Mutual Aid	<i>We will explore opportunities to share resources and services for mutual benefit, to enhance the resilience and sustainability not only of individual local authorities, but Local Government as a sector.</i>
Collective Leadership	As leaders of change, we will create a values system in the way that we work together and take responsibility for the success of the sector as a whole, not just our individual local authorities. And our approach will support the development of future leaders in that values system.
32 solution first	When introducing new national services/initiatives or digital platforms, our starting point will be to explore if there is one solution that would suit all 32 local authorities, before seeking regional or local solutions.

***At the workshops, it is important to ensure that the priorities agreed align with the principles in each of these high-level frameworks.***

## OUTCOMES AND JOINT ACCOUNTABILITY

At each of the breakout sessions, delegates will be asked to define what we want to achieve (outcomes), and how we will measure progress locally and nationally (indicators).

In jointly agreeing a monitoring and accountability framework, from a LG perspective, it is vital we build our approach from existing LG sector-led approaches to improvement and accountability (e.g., LGBF; Self-Assessment; Peer Review; Solace/IS Transformation work; LG Data Platform). It will be important to avoid the creation of a new assurance/performance framework along the lines of the centralised approach being introduced in England by [The Office for Local Government](#) (Oflog), the new local government performance body in England, which aims to provide *'authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of LG and support its improvement'*, including an [online LA data explorer](#)).

### **Rationale for drawing on LGBF within the joint framework**

- LG already has its own well established performance improvement framework - LGBF
- Suite of cost, performance, satisfaction and outcome measures covering all areas of LG
- Sector led approach (in contrast with new 'centralised' approach proposed by Oflog)
- Mature – >10 years
- Ownership by all 32 authorities (implementation & resourcing)
- Oversight provided by LGBF Board – Solace/COSLA/Professional Associations
- Well embedded within [local improvement, decision making, scrutiny and public accountability processes](#)
- Existing [good practice guidance](#) on how to use LGBF locally as a key improvement tool
- Established processes and infrastructure for sector wide practice sharing (e.g., Family Groups)
- Advanced understanding of variation observed within the data which recognises local differences (local context, priorities or performance)
- Part of wider LG improvement toolkit (e.g., self-assessment, peer review – in development)
- Mapped to National Performance Framework
- Endorsed by Accounts Commission/Audit Scotland as positive example of sector led improvement and recognised within statutory public performance reporting duties (& successful in reducing scrutiny landscape)
- Utilises existing data which reduces reporting burden, and ensures richer insight is created from that data which is reported (links with ambition in Local Government Data Platform)
- Transparent with established local and national reporting structures, and publicly available dashboard
- [Robust](#) and [credible](#)
- Continuous improvement of suite of measures by LG to ensure policy relevance.
- Existing measures can be mapped to 3 PA priorities – with the potential to enhance
- **Alternative/additional approach would risk duplication and strategic “deprioritisation” of existing approach**

## Mapping existing LGBF measures to 3 Partnership Agreement priorities

Tackle poverty, particularly child poverty	Deliver sustainable person-centred public services	Transform our economy through a just transition to deliver net zero
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent Arrears</li> <li>• Scottish Welfare Fund</li> <li>• Discretionary Housing Payments</li> <li>• Council Tax collection</li> <li>• Child Poverty</li> <li>• Living Wage</li> <li>• Claimant Count</li> <li>• Employment support</li> <li>• Money advice services</li> <li>• Housing Quality</li> <li>• Educational outcomes for most deprived</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Sustainability e.g., Reserves</li> <li>• Satisfaction with public services</li> <li>• LG staff absence</li> <li>• Adult Social Care (e.g., Homecare/Care at Home provision, satisfaction, quality, delayed discharges and readmission rates).</li> <li>• Early Years Provision and quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area Wide Carbon Emissions (within LA scope)</li> <li>• Council Emissions due to Electricity, Gas, Transport</li> <li>• Recycling</li> <li>• Expenditure on Environmental Services (e.g., Waste Management)</li> <li>• Local Procurement</li> <li>• Housing Energy Efficiency</li> <li>• Corporate Asset</li> </ul>

### Some opportunities to enhance/build upon LGBF

- There are opportunities to tie in with the LGBF Board’s strategic focus on adopting a more assertive role on behalf of councils in using the LGBF to advocate for, demonstrate ownership of and ensure a strong narrative around the sector-wide performance improvement agenda. It is proposed that this approach would involve using the LGBF to facilitate deep dives into areas of critical policy importance for the Local Government sector to promote where progress is being made and identify where there are opportunities for performance improvement, and importantly tying in a new offer of peer review/collaborative improvement to support and drive change (potential to align these deep dives with PA priorities).
- Potential to include further measures/disaggregation to strengthen assurance/reporting in relation to 3 PA priorities (this could include drawing from other sector led frameworks e.g., SLAED)
- Opportunity to restructure and re-present the data/analysis within the LGBF to provide more focussed picture of improvement in relation to 3 PA priorities (e.g., possible to provide an analysis of improvement against an aggregated suite of ‘poverty’ measures)
- Identify where existing data could be supplemented with other sources, including qualitative evidence of progress.
- Build in council profile/strategic context within local (and national?) assessment of progress against selected indicators. Incumbent on LAs to set the context - a role for place directors/peer review?

### Role for LG Data Platform

- The Local Government Data Platform represents an ambitious transformation programme to deliver improvements in the way Local Government manages and uses data. This ground-breaking initiative represents a collaboration between the Improvement Service, COSLA, Solace, LGDO (with support from PHS and SG) to improve and streamline the data reporting landscape and to provide enhanced value from the data which is returned.

- Phase 1 of the LG Data Platform project represented a discovery phase aiming to better understand the complexity in the current reporting landscape in order to improve governance and to identify opportunities for streamlining reporting requirements and processes.
- So far, this project has mapped all existing data returns councils are required to provide, highlighting an acceleration in the volume and burden of reporting in recent years, and a lack of focus on outcome improvement. The New Deal for Local Government allows us to think differently about how we can work together to make better use of data to drive the desired improvement in outcomes.
- The recommendations from this phase include:
  - LG & SG should use the New Deal for Local Government and underpinning partnership agreement to ensure a focus on reporting which is essential to evidence improvement in outcomes in partnership, ensuring that we take account of existing data reporting and consider streamlining and reducing where possible.
  - LG & SG should work together to:
    - Build trust around delivery, and a focus on only the data required to evidence outcome improvement.
    - Develop a protocol and governance mechanism to agree and implement future reporting (+online register of data returns)
    - Reduce the overall volume of data reporting by reviewing relevance, usefulness and duplication
    - Ensure greater use and re-use of collected data in driving improvement in outcomes
    - Review the extent to which the Crerar recommendations have been implemented
  - The IS, COSLA & Digital Office should work with Scottish Government to seek opportunities for improvements in national co-ordination, orchestration, standardisation, and (where applicable) automation to reduce burden.
  - The IS, COSLA & Digital Office should work with Councils to prioritise local improvements in data quality and data standards

## **Examples of Local Government sector-led frameworks**

### [Local Government Benchmarking Framework](#)

This provides a self-service dashboard of information about how all Scottish councils perform in delivering services to local communities. It provides evidence of trends in how councils allocate resources, the performance of key council services and levels of public satisfaction with the major services provided and commissioned by councils. The rich data supports evidence-based comparisons between similar councils and over time, providing an essential improvement tool for Councils.

### [Community Planning Outcomes Profile](#)

The CPOP provides a self-service tool to help Community Planning Partnerships assess if the lives of people in their community are improving. It contains core measures on important life outcomes including early years, older people, safer/stronger communities, health and wellbeing, and economy, and provides a consistent basis for measuring outcomes and inequalities within local areas.

### [Sub- Council Population Projections](#)

The IS developed a national set of sub-council population projections. This provides a set of population projections for Multi-Member Wards or other small areas in all of Scotland's council areas. The projections provide a standardised set of projections at a level not currently made available by the National Records of Scotland as well as a basis for undertaking bespoke population analysis for Councils with the capacity to do so.

#### [SLAED Indicators Framework](#)

The SLAED Indicators Framework is a 'basket' of measures developed by [SLAED](#) with input from the Improvement Service and the Scottish Government. The Framework is used by all Scottish Local Authority Economic Development services to provide a consistent basis for measuring the economic performance of Councils and highlighting the central role of economic outcomes in the SOA and the prevention agenda.

#### [Early Learning and Childcare Delivery](#)

Since the beginning of the expansion of funded early learning and childcare (ELC), the Improvement Service has collected and analysed data on the progress of the delivery of the expansion programmes across local authorities. The objective of these data collections is to understand the status of the ELC sector across the country regarding uptake, workforce and capacity at regular intervals.

#### [Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework](#)

The Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework have been developed by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Improvement Service and responds to the expectations set out in *Equally Safe*, in relation to effective performance management. This resource supports VAWPs to capture key performance data and facilitate a consistent approach to measuring and reporting on the progress being made to achieve the ambitions set out in *Equally Safe* at a local level. The IS collects performance data from VAWP's using this framework, and produces local level reports which are shared with individual partnerships to support improvement.

#### [Common Advice Performance Management Reporting Framework](#)

The CAPMRF brings together key performance data from local authority funded money advice and welfare rights services. The report aims to help 'tell the story' of the value of advice services, as well as provide a mechanism for councils to benchmark their performance and identify scope to further improve the impact and value for money of these services.

#### [HOPS Planning Performance Framework](#)

The Planning Performance Framework (PPF), introduced by planning authorities in 2012, was developed by [Heads of Planning Scotland \(HOPS\)](#), in conjunction with the Scottish Government. The Framework captures key elements of a high-performing planning service and comprises a mix of qualitative and quantitative performance measures that provides a toolkit of indicators. It offers a balanced measurement of the overall quality of each planning service and is used to promote continuous improvement.

### **ROLE OF AUDIT SCOTLAND AND THE ACCOUNTS COMMISSION**

Both bodies have been invited to be part of the accountability and assurance arrangements, building on the arrangements already in place around audit and best value.

The Accounts Commission holds councils and other local government bodies in Scotland to account and helps drive improvement by reporting to the public on their performance. To

provide assurance and to help support improvement, the Commission uses its statutory responsibilities in two ways - reporting on individual local government bodies (councils, Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) and other boards and committees); and reporting on a national basis on matters affecting all of local government.

The aim of the Commission is to drive forward the accountability and transparency councils must have to their communities, as well as helping councils deliver change that improves people's lives. Audit has a crucial role in holding local government to account on behalf of the people who use and rely on their services, and the Commission receives reports from Audit Scotland on a regular basis.

Audit Scotland and the Commission are introducing a new approach to Best Value audit to reduce the scrutiny burden on councils further. Best Value (BV) audit work is now fully integrated into annual audit work from 2023/24. The new arrangements are presented below and should be considered as part of any framework going forward.

#### *Annual National Thematic BV reports*

- each year the Commission will identify a theme for BV thematic which will be undertaken as part of the local audit in all councils and reported to the council;
- An annual national thematic BV report will be compiled from the information in the 32 Annual Audit Reports (ARR) to provide a Scottish picture
- The theme being examined in the current audit year is **leadership** of the development of new local strategic priorities by councils following the local government elections in May 2022.
- Work is currently underway to develop proposals for the theme next year but this is likely to centre on workforce innovation.

#### *S102 BV reporting*

- BV work will be reported in Annual Audit Reports (AARs) including annual risk based, follow up and thematic BV work
- The AAR for each council to be reviewed by the Commission under the cover of a s102 CoA report once over the five-year audit appointment.
- This provides the Commission with assurance on BV in each individual council
- A schedule of 8 councils have been agreed for the first and second years of the audit appointment period.

Each council will have its AAR, with a Controller of Audit cover report summarising the BV findings, considered by the Commission once between October 2023 and August 2027. This commitment maintains a regular and consistent focus on the performance of all of Scotland's 32 council, an important principle for the Commission.

**COSLA and Improvement Service, July 2023**

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