

Agenda Item	7
Report No	AC/10/24

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: **Audit Committee**

Date: **21 March 2024**

Report Title: **Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) Reviews**

Report By: **Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides details of work to date in implementing the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) approach to self-assessment and a planned programme of reviews which are targeted towards areas where improvement is required.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note:
- i. The self-assessment which is taking place using the PSIF framework.
 - ii. The next steps set out in section 6.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource Staff time will be required to undertake the PSIF reviews and monitor progress. However, prioritising self-assessment to those areas where improvements are required will ensure that staff time is targeted effectively.
- 3.2 Legal & Risk: Delivering Best Value is a statutory duty and an external audit of Best Value is an important process for the Council and carries with it a reputational risk should the agreed improvements not be achieved.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural), Climate Change / Carbon Clever, Gaelic: There are no implications arising from this report.
- 3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) There are no health and safety risks arising from this report.

4. Background

- 4.1 The purpose of self-assessment is to better understand how the Council is performing and to identify areas for improvement. It should be a continuous process and is a key part of ensuring that duties under Best Value are achieved. The Council is scrutinised by its External Auditors as to how it is meeting its Best Value duties.
- 4.2 In response to recommendations by our External Auditors, the Council agreed that it would review its approach to self-assessment and implement a new corporate approach to support the Council's continuous improvement and efficiencies agendas.
- 4.3 The Council adopted the [Improvement Service's Public Service Improvement Framework \(PSIF\)](#) as its corporate self-assessment approach to support improvement. This provides a structured approach which enables a comprehensive review of activities and results.

5. PSIF progress in 2023/24

- 5.1 The Corporate Performance Business Partners have been working with the Executive Chief Officers and their management teams to agree on areas where improvements are required and where PSIF self-assessment might assist. To date the following progress has been made.
- 5.2 A Self-Assessment of the Health and Social Care Senior Management Team (SMT) has been completed. This involved each member of SMT completing a self-assessment questionnaire. The results were collated and reviewed at a Consensus Session. Six key areas for improvement were identified and an Improvement Plan agreed following an Improvement Planning Session. The Improvement Plan will be regularly reviewed by SMT to make sure that the actions are delivered and agreed outcomes achieved.
- 5.3 The Climate Change Team has been created through a variety of teams coming together over the last few years. They carried out a PSIF assessment to shape the culture within the team and improve communication within the team. They further reviewed how to improve engagement with other services to share knowledge regarding Climate Change and Energy. A report and improvement plan have been drafted and some of the agreed activities have begun.
- 5.4 Within Education and Learning, self-evaluation takes place through the Education Scotland frameworks and is reported on the [Education Scotland Website](#). However, a comparison exercise has been undertaken between this framework and PSIF to identify any functions outside of the school settings that could benefit from a PSIF review. Most recently discussions have taken place with the Service's SMT with a view to carrying out an assessment of the handling of FOI requests and correspondence within HQ.
- 5.5 A cross service PSIF is being scoped out to cover the new Short Term Lets Regime. This involves both Licensing and Environmental Health with meetings planned for after Easter.
- 5.6 Other reviews are being considered in relation to the Digital Strategy implementation and the ICT Service desk.

6. Next Steps

6.1 The Corporate Performance Business Partners will continue to work with Service SMTs to identify areas for improvement which could benefit from using the PSIF framework. This requires service management to commit time to the preparation, reporting and monitoring of actions and must be fitted in with other service priorities.

6.2 In their Best Value Thematic report on Leadership which was considered by Committee on 24th January 2024 Audit Scotland stated the following regarding the rollout of PSIF:

“The council need to increase the pace of the roll out so that best value is achieved across the local authority. We will continue to monitor the progress of this over the audit appointment.”

In order to meet this requirement, it is acknowledged that a more robust approach to PSIF reviews is necessary. Therefore, a report will be taken to the Corporate Management Team to address this point with the aim of agreeing an annual programme of PSIF reviews across the Council. Committee will be kept updated on progress.

Designation: Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance

Date: 4th March 2024

Author: Miles Watters, Corporate Performance & Information Governance Manager

Background Papers: