

Performance Examples and Case Studies – 2016/17

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, places a statutory duty of Best Value upon local authorities in the discharge of their functions. Each year, the Accounts Commission provides information on the key activity areas that Councils in Scotland will be expected to report on, in order to meet their obligations. For 2016/17, Councils are required to provide information and data on the following:

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

Figure 1: Best Value Audit Direction 2016/17

This represents a change in approach from previous years to how Councils will be assessed and what is expected for public performance reporting. The audit direction covers broad areas of activity, with a greater focus on partnership working and engaging with communities. This report provides a range of qualitative examples and case studies of how Highland Council has fulfilled the duties outlined against section 1 in Figure 1.

Data relating to the section 2 “Local Government Benchmarking Framework” will be reported separately through a report to the Highland Council on 08 March 2018. This information will also be held on the Council’s webpages at highland.gov.uk/performance. This report will also include other local indicators which help to demonstrate our performance in relation to all areas outlined in Figure 1.

- **Performance in improving local public services (including with partners)**

Council Programme

2016/17 was the last reporting year of the Council’s Programme “Highland First”. The programme was based on three main themes – A community led, well-served, and a fairer Highlands. The programme contained 72 commitments including promoting connectivity, addressing poverty, and enhancing local democracy. The [final performance report](#) showed that good progress was achieved with 89% of the commitments (64 out of 72) being either completed, on target or where performance was being maintained. For 8 commitments (11%) there was mixed performance.

Following the Local Government elections in May 2017, a new Council Programme, “[Local Voices, Highland Choices](#)” for 2017/18-2022/23 was published.

City Region Deal

The [Inverness and Highland City-Region](#) deal amounts to £315 million and was signed on 30 January 2017 by Highland Council, the Scottish Government, and the UK Government. It is anticipated that the deal will help secure the long term productivity and economic growth for the region, including unlocking additional investment by the private sector. Specific funding will be used to enhance digital connectivity, digital healthcare, skills, innovation and infrastructure.

This deal represents a great opportunity for the Highlands to continue to grow and support economic development, attracting investors into the area and continuing to support the

tourist economy. Projects are being delivered in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the University of the Highlands and Islands, Albyn Housing, and High Life Highland. Two projects have been completed, the Castle view point, and Inverness WIFI. Visitor numbers for the tower have passed 15,000 and it is operating at a profit and WIFI take up is high at approximately 600 unique users.

Redesign of Highland Council

During 2016/17 the Council embarked on a programme to redesign the Council given the ongoing budget reductions alongside growing demand for, and increasing pressures associated with, services. The work was overseen by a Board of 16 elected members and 2 Trade Union representatives. This involved clarifying the Council's [purpose, outcomes, values](#) and [what redesign means](#). After a year of evidence gathering, engagement with staff, community bodies and partners, deliberation and the introduction of new review approaches, the Council agreed the Board's recommendations that the redesign of Highland Council means that the Council should be: more open-minded to new ways of delivering services; more commercially-minded to raise income to support services and jobs across the region; and more community-minded by listening locally and supporting more community action and community-run services. It recognised that staff are central to redesign and should be supported to be full participants. The process is continuing into 2017/18 and beyond. Further detail and examples are provided in this report. External auditors reported the redesign process had made good progress, is ambitious, and is founded on solid principles with a clear focus and direction.

LEAN Six Sigma Programme

LEAN Six Sigma is an improvement methodology which aims to improve performance by systematically reducing process waste and variation. In 2016/17, the Redesign Board agreed to introduce the practice so that where services remain in-house they are run as efficiently and effectively as possible. A Corporate LEAN Programme was established with over 25 staff trained in facilitating the approach and over 100 staff taking part in reviews so far. This bottom-up approach focuses on improving local public services and supporting an organisational culture of continuous improvement. In 2016/17, the programme comprised projects across a broad range of local service delivery, and included elements of: Service Centre (Bulky Uplifts); Waste; Street Cleansing; Fostering and Adoption; Additional Support Needs; Facilities Lets; and Complaints. All have shown improvement can be made and often alongside reducing cost and work load. The programme continues into 2017/18 with many ideas for Lean projects coming from front-line staff.

