

Statutory Performance Indicator Narrative Report 2018/19

Highland Council has a statutory duty under the Local Government in Scotland Act (2003) to deliver Best Value in the provision of its services. The Accounts Commission has a statutory power to define the performance information that Councils must publish. The Accounts Commission issued The Publication of Information (Standards of Performance) Direction 2015 which covers reporting up until the financial year ending 31st March 2019. The Highland Council is required to provide information and data that covers the Direction below:

Achievement of Best Value

SPI 1: Each council will report a range of information setting out:

- Its performance in improving local public services (including with partners).
- Its performance in improving local outcomes (including with partners).
- Its performance in engaging with communities and service users, and responding to their views and concerns
- Its performance in achieving Best Value, including its use of performance benchmarking; options appraisal; and use of resources. Local Government Benchmarking Framework

Local Government Benchmarking Framework

SPI 2: Each council will report its performance in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.

Figure 1: The Publication of Information (Standards of Performance) Direction 2015

The Audit Direction covers a wide range of activity and has a focus on partnership working and how Councils work with their communities. This report highlights a range of examples and case studies providing evidence of how Highland Council has fulfilled its duties in 2018/19. It should be considered alongside the Council's annual report on its Statutory Performance Indicators.

Performance in Improving Local Public Services (including with partners)

The examples below highlight Highland Council's performance in improving local services (including with partners):

- **Council Programme**

The Council's key strategic priorities are outlined in its programme "[Local Voices, Highland Choices 2017-22](#)". There are five main themes: A Place to Live; A Place to Learn; A Place to Thrive; A Welcoming Place; and Your Highland Council. In 2018/19, there were 30 commitments with a strong focus on communities including: putting communities at the heart of service design and delivery; working collaboratively for economic growth; a whole system approach to education and children's services; and protecting the most vulnerable in our communities. The Corporate Plan sets out how the Council's Programme will be delivered.

The [Annual Performance report 2018/19](#) for the period 01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 showed good progress being made in delivering the Programme. 77% of the commitments (23 of the 30) were either completed, on target or performance was being maintained. For 7 commitments (23%) there was mixed performance or no significant progress.

- **Redesign of Highland Council**

The Redesign of Highland Council has been ongoing since 2016 and has delivered an effective and dynamic method of challenging how our Services are delivered, with involvement from staff, Elected Members and Trade Unions.

In 2018/19, the Redesign Board oversaw peer reviews on Trade Services, Children's Commissioned Services, and Agency and Temporary Workers. Recommendations are being implemented. Two new reviews have been commenced, on Catering Services and on Engineering Services. Lean reviews have continued with work on cash collection and trades services, and further proposals to be considered. A report on progress and future activity is on the [Council website](#).

A progress review was completed in September 2018, and in February 2019 the Council approved £37.456m of savings to be delivered over the next three years through its Change Programme, "A Sustainable Highland", which focusses on four key themes:

1. Making the Council more efficient;
2. Commercialism and Income Generation;
3. Redesign and Improvement and
4. A Flexible and Well Managed Workforce.

Elected Members agreed that it was essential for this transformation to be properly resourced and established the Change Fund (£2.225m). The Change Programme will include a wide range of projects and will implement recommendations arising from the Redesign Board and Commercial Board.

The six priority projects for the first phase of the Change Fund are Education Transformation; Care Placement Services Programme; Trades Review; Transport and Grey Fleet; Waste Strategy; and Income Generation.

- **Multi Year Budget Planning**

The Council's Administration, and in particular the Administration budget group, worked with Council officers to explore areas of opportunity for budget savings. A budget engagement exercise was undertaken throughout November 2018 with the intention of informing revisions to the Council's Programme, the Council's three-year budget, and supporting how the Council works in partnership with communities. This engagement used a range of methods:

- Public, staff, and member engagement sessions
- A video and supporting public engagement leaflet ([Budget Booklet](#))
- An online survey
- Budget Challenge – an online tool to consider where budget should be spent
- Facebook chat sessions and accompanying online polls
- A dedicated email address for comments and general responses.

Over 50 separate engagement sessions were held in November and December 2018 throughout Highland with the aim of speaking to communities and staff to hear about their ideas for change and their priorities. An online budget engagement survey was circulated to community groups and to staff, and promoted through our third sector partners, on the Council's website, and through social media. 470 completed responses were received.

The 2018/19 budget process focussed on five themes; Redesign; Prioritisation; Efficiency; Income; and Commercial. It is clear that any budgetary planning work should look ahead more than one year to help to manage future uncertainties. The approval of a three-year budget covering the period from 2019/20 to 2021/22 forms a key part of the Council's strategic planning process, tying in to the Council's Programme and workforce plan.

- **Transformational Change in Education**

Analysis of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data has initiated a review and a re-design of Highland Council's education services. By the end of this process, capacity will be in place to improve outcomes for all children and young people, ensuring

that all available resources are used wisely and efficiently. In November 2018, conferences with Head-Teachers were held, and school performance measured against national data was shared. Further meetings took place with Head-Teachers in January and February to discuss how best to collaborate to improve and transform education. Online methods have also been used to encourage participation in these discussions.

Following this, in May 2019 a change team of 5 Head-Teachers was seconded to the Education Transformation Programme for one year to help embed identified improvements in the education system. Improvements will be driven by leading families of schools towards equity and excellence which will see schools with similarities effectively working together offering a much-needed level of support and challenge that Highland has not had before.

There will also be the roll-out of a new comprehensive training strategy for all school-based staff and Highland-wide collaboration in responding to the priorities recently identified by Head-Teachers to improve education outcomes.

- **City Region Deal**

The Inverness and Highland City Region Deal totals £315 million and is a ten-year agreement. Funding is being used to enhance digital connectivity, digital healthcare, skills, innovation and infrastructure. Projects are being delivered in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the University of the Highlands and Islands, Albyn Housing and High Life Highland. There are 14 projects which include:

- Inverness Castle redevelopment
- Castle Viewpoint
- Northern Innovation Hub
- UHI Centre for Health Innovation
- Digital
- Science Skills Academy
- Wi-Fi
- Fit House
- Affordable Housing
- Longman Land Reclamation
- Transport Infrastructure (Transport Scotland)
- Transport Infrastructure (HC)
- Employability and Skills
- Air Access

The Wi-Fi project has concluded and has improved local public services (working with HIE) by providing a free open public Wi-Fi system in Inverness and 14 other areas for visitors, residents and businesses. This has also increased citizen engagement and improved social and digital inclusion.

The completion of the first projects under affordable housing have improved local public services by delivering a total of 35 new Mid-Market Rent opportunities.

The full [annual report](#) providing more detail on the projects and progress of the City Region Deal is available on the Council website. The performance of the City Region Deal has been promoted through press releases including:

- [City Deal investment already bringing local benefit](#)
- [City-Region Deal update](#)
- [What next for Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal?](#)
- [Inverness and Highland City Region Deal projects delivered as governance improved.](#)
- [Decision on Heathrow opportunity to deliver on City Region Deal commitments](#)

- **High Life Highland**

High Life Highland (HLH) is the Council arm's length organisation which develops and promotes opportunities in culture, learning, sport, leisure, health and wellbeing throughout the Highlands. Particular achievements in 2018/19 are presented in the [winter newsletter](#) and also in [progress reports](#) which are presented to the Council twice per year.

HLH has been selected as a finalist in the Community Leisure UK Awards 2019 under the Innovation category. These awards recognise, showcase and honour the extraordinary impact of public leisure and cultural services throughout England, Scotland and Wales.

Music Tuition – the transfer of music tuition from the Highland Council to HLH has progressed well with the number of school pupils undertaking lessons increasing by 14% since the service transferred. A website and an online booking facility have been developed which has made it easier for parents to enrol their children.

- **West Link**

The [West Link](#) (Inverness West-Link road and associated amenity and leisure improvements) is an ambitious project and a key commitment in achieving infrastructure for growth. Progress to date includes:

The West Link funding and programme was approved in 2015, and the project has met all its programmed milestones and remains on target to complete within the available budget.

Stage 1 of the West link - which included the Canal Parks Enhancement, was completed in December 2017. The golf course and new clubhouse was completed and became fully into use in July 2019.

West Link Stage 2 commenced on site in June 2019 and is programmed to be complete in December 2020.

The West Link project contributes to the Council's performance on improving local services in a number of ways such as enhanced active travel linkages within the city, improving traffic delays and congestion, and new leisure facilities at Canal parks run by HLH. It has enabled the development of significant areas for housing and other economic development at Ness-side and Torvean and the Benefit to Cost Ratio is 3.86, representing nearly £4 of benefit for every £1 of public investment.

