

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	23 rd August 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Best Value Assurance Report
REPORT NUMBER	COM/21/177
CHIEF OFFICER	Angela Scott, Chief Executive
REPORT AUTHOR	Fraser Bell, Chief Officer - Governance
TERMS OF REFERENCE	Introduction, paragraph 6

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the Accounts Commission's report published on 24th June following Audit Scotland's [Best Value Audit of the Council](#).

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council:

- 2.1 notes that the Accounts Commission's scheduled full Best Value audit of the council was not delayed due to the pandemic and thanks officers for supporting the audit, whilst also dealing with the council's response to the pandemic;
- 2.2 notes the progress made with the recommendations from the 2015 Best Value Assurance Report, outlined in exhibit 14, and welcomes the positive commentary in relation to the Council's: -
 - robust financial management arrangements, including effective monitoring and reporting and medium-term financial planning;
 - strong, effective, and well-established governance arrangements receiving external recognition;
 - ongoing transformation programme including the adoption of a new operating model;
 - reflection of the clear and ambitious vision for Aberdeen articulated in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan within the annual planning cycle; and
 - delivery of key services and savings targets concurrent with the delivery of major capital projects.
- 2.3 further welcomes the positive commentary contained within the Best Value audit and the external audit of the Council's financial statements (2020/21), considered by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee at its most recent meeting, in terms of the Council's response to the pandemic;

- 2.4 accepts the findings of the Accounts Commission and notes the action plan at appendix A which includes both existing and emerging actions, to be monitored by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with its Terms of Reference; and
- 2.5 notes that extensive improvement and transformation activity is underway as detailed in this report, for both education and housing and notes that the 2021 SQA attainment data evidences significant improvement as detailed in the report appendix.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Each local authority in Scotland receives a Best Value audit every five years as part of a rolling programme of audits established by the Accounts Commission. The Council was audited from December 2020 to April 2021. The [Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee](#) received an overview of the full process at its meeting in October 2020, including reference to the annual audit process which includes the best value core themes. Audit Scotland confirmed that they would not seek to run focus groups or face to face interviews due to the restrictions in place during the audit timetable, however, were clear that the extent of the evidence submitted, including our own self-assessment, had ensured there were no gaps in their understanding of our position.
- 3.2 Preparations for the best value audit process began in late summer 2020 with the establishment of a series of sponsors for each of the seven best value themes:
 1. Vision and Leadership;
 2. Governance and Accountability;
 3. Effective Use of Resources;
 4. Sustainable Development;
 5. Partnerships and Collaborative Working;
 6. Working with Communities; and
 7. Fairness and Equality.
- 3.3 Sponsors led smaller teams on the collation of evidence, the identification of any gaps, and documenting planned improvements to close those gaps (self-assessment). Sponsors reported into weekly meetings chaired by the Assurance Manager. This continued over the autumn period whilst timescales for commencing and completing the audit were awaited. These were confirmed in November, to include:
 1. Review of evidence using shared Teams sites – November 2020
 2. Initial interviews with Corporate Management Team, theme sponsors and group leaders – December 2020
 3. Follow up interviews with partners and sponsors – January 2021
 4. Production of emerging messages – March 2021
 5. Presentation of draft report – April 2021
 6. Factual accuracy checking by officers – May 2021

7. Submission of Controller of Audit report to the Accounts Commission – 10th June 2021
8. Publication of Accounts Commission report – 24th June 2021

Accounts Commission Findings

- 3.4 The Interim Controller of Audit's report was presented to the Accounts Commission on 10th June. The Commission determines how it wishes to respond to the Controller of Audit's report. The Commission can:
- state its findings on the report;
 - direct the Controller of Audit to carry out further investigations; or
 - hold a hearing.

In the case of Aberdeen City Council, the Commission accepted the Controller of Audit's report and recommendations. The final report was published on 24th June and concluded:

“We commend Aberdeen City Council on the strong changes, improvements and ambition that have been put in place since our 2015 and 2008 Best Value reports. The council continues to display a self-awareness about its need to further increase its pace of improvement if it is to deliver its ambitious vision with its partners to bring positive change for all of the people of Aberdeen; this is welcome.”