For a modest financial investment we have already seen an excellent return from the first two completed projects, with savings of £120,000 and significant wider benefits delivered through improvement of the Human Resources Occupational Health referral process and the Bulky uplift service.

The Bulky Uplift project has reduced time taken to process requests, improved the bulky uplift service for customers including reducing notice required for an uplift from 48 to 24 hours, making the whole service more direct and responsive, and some savings have been delivered ([Autumn 2017 Highlights Magazine](#), p19 "£57k saved and service improved").

Customer Services

Through our Netcall Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system we monitor a comprehensive suite of metrics to improve our performance through all our customer service channels. We also participated in the Local Authority Complaint Handlers network and have just received the first year of results which will form a benchmark. We are transforming our approach as an organisation to enable more people to use of services online, and drafted our digital strategy, "[Digital Ambition 2020](#)" in 2016/17, published in August 2017.

Service Performance

Each of the Council Services regularly reports its performance to its relevant strategic committees. These reports can be accessed through the Council's website through the following links:

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

Workforce Planning

We refreshed our approach to workforce planning in 2016/17 and Elected Members scrutinised the first cycle of Service Workforce Plans and Service Learning plans at the relevant strategic committees during 2016/17. We are now implementing a Council wide Corporate workforce planning strategy for the period 2017 to 2023. A [draft](#) of this strategy was discussed at the Corporate Resources Committee in August 2017. Work will take place during 2017/18 to further develop the necessary tools and techniques to support the strategy and put the strategy into practice.

High Life Highland

High Life Highland is a Council arms length organisation which develops and promotes opportunities in culture, learning, sport, leisure, health and wellbeing across nine services throughout the whole of the Highlands, for both residents and visitors.

Particular achievements of High Life Highland in 2017 are presented in their [winter newsletter](#), and in the [progress reports](#) which are presented to the Council twice per year.

- **Performance in improving local outcomes (including with partners)**

Community Planning

A significant area of work for the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) in 2016/17 was developing its response to the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act, particularly in relation to the new duties regarding Community Planning. Work included:

- Agreeing a shared approach to resourcing community planning arrangements between the five statutory organisations now tasked to lead on community planning. This was agreed by the Board in June 2016.
- Developing an area structure to support the new locality planning duties and the participation and engagement of communities across Highland in community planning. The Board agreed in June 2016 to develop an area based structure for community planning across Highland. It was agreed to establish nine Community Partnerships across the area, building on the former District Partnership structure. It was agreed to share the leadership and resourcing of these partnerships across the five agencies tasked to lead on community planning.
- Work during 2016/17 also focused on supporting the Partnerships to develop. A development day was held for core Community Partnership staff and supporting documentation for Community Partnerships developed from the feedback of that event. This included a self- assessment tool developed to enable local partnerships to identify their development and support needs, role and responsibilities, a planning framework and local profiles. The CPP Board agreed the Community Partnership toolkit at the December 2016 meeting. This included a Planning Framework to support local Partnerships take forward their local plans. Further support days have been held with Community Partnership Chairs and a second pan-Highland event planned for Autumn 2017 to bring together all involved with Community Partnerships. Training sessions on community engagement, driver diagrams and the place standard have also been held.

- Agreeing an approach to developing a Local Outcome Improvement Plan for Highland. The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) will replace the Single Outcome Agreement as the plan for Highland's CPP for the period 2017-2027. A development plan on how to progress this in Highland was considered by the Board in December 2016 and a further paper outlining proposed outcomes for engagement and an engagement approach was considered by the Board in March 2017. The Partnership agreed several key principles on which to develop the HOIP:
 - Listening to communities needs to ensure that the HOIP will make a difference and improve outcomes
 - Change how we do things so that we focus on inequalities and prevention
 - Engage with communities in a way that supports a focus on outcomes and co-production
 - The HOIP will not be a continuation or a refresh of the current SOA, it will be strategically focused, concentrating on fewer priorities that are genuine outcomes for the partnership as a whole and requiring partnership action in order to deliver

More information can be found on the [Highland Community Planning Partnership website](http://www.highlandcpp.org.uk):
www.highlandcpp.org.uk

LEADER

The [Highland LEADER programme](#) is a grassroots method of delivering support for rural development through implementing Local Development Strategies. It is aimed primarily at small and medium sized community driven projects that are pilot and innovative in nature. On an ongoing basis we have a structure that allows for around 200 people (mixture of public/ private/ community/ third sector) to be involved in decision making across the programme. This is mainly through our Local Area partnerships that operate in seven areas of Highland.