- **Highland Council's British Sign Language Plan**

The Council published its first British Sign Language (BSL) Plan in October 2018. The Plan reflects the goals of the National BSL Plan published by the Scottish Government in 2017 and is a requirement of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. To develop the Plan, the Council worked with partner agencies to find out what is important to BSL users in Highland. This helped the partners to develop a coordinated approach to the issues raised. Much of this engagement work was led by the Council during March-July 2018, and the methods included:

- A focus group held for young BSL users in school.
- A drop-in event in Inverness, well attended by BSL users and their families.
- A focus group with adults in Wick.
- A survey which could be completed online or in paper format.
- Comments were also welcomed by email and through video clips.

- **Brexit**

During 2018/19, The Council engaged with and contributed to planning through local, regional, national, European and professional networks. At a meeting in September 2018

Elected Members agreed four policy statements to inform Council lobbying following exit from the EU covering agriculture, inward migration, access to EU markets, and regional policy. The Council hosted a seminar in November 2018 for Elected Members, partners and business organisations to raise awareness of the need to prepare for EU exit and to seek views on the most important policy areas to lobby on. Staff have been trained on pertinent issues, with this hosted by EU Citizens Rights Project Scotland. A [public webpage](#) has been set up to describe the work of the Council and partners and to provide more information for our EU staff and citizens.

- **Human Resources**

A recruitment campaign was delivered resulting in the appointment of the Chief Executive, Donna Manson, in Autumn 2018. This process involved Elected Members, union partners and external stakeholders such as HIE, NHS Highland, UHI and Third Sector reps.

An awareness session for managers and Human Resources staff on “Supporting Staff with Autism” was delivered in partnership with local charity, Autism Initiatives. This provided a number of ideas and techniques to assist keeping staff with a diagnosis of autism in work. Communication and environment are two of the most important areas for development and to provide reasonable adjustments.

Four Council officers were presented with their Trades Union Congress (TUC) health and safety diplomas in 2018. Four staff from partner organisations were also recognised. Access to such training is a result of the Council’s Partnership and Charter arrangements for safety representatives.

- **Reduction in Staff Travel**

This project focussed on reducing staff business travel to reduce spend and carbon emissions. Actions included reviewing the travel hierarchy, related policies and introducing car clubs as an alternative to grey fleet travel (staff using their own vehicles for business). Staff were also encouraged not to travel unless it was necessary.

Through the project, it became clear that there was a lack of monitoring and control over staff mileage claims. To resolve this a “grey fleet report” is now produced monthly bringing together data from payroll as well as Human Resources. This report is also used to determine where to expand the car club. Travel spend was reduced by £400,000 in 2018/19 and grey fleet mileage was reduced by 1.1m miles. The project was nominated for a Scottish Transport Award.

- **Early Years Modern Apprenticeship Programme**

The Council are facilitating the training and qualification of 250 Early Years Practitioners to support the Early Years expansion programme. This will be funded by the apprenticeship levy over five years and will achieve savings of £169,000 by bringing training in-house.

- **Service Performance**

Each Council Services regularly reports its performance to the relevant strategic committees and performance reports are available on the Council’s website through the following links:

- [Care and Learning](#)
- [Corporate Resources](#)
- [Community Services](#)
- [Development and Infrastructure](#)

The Council is currently transforming its structure and moving from four Services to eight. This will be reflected in future Service performance reporting. The Council’s website also publishes information on performance through news releases, for example:

[Leader Responds to Performance Report](#)
[Council's Benefits Service commended for outstanding performance](#)
[Highland Council demonstrates improving performance](#)
[Your voice – Your council – Your future](#)
[Highland tenant engagement work recognised nationally](#)

The Council also promotes its performance through various social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Flickr and through the quarterly magazine “Highpoints”:

[High Points Issue 10 Spring 2018](#)
[High Points Issue 11 Summer 2018](#)
[High Points Issue 12 Winter 2018](#)
[High Points Issue 13 Spring 2019](#)

Performance in Improving Local Outcomes (including with partners)

The examples below highlight Highland Council's performance in improving local outcomes (including with partners):

- **Trading Standards**

The Trading Standards team have seen a full transition in how its work is carried out and now operates a targeted, evidence-based model. This has seen a range of benefits for consumers and businesses in the Highlands including:

Internet Delivery Charges: Investigating hundreds of complaints relating to internet delivery charges and successfully resulting in small and large businesses changing their delivery charging practices. There was widespread engagement with partners such as Citizens Advice to improve the situation nationally. Highland Council operates a “one-stop shop” website for consumers, businesses, and practitioners, www.deliverylaw.uk. This project won a Highland Council Quality Award and was listed for a COSLA Award.