- 3.5 Audit Scotland recognised that the Council had made significant improvements since the last [Best Value Audit in 2015](#). The Commission noted that the Council's sound financial planning and ability to meet challenging financial targets had placed it well in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the robust governance and financial stewardship required in pursuance and maintenance of the London Stock Exchange bonds was commended, and it was noted that the Council demonstrates advanced practice, in a local authority context, through quarterly financial reporting. The Commission commented that the major transformation programme undertaken by the Council, with the Target Operating Model and digital strategy at its centre, had led to improvements in organisational structure and governance. The significant changes to the governance arrangements were recognised to be well established, robust and effective, and had led to a better understanding among members of how committees are expected to contribute to council business. It was also noted that the governance put in place had received external recognitions when the Council became the first Scottish Council to be awarded CIPFA's Governance Mark of Excellence. Staff had been consulted during the development of the council's Guiding Principles and it was noted that the Future of Work survey results suggest that the council has been broadly successful in embedding the cultural changes associated with its transformation programme.
- 3.6 The Commission commented that the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) articulates a clear and ambitious vision for Aberdeen, having been developed through an assessment of local priorities and needs based on a comprehensive population needs assessment produced by the Council on

behalf of the Community Planning Partnership. It was reported that the vision and stretch outcomes in the LOIP benefit from cross-party support, with the Council's strategies and plans clearly aligned to the LOIP. The annual planning cycle, including the review of budgets alongside commissioning intentions to produce the annual Council Delivery Plan, demonstrates that the priorities are well articulated and embedded within the strategic planning framework.

- 3.7 The Commission noted the council's achievements in delivering key services and savings targets, whilst also delivering on several major capital projects. Significant investments in Marischal Square, The Event Complex Aberdeen, and the Art Gallery were noted for both their size and the council's innovative approach to capital projects overall. This is given particular attention in Case Study 2.
- 3.8 The Commission highlighted the importance of continuing the pace of transformation to address inequalities in our communities, the substantial need for improvement in housing and education performance, and the benefit which improvements to public performance reporting can bring to locality planning. These areas identified for improvement are addressed in more detail at paragraphs 3.13 to 3.44 below.
- 3.9 The Commission noted the importance of elected members working together for the benefit of Aberdeen and its citizens. Whilst there is broad agreement about the Council's priorities, as defined in the LOIP, citizens would benefit from more cross-party working.
- 3.10 Attached at appendix A is an action plan setting out the report's recommendations, progress already made in addressing these, and further actions which are now planned. Council is asked to endorse these and to note that progress will be overseen by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.11 Whilst not focusing specifically on the Council's response to the pandemic, Audit Scotland recognised that COVID-19 had reflected on all the Council's activities and for this reason there was a degree of scrutiny of the Council's response. The report concluded that the Council had responded well to the immediate pressures and is now well placed in the medium to longer term. The annual external audit, reported to Audit, Risk and Scrutiny on 30th June that the Council continued to meet the accelerated financial reporting timetable for 2020/21, with complete draft accounts approved on 12 May 2021 and good support provided to facilitate access to information and complete audit testing. The External Auditor also stated he "expected to issue an unqualified opinion on the truth and fairness of the state of the Council's affairs as at 31 March 2021, and of the surplus for the year then ended." Specifically in respect of COVID financial support they have "concluded that the treatment of Covid-19 related grants is satisfactory." The Council has focused on its financial resilience during 2020/21 and continues to develop its approach to how it measures and assesses the strength of that resilience.
- 3.12 In May 2021, Audit Scotland published [Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2021](#) which specifically addresses the impact of COVID-19 on local government services. This places a strong emphasis on the role of communities

in their own recovery, whilst noting the challenges which will persist as councils continue to address the inequalities more deeply emphasised by the pandemic. Councils and communities have worked well together in the response and recovery stages and must continue to do so to minimise the inevitable impact to service delivery. There will continue to be significant financial challenges for councils, who are already planning for the economic recovery of their areas including supporting communities. The report recognises Aberdeen City's agility in adapting service provision by redirecting resources. In particular, the report commends the Council's Education Service for the delivery of a digital curriculum.