The Performance Framework for integrated children's services

The performance management framework developed within our integrated children's service plan, 'For Highlands Children 4' (FHC4), is designed around the achievement of better outcomes for Highlands's children, their families and the communities in which they live. The outcomes relate to the impact of services on the well-being of children and young people using the "SHANARRI" indicators. It focuses on their experiences and the extent to which their lives and life opportunities will be enhanced to ensure they are; Safe; Healthy; Achieving; Nurtured; Active; Respected and Responsible; Included.

The performance framework is designed to monitor and scrutinise progress in meeting these outcomes. The performance measures in this framework are high level and are reported on to the [People committee](#). More detailed performance measures against outcomes in Improvement group plans are contained within [individual improvement group plans](#).

Highland Health & Social Care Partnership

In 2012 The Highland Council and NHS Highland Board decided that they would use existing legislation (the Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002) to take forward the integration of health and social care through a lead agency Partnership Agreement, whereby the Council would act as lead agency for delegated functions relating to children and families, whilst the NHS would undertake functions relating to adults.

The Highland Council and NHS Highland Partnership Agreement was signed on March 31st 2012, and was the first to be put in place in Scotland. The associated integration scheme was concluded in March 2016 to meet the requirements of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014.

The Integration Scheme describes detailed arrangements for operation and governance of Community Health and Social Care Services in North Highland. In addition, it describes the detail for Lead Agency arrangements where one agency manages delegated functions on behalf of the other.

In terms of governance and reporting arrangements the Integration Scheme details that the Lead Agency is responsible for the operational management and performance of integrated services, including shared services. The NHS reports to the Council in relation to adult care, and the Council reports to the NHS Board on children and families.

This [annual performance report](#) is developed in line with the performance reporting guidance and regulations of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. This specifies that a performance report must be produced by an integration authority and also provides detail of the specific matters that require to be reported.

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

Community Asset Transfers and Participation Requests

As part of the new duties contained within the Community Empowerment Act, the Council developed and agreed a process for Community Asset Transfers (CATs) and Participation requests during 2016/17. A CAT policy was agreed in December 2016 and established a two stage process to enable support for community bodies to submit effective CAT requests. Public bodies in Highland have adopted common approaches to asset transfer and participation requests and a network set up to support the processes. Community planning partners are working with the Development Trusts Community Ownership Support Service to support communities with the process. Webpages have been developed to provide guidance and information.

Participatory Budgeting (PB)

PB, where communities are involved in allocating public money, continued to develop across Highland with support from Scottish Government funding. In 2016/17, PB processes were held in seven areas and local groups comprising of public and community bodies formed to design and deliver this. In total 2,496 people participated in the events to decide how £155,200 was spent. The events held also provided an opportunity to engage with the public on wider issues and this opportunity was also offered to our partner organisations. Next steps are to develop our understanding of how the process can be applied to our mainstream resources and services.

Community Run Services

As part of our Council redesign process, the Redesign Board were involved in two rounds of engagement with community groups in Autumn 2016 to understand how to support them to deliver more community run services. Key messages were that for community action to thrive we need:

- The right supports in place
- Willing and able people in communities seeking to making a difference
- Helpful behaviours across public bodies and communities bodies
- Shifting the balance of power

Community bodies sought a single point of contact for advice, know-how and support for them to do more in their communities. Having listened to their views the Council is now working with partners to develop a Community Gateway of support. This will help us to

create better ways to listen to, support, and work with communities to assist them in delivering services and to help them help others in their community.

In 2016/17, the Council supported the work of an independent [Commission on Highland Democracy](#). Commissioners engaged with local communities, young people and staff and identified what needs to change to improve citizen participation in public services and in shaping local priorities.

Development Plans

In 2016/17, the Development Plans team undertook a range of engagement activities to better understand public opinion at public events, focused stakeholder meetings, and online using a dedicated [Consultation Portal](#).