Doorstep Crime: Working in partnership with Police Scotland, the prevention of “rogue” tradesmen providing sub-standard services has resulted in joint investigations leading to prosecutions. There have also been prevention initiatives such as publicity campaigns and a network of [Cold Call Control Zones](#) established to help communities battle unfair trading. 2018/19 saw a total of 94 incidents reported, a two-thirds reduction from 2011/12.

Scams: 71 “callblockers” installed into the homes of those most at risk of scams blocking 99% of nuisance calls and preventing at least 19 scams so far (a saving of £66,000).

Use of Civil Procedure: Making use of the civil process through the Enterprise Act, as opposed to prosecution, is a quicker route and results in court orders instructing businesses to make changes to bad practices. The threat of action is often enough for businesses to change their practices. Highland has led the way in Scotland in its use of the Enterprise Act.

- **Benefits and Welfare**

Council staff created a dynamic and customer-focussed model which provides local services at the point of need and single access to Council entitlements. This produces positive outcomes for local people by improving their financial and overall wellbeing. Effective leadership, skilled and motivated staff and collaboration with partners was key to performance, including increasing benefit take-up by £6M and delivering service cost savings of over £1.3M. The team were awarded the UK Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV) Benefits & Welfare Reform Team of the Year Award in October 2018.

- **Killen Children's Residential House**

Highland Council seeks to care for and educate Highland's children locally and the Alternatives to Out of Area (OOA) Programme identified cohorts of children for whom it would be beneficial to develop services in Highland.

Killen children's residential house was developed by Highland Council for younger children to return from out of area. The property is a nurturing home with a skilled staff team and has two linked schools and an off-site education provision that are resourced for the children to attend. The OOA budget has paid for a Pupil Support Assistant for each child and half a teacher's time to ensure their success in education. The return of these primary aged children has saved the Council well over £150,000 per annum as compared to their OOA placements which would have continued to age 18.

The quality of this care is demonstrated in the Care Inspectorate grading which was the highest possible for a new unit. The model was commended for its full integration of stakeholders and excellent partnership working. This project is an example of working across social work, education and health to greatly improve Highland children's lives and learning. The programme achieved a Bronze Cosla Excellence Award.

- **Words up**

"Words up" is a programme developed by Highland Council Speech and Language Therapy. It helps all those who interact with children, from the pregnancy stage through early years to the end of schooling, supporting the development of interactions between adults and children. Evaluation has shown excellent results including 71% of parents of babies remembering at least one key message, and 93% of school staff reporting more use of key messages with a corresponding increase in development of children's expressive language skills. More information and evaluation results are [available](#). Parts of this work won a bronze award at the Highland Council Quality awards 2019.

- **A Highland Fling: Delivering Intensive Aphasia Therapy**

Traditionally, Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) input for post-stroke aphasia in adults has been delivered in regular sessions over an extended period of time. Highland Council and NHS Highland collaborated to explore whether an intensive therapy model would be beneficial. Results showed improved speech with fast progress, which improved participants' confidence, motivation, independence and wellbeing. This project was presented at the Scottish Stroke Allied Health Professionals Forum.

- **Supporting Autism Understanding**

The Pines Neurodevelopmental Service team which includes Highland Council health and education staff, third sector partners and film students from the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) have created a series of training [videos](#) to support autism understanding. This project has led to autism information being available Highland-wide rather than relying on people accessing services in Inverness. The team are finalists in the Innovative Family Support category at the National (UK) Autistic Society's Autism Professionals Awards.

- **Improved Transition Planning in Early Years**

From 2017/18, health visitors from Inverness and Tain undertook a project to support better information sharing and transition planning for children who were entering nursery for the first time. Effective collaboration and sharing of information to ensure a child's wellbeing is one of the key principles of National Guidance.