Education Services

- 3.13 In reviewing progress made since 2015, Audit Scotland concluded that significant changes had been made within the Education Service since the transformation programme began in 2018, including a rapid restructure of the service, improved alignment of improvement plans with the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and a significant reduction in issues with teacher recruitment. Audit Scotland concluded that these changes were positive and that green shoots were evident, but that clear evidence of improvement had been hampered by changed assessment methodologies by SQA due to COVID-19. As a result, the report comments that the pace of improvement since 2015 had been slower than in other Councils and that a continued focus and pace is necessary.
- 3.14 The appointment of the Chief Education Officer in 2018 and swift restructure of the education service has enabled the service to drive forward improvement at pace in collaboration with school leaders. This has increased the capability and capacity of the service.
- 3.15 A report to the Education Operational Delivery Committee (EODC) in April 2018 entitled [Education Improvement Journey](#) set out how the service would align school improvement plans with the LOIP and introduced a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure that performance data was routinely reported to Committee. This report determined how performance would be reported to enable effective scrutiny by elected members. As this process has become embedded, data briefings are now offered in advance of reports being presented to Committee, thereby increasing accessibility.
- 3.16 The [National Improvement Framework Plan](#) presented to EODC in September 2018, set out key priorities for improvement at that time. Members have received twice yearly updates ever since with the latest service evaluation and Plan due to be presented to Committee later in the year. Yearly plans are ambitious, and progress has been swift.
- 3.17 In January 2020, EODC received an [Empowering the system](#) report which set out how the service intended to build capacity and capability further. Implementing the committee instructions has helped increase the confidence of our workforce and undoubtedly enabled a stronger pandemic response.
- 3.18 By March 2020 the restructure of the service was well established, and more effective collaboration was aiding the identification of areas of vulnerability. The first [Supporting Learners](#) report presented to EODC set out an ambitious

programme of improvement and progress has been routinely reported to EODC since. This programme is on-going and has led to a restructure of all Additional Support Needs and Outreach services.

- 3.19 [Leadership](#) of improvement at all levels of the system is critical and a report to EODC gained approval for a new approach to building leadership capacity. The approach has helped increase the number of internal candidates seeking leadership opportunities and has increased the capacity and capability in our schools.
- 3.20 The first of the proposed regular [Inspection](#) Reports was presented to EODC in March 2020 in order to ensure absolute transparency around the performance of our schools.
- 3.21 The approval of the new [Devolved School Management Scheme](#) in September 2020 provided a further mechanism for schools to drive forward improvement at local level. This scheme enables school leaders to take local decisions around the use of resource to aid improvement.
- 3.22 By November 2020 the operating environment was considerably changed and the service presented [live COVID-19 data](#) to EODC to ensure that Members could continue to scrutinise performance whilst some of the restrictions prevented reporting of the KPIs agreed previously. This report was complemented by regular service updates to keep Members sighted on the situation in schools.
- 3.23 Despite the challenges of the pandemic, a refreshed [Minimising Exclusion](#) policy was presented to Committee to help address some of the issues that were clear from the data. This new policy and central quality assurance of data has helped address the issues identified at that time.
- 3.24 One vulnerability identified through analysis of data was that the [Senior Phase](#) curriculum required adaption to ensure it was well placed to support all of our young people. The report honestly evaluated the current state and set out plans to realise improvement. Progress has been considerable with a further report due to be presented to EODC in September 2021.
- 3.25 Preparations for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare continued through the challenging circumstances created by the pandemic. The agreement of the [ELC admissions policy](#) in January 2021 enabled the programme to progress at pace.
- 3.26 The most recent EODC in June 2021 considered the evidence available through [Thematic Reviews](#) by Education Scotland and gave a sense of how the service had adapted during the pandemic, it is anticipated that more regular Inspection reporting will resume early next session. June EODC heard of the progress made by the [Supporting Learners](#) workstream and that the service were in the final stages of restructuring all ASN and Outreach Services to improve service delivery. This work concludes all restructuring planned for the education service.
- 3.27 The education service continues to drive improvement at pace despite many additional expectations over the last 18 months. The service has developed with agility and greater levels of confidence which is leading to more innovative