The [Draft Inverness City Centre Development Brief](#) consultation included an invited discussion with sectoral interest groups on the 14th September 2016, a public exhibition in the Eastgate Shopping Centre on 15th February 2017, and a drop-in exhibition in the Town House on 22nd February 2017. Based on Google Analytics, 514 people used the City Centre Development Brief pages of our Consultation Portal which resulted in 225 comments being made by 34 respondents.

People have been engaged in the [Inverness East Development Brief](#) from an early stage. We started work well in advance of preparing the actual document. Focused Community Council, landowner and stakeholder engagement took place in Autumn 2016. We ran an online "[Place Standard](#)" survey through our Consultation Portal resulting in 354 comments from 41 people and held a one-day workshop at Inverness Campus on 16th November 2016, attracting 70 people. The [outcomes](#) of these engagements have informed work on the Brief, which were fed back to Elected Members at the [February 2017 City of Inverness Area committee](#) and to stakeholders, including Culloden Youth Forum.

We continue to develop new and innovative approaches to engage with our communities. Our Consultation Portal continues to be a fundamental tool in reaching communities including hard-to-reach groups. Since introducing the Portal we have seen a steady increase in the proportion of comments submitted online, with our recent [West Highlands & Islands Local Development Plan Consultation](#) receiving 95% of comments through the Portal.

Housing

In 2016/17 we continued to focus on developing excellent communication with our housing tenants.

- We have a regular [housing newsletter](#) which goes out to our tenants providing a wide range of information and advice. Contact details are given on this to enable tenants to contact the Housing service.
- We have developed our on-line housing forms, for example, to enable tenants to [request repairs](#).
- We have increased [tenant participation and scrutiny](#), and we regularly conduct surveys of our tenants.
- We consulted on the [Local Housing Strategy](#)
- We conduct a detailed tenant survey every 3 years, and published our most [recent survey results](#) in April 2016. This provided a wide range of tenant opinions, such as on the Highland Council as a landlord, preferred communication styles, rents and value for money, and the quality and maintenance of homes.
- We complete our [annual return on the Charter \(ARC\)](#) to the Scottish Housing Regulator. This helps to publically monitor and assess our performance.
- We also ask for tenant views on the quality of repair works, and have our complaints procedure available [online](#) if tenants are not completely satisfied.

- We have responded to issues of low demand for Council housing in Caithness by developing a [Choice-based letting scheme](#), giving citizens a greater say over where they live.

Planning and Building Standards

The Council has implemented a Highland e-Development project which has delivered a transformation so that planning and building standards applications and enquiries can be submitted, assessed and determined electronically. This delivers an enhanced service for customers and avoids significant printing costs. The service went live on 24 August 2016, and there were 1,703 electronic applications (building warrants and amendments) to 31 March 2017.

A fully electronic process now complements our workload management system, meaning that workload can be easily transferred across our network of seven area offices. Achieving this involved a full review of how we process all applications (including pre-application requests), the implementation of a mobile working solution for all staff and significant engagement with customers and stakeholders to achieve buy-in. As a result we have achieved one of the highest rates of electronic submission in Scotland and been praised by Scottish Government as a great example of success. Customer and staff feedback has been positive and we are already rolling out the approach to other application types.

Budget Simulator

As part of the budget setting process for the 2017/18 financial year, we made an online budget simulator tool available as part of the consultation process ([press release](#)). This enabled citizens to consider how they would set the budget for the year ahead, and what they would prioritise. The tool received good [feedback](#), and showed to members of the public in an easy to understand, transparent way that the Council cannot afford to spend on services in the way it currently does. During the period the budget simulator was available 1,026 budgets were submitted, and as budgets could not be submitted until they balanced, all showed ways of achieving the anticipated savings for 2017/18. Services prioritised by the public as part of this exercise included: Children, young people and Education, services for vulnerable adults and roads and bridge maintenance.

- **Performance in achieving Best Value, including the use of performance benchmarking, options appraisal and use of resources**

Redesign Reviews

The Redesign Board considered all of the [Council's functions](#) and identified [those for review in 2016/17](#).