New ways of working were tested using the Model for Improvement, and initial data gathered suggests that health visitors in the test areas developed stronger relationships with their colleagues in early years settings. This partnership allowed nursery staff to be better

prepared for a child's transition from home to nursery. In 2018/19, this project has been rolling out across the Inverness West Family team. This way of working has spread from 1 to 10 health visitor caseloads and is now being implemented in 15 nurseries in Inverness.

- **Single Use Plastic**

Highland Council has become the first local authority in Scotland to develop a holistic strategy and action plan to reduce the consumption of single use plastics from its sites and schools, and the wider community. The Council recognises that the region has a key role to reduce plastic waste as part of its sustainable waste strategy (See related [Press Release](#)).

- **North West Sutherland Schools Doing Great Things Together**

The Highland Council is committed to delivering equity and excellence in learning and teaching and through the work of their Sustainable Education in Highland Communities Programme aims to make informed decisions about what excellence in education looks like and how it can be delivered.

In August 2017, four Sutherland schools clustered to form the North West Sutherland Schools. This helps to respond to the challenges faced by rural schools. This collaboration has seen each school embrace the all through 3-18 model that was introduced to positively impact, improve and sustain education in the area. Head-Teachers and senior management felt strongly that sharing expertise and skills would positively impact on the leadership and school improvement plans of the cluster. The new management structure is highly effective.

- **Partnerships – Care and Learning LGBTI+ subgroup**

Highland Council joined Stonewall as Education Champions in 2014, and have improved each year in the Stonewall Education Equality Index. In February 2019, the Council reached the Top 10, placing 8th. As well as acknowledging the input of young people to develop and shape policy documents and the support provided to Highland schools to develop equality and diversity education, Stonewall recognises the contribution of a dynamic multiagency planning group for LGBTI+ education and inclusion. (Press release: [Highland Council named among top 10 in Britain for tackling anti-LGBT bullying](#)).

Performance in engaging with communities and service users, and responding to their views and concerns

The examples below highlight Highland Council's performance in engaging with communities and services users:

- **Participatory Budgeting**

Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Highland is designed and led at a local level. It creates a partnership of local community organisations supported by public agencies to initiate and organise PB. The entire process including the scope, scale and method of decision-making are created and agreed by the partnership at a local level. This approach to community engagement and participation leads to the delivery of better, more responsive services and better outcomes for communities. Council Wards have used a mixture of Ward Discretionary Budgets and Scottish Government Funding to deliver a small grant PB process.

The benefits have included: Increased local democratic participation; increased confidence and skills among local people; support people volunteering in their communities; satisfaction with quality of life in a local neighbourhood; stronger community networks; better understanding and awareness of services available across all sectors; increased awareness of areas of need, driving the delivery of more effectively targeted services; and increased awareness of the financial challenges of the Council and partners.

- **Housing**

In 2018/19, The Highland Council continued to focus on developing excellent communication with its housing tenants and improving service delivery. Achievements include:

- Increased tenant participation and scrutiny, including exploring new methods of communication with tenants including better digital engagement;
- “Rate your Estate” walkabouts across Highland to ensure we are listening to our communities as to what environmental works are a priority for their estates;
- “Senior Safe Highland” events to encourage home safety for older tenants;
- A comprehensive tenant survey which received 2,343 responses (17.5% of tenants). This focused on tenant opinions such as the quality and maintenance of homes. Overall satisfaction levels have improved from 2016;
- The annual Landlord Engagement Plan highlighted to the Regulator recent good practice in meeting our legislative requirements on homelessness and engaging with homeless clients to improve services and the quality of temporary accommodation;
- Capital improvements at our gypsy/traveller sites and engagement work with residents to identify future works has started;
- Good performance at the annual Tenant Participation Advisory Service Conference. For example, the Balintore and District Residents Group won the “Engaging with Communities” national award for their efforts in transforming the community.

- **Fort William 2040**

The “Fort William 2040” project has proactively engaged communities in planning and delivering a future vision for Fort William and the wider Lochaber area. This new way of working has brought partners and communities together to consider the impact of future developments for the people and the place. This has led to the publication of a shared vision, masterplan and delivery programme published as a live and dynamic [“storymap”](#).

At its most basic level, this provides a forum to tell people about changes taking place in their community. More significantly this acts as a shared portfolio for the future, outlining joint responsibilities for delivery, and a tool for ongoing monitoring and collaboration with the community to deliver their ambitious vision for the future. This work provides The Council with a template for delivering localism across its services and with partner organisations.