practice which practitioners now readily share. The service is now more routinely involved in leading cross council initiatives such as the [Summer of Play](#) proposals presented to Committee and the administration of grants to support business and families in need.

- 3.28 2021 SQA attainment data evidences significant improvement as detailed in Appendix B. Attainment at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher are now in line with national levels. The changed methodologies used by SQA over the last two years will make improvement difficult to evidence in hard data but a suite of measures being proposed in this year's National Improvement Framework Plan will help to continue to track progress and pace. The recent [report](#) from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the success of Curriculum for Excellence and anticipated Senior Phase assessment proposals will also heavily influence the next steps of the service. Aberdeen's Education Service will maintain the pace of change to help realise its ambitions to become a high performing education service to ensure that the city is a place where all people can prosper.

Housing Services

- 3.29 Although the Best Value Audit report does not draw direct comparisons with the 2015 report regarding Housing services, the 2021 report highlights both challenges and successes in Housing Performance, acknowledging that service transformation is already underway to improve services and outcomes. The aims of this transformation are to improve customer experience, increasing the supply of housing and making it quicker and easier to access the right support.
- 3.30 The Best Value Audit report also highlights our sector leading performance in homelessness provision, with the greatest reduction in the number of households living in temporary accommodation for any Local Authority, and the average journey time for a homeless presentation reducing by 46 days to 125 days – 99 days below the national average. This demonstrates the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan agreed by Council 2019 is being embedded in practice and making a difference to those presenting as homeless. Our performance across emergency, non-emergency and reactive repairs is also reported as excellent.
- 3.31 Our Housing Access and Support services have been transformed, supported by the introduction of new and amended policies such as Domestic Abuse in Housing, revised Evictions policy and amended Allocations policy. The proposed introduction of a Choice Based Lettings policy later this year makes it more likely that an applicant will receive an appropriate offer, while reducing the number of refusals. This will ultimately lead to an improved customer experience while reducing the officer time required to allocate properties.
- 3.32 The Council monitors, reviews, and reports its performance regularly and recognises that Housing is a priority area for continued improvement. This includes a dedicated Housing Improvement Group that focuses on all housing services.

- 3.33 The Best Value Audit report does identify Housing as an area that requires continued focus and improvement, although it also acknowledges our awareness of performance challenges, and our existing plans to improve performance. The report highlights areas where performance has decreased in Housing services. In two of these areas: Satisfaction with repairs, and proportion of Antisocial behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets, performance remains above national average despite the noted decrease in performance. These are areas where we have active improvement planning in place and align with our own internal assessments that are also in line with our reporting to the Scottish Housing Regulator.
- 3.34 The Scottish Housing Regulator relies on a system of self-evaluation and monitoring to govern the social housing sector, issuing an annual engagement plan for each landlord. As part of this process, Aberdeen City Council undertakes an annual process to review performance and submit an [Annual Assurance Statement](#). The most recent of these was agreed at Operational Delivery Committee on 19th November 2020, identifying through self-assessment that priority improvement areas with action plans in place were Void Property Management, and Complaint Management. These operational considerations are in addition to the refurbishment of the travelling persons' site at Clinterty.
- 3.35 The Scottish Housing Regulator's engagement plan for Aberdeen City Council this year focuses on the travelling peoples' site and homelessness services. Engagement over homelessness services is common to all social landlords this year as the Regulator assesses the impact of the pandemic on how the sector has supported homeless people.
- 3.36 Since 2017, Aberdeen City Council has been removed from ongoing scrutiny by the Regulator over performance on operational issues. This has been due to the assurance provided over our awareness and understanding of our performance, and our transformation and improvement plans identified to create better outcomes for our tenants and prospective tenants. This is reflected in the Best Value Audit.
- 3.37 Officers are confident that the work being progressed by the Housing Improvement Group and the existing transformation of the Housing Service will address the necessary improvement identified. This transformation includes Customer Contact moving to the Customer Experience Cluster, and the creation of a Corporate Debt team also within Customer Experience. By removing these routine tasks from the traditional role of the Housing Officer we can combine the Housing Officer and Housing Support Officer duties into a single role, that focuses on a greatly reduced number of tenancies and prioritising positive interventions and working within that area to improve outcomes for more vulnerable tenants and enhance community empowerment. Ultimately, the transformation redesign will increase resourcing, reduce the average tenancy caseloads per officer, enhance and coordinate housing support to our tenants and make it easier for the tenants to seek the support they need.