[Seven significant reviews](#) were undertaken in 2016/17. These were done through a new process of peer review developed to enable challenge to current service arrangements by peers and involving Members, Trade Union representatives and staff. Four of the seven services reviewed are commonly used by the general public so public views were gauged about them through a survey of the Citizens' Panel. The reviews appraised 10 options for service delivery and all made recommendations on service redesign. The approach to the reviews is summarised in the [review framework](#) and in the [guidance for teams](#) which included the evidence to be used in understanding service needs, performance, and costs. Review recommendations were agreed by the [Council in March 2017](#) along with the Board's recommendations on redesigning the Council's approach to operating more commercially and being more community-minded.

Staff Engagement

Highland Council recognises the vital and fundamental role staff play in achieving best value and improving performance. The Council has an active staff partnership forum and good partnership working relationships with the Trade Unions. Through the redesign process new ways of engaging with staff were introduced, in addition to having Trade Union representation on the Redesign Board. The new methods of staff engagement introduced in 2016/17 were:

- Face to face briefings across the region between staff and the Executive Leadership Team (50 were held in council offices, depots and village halls reaching over 620 staff in the summer and over 400 staff in the winter). These are now being run twice a year;
- The creation of a staff panel, with around 900 staff agreeing to take part in surveys;
- Developing an on-line tool for sharing ideas for improvement. The Council bought a licence for one product last year and are now working on developing our own in-house tool. Last year it generated 157 efficiency ideas and 61 commercial ideas;
- Created a staff Facebook page for sharing news;
- Training over 25 staff as LEAN facilitators as a way to involve staff in identifying where to make changes and streamline processes. Further staff will be trained in 2017/18;
- Involved over 40 staff in peer review teams, with the numbers growing through the next round of reviews for 2017/18.

Shared Procurement Service

Highland Council agreed to enter a shared Commercial and Procurement Service with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, and this was agreed by [Resources Committee](#) in August 2016. The shared service was formally established in January 2017. The target is to deliver annual savings of £1.36m per annum to Highland Council, as well as improve a range of processes and support local businesses through a new procurement strategy. The initial focus will be to reduce the spend that each Council makes out with the area, and obtain better value through a combined spending power in excess of £1bn annually.

Merger of Audit and Performance Teams

Whilst delivering some small management savings the main purpose of the merger was to bring together the two teams. This has allowed the Council to adopt a different approach to audit. As well as looking at regulatory audit work, the combined team is able to access a range of performance data and make recommendations that add value to the organisation, using the skillsets of both teams. This has enhanced the role of the team within the Council and provided a greater focus on performance. Early improvements are a reduced audit report focussed on actions, and strengthened links with the Corporate Improvement Team including recommendations to apply the LEAN methodology to areas reviewed under audit.

Work with External Auditor

The Council has reduced the time taken to produce the annual accounts, despite a significant reduction in staffing within the Accountancy Team. This is due to a review of processes, better service planning and use of staff resources, and early engagement with the Council's new auditors. This is the start of a plan of continuous improvement, continuing this work and through the acquisition of new software and new processes; to deliver further time released savings over the next 5 years. This means that the year-end position and accounts are produced earlier, allowing staff to concentrate on wider financial management and support services.

Revenues and Benefits

The Council has delivered significant cash savings through a significant review of structure and process and other management techniques including the non-filling of vacant posts. The cost of the Council Tax service has reduced from £10.67 per dwelling (2015/16) to £8.83 (2016/17), a 17% reduction. Similar results have been achieved in the Benefits service

where the cost per claim has reduced from £46.85 (2015/16) to £43.34 (2016/17), a 7% reduction.

The cost of Council Tax and Benefit Services are £0.484m less than 2015/16. The introduction and continued emphasis on process reviews, including the digital delivery of services, means that the Council has achieved considerable improvements in service. Time taken to process new benefit claims reduced from 20.4 days (2015/16) to 17.0 days (2016/17), whilst the time taken to process Change in Circumstances fell from 4.3 to 3.2 days.

The Service is now one of the top performing councils in Scotland at a time when it has coped with the introduction and challenge of Universal Credit. By managing resources better through a combined service the Council has also been able to increase the value and number of [awards of school clothing grants](#).

Highland Council website:

On the [Council's performance webpages](#), we publish infographic reports on how we compare to other Councils using the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking data, and a link to the [mylocalCouncil](#) website is also provided.