- **Involving service users in recruitment processes**

Following the model recommended for the recruitment of nurses to Family Nurse Partnership teams, we are now inviting service users to be part of the recruitment process for trainee health visitors. The interview process is undertaken in two parts, a group interview which allows candidates to have conversations with separate individuals (including experienced health visitors, a practice teacher, an early years’ psychologist and two service users), and the second part is a panel interview. The process reveals that service users are perceptive to the qualities of candidates in relation to their communication skills, their empathy and how it would feel to invite them into their home. Their insights are usually closely matched to the other interviewers. The Council has made several excellent appointments using this method.

- **Digital Technology and Allied Health Professionals**

Allied Health Professionals (AHP) use digital technology to support their work and develop self- management by improving access to services and information. Examples include:

- A multi professional AHP [Facebook](#) page giving information on a range of topics.
- A blog to improve access to information for children and young people (CYP) with Type 1 Diabetes.
- Use of Attend Anywhere (Skype like system) for appointments and meetings giving improved access and reduced travel time and cost.

- Use of Florence (a text messaging service) for follow up after Words up training. 97% of users said this helped them change their practice in how they talk to CYP. Florence is also to monitor self-care of CYP with Type 1 Diabetes.
- Use of phone for first conversations following a request for assistance being made. This reduces time before an AHP contacts the person concerned about the CYP and reduces travel time and cost.
- The multi professional 'Just ask' phone enquiry line. This highly rated service gives fast access to initial advice/ support / signposting from a range of professionals.

- **Just Ask Enquiry Line**

When parents and others have a concern about a child or young person they usually want advice and support as soon as possible. It is important that assistance is given quickly. The Council wanted to create a new way of helping them make informed decisions about how best to help our children and young people develop and thrive.

The "Just Ask" phone enquiry line for children, young people, parents, carers and those who work with them was set up. Initially Paediatric Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists were available, and this has rapidly developed to Dietitians, Educational Psychologists, Primary Mental Health Workers, School nurses and Pre-school home visiting teachers also being on duty. There have been over 460 calls to this line and the feedback from a sample of users has been 96% positive. We have developed a new, affordable, efficient way of delivering a service which is highly rated by Highland users and is unique in Scotland. Further information and performance evaluation results are available [here](#). This work won a Highland Council Quality award in 2019.

- **Getting the Views of Children and Young People**

Allied Health Professionals produced a [leaflet](#) which shows methods of getting the views of children and young people of any age including those who have difficulty communicating. This has been shared locally and nationally.

- **Youth Justice Improvement Group**

The Youth Justice Improvement Group set their priorities in line with the Whole System Approach agenda, guided by the Scottish Government's priorities. Early and Effective Intervention work is currently underway to look at improving diverting young people away from the children's hearing system and criminal justice.

In relation to 'Improving diversion of young people from prosecution' the Youth Offending division, Police Scotland have been active in revising and improving procedures, and the Youth Action Team South have made a commitment to undertake work on 16-17yr olds on diversion with improved links with Criminal Justice Social Work. There are also plans to improve our processes for notifying courts if a young person is appearing in court, through liaison with Custody Inspector and Youth Action Team.

A strategy is being developed to divert children and young people away from serious and organised crime. This has largely been driven by Action for Children but includes Police Scotland and Youth Action Team. This [case study](#) of the Forensic Psychology Service in Highland has been promoted by the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice.

- **Criminal Justice Service**

Criminal Justice Service (CJS) quarterly reports track performance across a range of indicators. Also, annual performance reports present a range of measures:

- Data collated and analysed from exit questionnaires sent to those subject to a Criminal Justice Social Work Report and community payback, including outcomes across a range of criminogenic needs (i.e. drug & alcohol use etc.) and the impact of the orders,

- Data collated and analysed from exit questionnaires on the satisfaction and outcomes of unpaid work projects sent to the beneficiaries of this work.
- Data collated and analysed by Action for Children relating to an Offending Awareness programme and Preventing Violence in Relationship programme. A research and evaluation study was completed in 2018/19 detailing outcomes from a CJS funded multi-agency Persistent Offenders Project – the report was vital in determining whether to continue the project.