- 3.38 There is also scope for improvement with the results against Tenant Satisfaction. The Council has an award-winning Tenant Participation group that has helped to scrutinise and improve performance over the last decade. There is a range of Tenant Groups across Multi-Storey blocks, sheltered and very sheltered accommodation, as well as performance and budget scrutiny. Recently, a Young Person tenant's group has been established to understand young people's housing issues and concerns. Work to expand membership and diversity across all groups as part of a revamped Tenant Participation and Engagement strategy continues.
- 3.39 The Council is aware of the challenges faced in Aberdeen in re-letting void properties. [Strategic Commissioning Committee](#) agreed earlier this year to the commissioning of external businesses to assist in repairing properties and returning them for let. Over the past year restrictions introduced to curb the spread of Covid-19 have had a significant impact on performance in our Housing services, significantly increasing the length of time taken to repair a property and relet it. This is common to all landlords. These commissioned contracts will account for up to 200 individual properties coming back into use.
- 3.40 Operational Delivery Committee receives regular updates on all void performance, and it is believed that by improving performance in this key area we will notice a significant difference in performance around tenant satisfaction as well as void rent loss and time taken to relet. The Scottish Housing Regulator also regularly reviews Committee reports and is satisfied with the level and quality of reporting and scrutiny.

Public Performance Reporting

- 3.41 The Best Value Assurance Report's recommendation is to supplement the Council's current public performance reporting arrangements to "report more clearly the longer-term progress made in improving outcomes."
- 3.42 Those current arrangements are described below:-
- An "Annual Outcome Improvement Report" is prepared by Council officers, on behalf of Community Planning Aberdeen, which provides a summary of in-year highlights and progress in achieving the long-term stretch outcomes and improvement targets which have been set within the LOIP. This report is supplemented with:-
 - a more concise public "friendly" version;
 - a single page infographic summary; and
 - the "Aberdeen Outcomes Framework" interactive public website, which includes a very large amount of continuously updated data and information, giving detailed progress on the delivery of all agreed improvement projects as well as reporting on the outcomes which the projects support. It also provides access to external reports and information on the performance of the Council and outcomes for the city and its communities. For example, Local Government Benchmarking Framework; Scottish Public Health Observatory; Community Planning Outcome Profiles.

- “Locality Partnership Annual Reports” for each of the Council’s priority localities, are prepared by Council officers on behalf of Community Planning Aberdeen. Supplemented, as above, by locality data within the “Aberdeen Outcomes Framework”.
- An annual report is prepared on the progress in delivering the Council Delivery Plan. In the same way as the Community Planning “Annual Outcome Improvement Report”, this report includes in year highlights and progress in achieving the outcomes and improvement targets set out within the Council Delivery. This is, again, supplemented by the “Aberdeen Outcomes Framework”, as described above, which gives access to continuously updated data on the 300+ performance measures which are included within the Council Delivery Plan.