- **Highland Community Planning Partnership**

The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) 2017-2027 was approved by the Community Planning Partnership Board in October 2017 with the agenda “Working Together to Reduce Inequalities in Highland. The outcomes, priorities and cross-cutting themes identified through community consultation set the framework for partnership delivery. An interim performance report was published in 2019. Of the 18 key performance indicators listed, Highland is performing well for the majority. The full report is available [here](#)

- **Prevent Suicide Highland App**

The Highland Community Planning Partnership launched an app in November 2018 to help prevent suicide in the north of Scotland. The app allows you to complete a ‘Prevent Suicide’ safety plan and can be completed with the help of a trained listener on a helpline such as Breathing Space with a health professional, or with a friend or family member. Further information is available [here](#).

- **Community Asset Transfer**

The Council has put in place a community asset transfer process compliant with the Community Empowerment Act. For 01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, 49 expressions of interest were received and 15 full community asset transfer requests were received. Of the 15 full asset transfer requests received: 8 have been agreed; none were rejected; 3 are under consideration; and 4 were withdrawn by the Community Transfer Body. The Council is developing an approach to asset use that involves promoting a wider view at assets across a community. This approach will involve public sector partners and community organisations.

Press Releases relating to engaging with Communities and Service Users:

[Proactive role for communities in steering ambitious Fort William 2040 Vision](#)

[Have your say on Torvean Gateway](#)

[Results for Your Cash Your Caithness](#)

[Highland tenant engagement work recognised nationally](#)

[Have your say on options to improve walking and cycling links in Inverness city centre](#)

[YOUR AREA – YOUR VIEWS – Still time to take part in Fort William Consultation](#)

<p>Performance in achieving Best Value, including the use of performance benchmarking, options appraisal and use of resources</p>
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The examples below highlight Highland Council’s performance in achieving Best Value, including the use of performance benchmarking, options appraisal and use of resources.

In addition to this, many of the case studies presented throughout this report demonstrate Highland Council’s commitment to Best Value, to provide excellent services, strengthen satisfaction, and increase efficiency.

- **Highland Council Website**

All of the Council’s corporate performance reports are published on the Council’s website at: www.highland.gov.uk/performance. This includes:

- Annual report on the Statutory Performance Indicators;

- Infographics of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework Indicators and a link to the [mylocalCouncil](#) website is promoted;
- Annual Performance report based on the Corporate Plan;
- Annual Performance and Attitudes Survey

- **Best Value Assurance Report**

The statutory duty of Best Value was introduced in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. The assessment of Best Value is a continuous process that forms part of the annual audit of every council. In addition, a Best Value Assurance report is presented to the Accounts Commission at least once during a five-year audit appointment. Highland Council underwent an audit during 2019 and the results have been published on the [Audit Scotland website](#). Highland Council also published [a press release](#) on the report.

- **External Audit Report**

The Council's external auditor, Grant Thornton, produce an assessment on the Council's performance to achieve Best Value through the [External Audit Annual Report](#), 2018/19. The main findings of this report in relation to Value for money were:

- Highland Council has looked to enhance its performance management arrangements, providing a greater focus within the measures on outcomes. However, it is too early to determine whether the reporting and monitoring of these will also focus on wider benchmarking data and the extent to which these measures stretch and challenge the organisations. It is critical that the Council ensure that there is continued focus on targeted outcomes and not just improvement on prior year measures.
- The Council faces significant financial and operational challenges. Effective partnership working with strategic partners including NHS Highland as well as local engagement will be increasingly important to support the delivery of the Council's strategic goals.
- Given the financial challenges facing the Council, Officers recognise the importance of developing a culture that drives continuous improvement and delivering services as efficiently and effectively as possible. While quarter 1 2019 performance information indicates that the Council is on trajectory of performance improvement, it will be critical that an improvement culture is embedded within the organisation over the medium to longer term.

The findings of the external audit report are used to continuously improve the Council's practices.

- **Internal Audit Team**

The Internal Audit Team provides services to the Council, Pension Fund, the Assessor and a number of external organisations. Its purpose, authority and responsibility within the Council is prescribed in the [Internal Audit Charter](#). The purpose of the internal audit function is to provide:

“An independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.”

The work to be undertaken by the internal audit team is set out following consultation with Service in the annual audit plan. This work helps to ensure that the Council is achieving Best Value. Completed audits are reported to the [Audit and Scrutiny Committee](#).