(These arrangements describe the main “corporate” vehicles for public performance reporting, however, there are many additional reports which are targeted to different demographic or service user audiences.)

3.43 The arrangements described above reflect:

- i. reporting performance against outcomes which are, in most cases, agreed through Community Planning Aberdeen and are a shared priority with our partners. This is a deliberate approach which emphasises the importance of outcomes measures, rather than process measures, as a key element of moving to outcome-based approaches to the design and delivery of public services. This does not, of course, mean that measurement and reporting of key processes is not important and the Council’s Performance Management Framework, which the Best Value audit report, recognises as comprehensive, clearly sets out how both are achieved; and
- ii. a preference for reporting which is capable of continuous updating as new data and information becomes available, rather than static reports. Taking advantage of the near ubiquitous use of digital communication channels and blending narrative context and explanation with access to data.

3.44 The approach set out above is considered to be appropriate, with the development of the Aberdeen Outcomes Framework, in particular, to be leading practice. Notwithstanding this, the Strategic Commissioning Committee agreed to defer the annual review of the Council’s Performance Management Framework so that recommendations from the Best Value audit report could be considered and incorporated as necessary. Accordingly, this review is now underway and will consider how this recommendation of the Best Value audit can best be considered in the design of future public performance reporting arrangements. The outcome of this review is due to be submitted to the Strategic Commissioning Committee in October 2021.

CIPFA/Local Code of Governance

3.45 The appended action plan aligns all actions to the Best Value Themes. These actions will be incorporated into the Council’s Annual Governance Statement. The Statement is reported annually to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee. This will help to ensure that all actions to respond to the Accounts Commission

recommendations are delivered as appropriate. The completion of the actions will also support efforts to retain the Council's existing Mark of Excellence in Governance and ensure that the Council is fully compliant with the [Local Code of Corporate Governance](#).

3.46 In addition to the integration of the actions designed to address the Accounts Commission's recommendations, the Council will continue to explore opportunities to further embed the Best Value themes into the Council's operations. For example, the learning programme being developed to support the delivery of the Council's capability framework will actively seek to incorporate the themes where possible. Consideration will also be given to how the Best Value themes can be integrated into the Council's Scheme of Governance as part of its annual review.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations. The Council will continue to embed and strengthen financial stewardship to support the delivery of the vision for the city through the LOIP.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations. The Council is required by law to consider the findings of the Accounts Commission within three months of receiving them, a duty which must be discharged by the Council, not delegated to a Committee, Sub Committee, or officer. The Council must decide whether to accept the recommendations and what, if any, action will be taken in response. After the Council has met, the Commission must be notified of any decisions made and the Council must also publish a summary of these in the local newspaper.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Failure to implement the Best Value recommendations could impact on delivery of strategic outcomes and the vision for the city as articulated in the LOIP.	L	A detailed action plan at appendix A will ensure that the recommendations are implemented in full. This will be overseen by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.
Compliance	Failure to consider the Accounts Commission findings within 3 months of their publication, to notify the	H	This report helps to meet this requirement. Officers will ensure that the Commission is notified, and that the outcome is

	Commission of the outcome of this consideration and to publish the outcome.		published, following the Council meeting.
Operational	Actions related to the recommendations are not completed.	L	A detailed action plan at appendix A will ensure that the recommendations are implemented in full. This will be overseen by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.
Financial	Actions related to the recommendations are not completed.	L	A detailed action plan at appendix A will ensure that the recommendations are implemented in full. This will be overseen by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.
Reputational	Actions related to the recommendations are not completed.	L	A detailed action plan at appendix A will ensure that the recommendations are implemented in full. This will be overseen by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.
Environment / Climate	Actions related to the recommendations are not completed.	L	A detailed action plan at appendix A will ensure that the recommendations are implemented in full. This will be overseen by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The duty of Best Value and the cyclical five-year best value audit supports the council in the delivery of the outcomes.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The Best Value audit supports the council to deliver all the stretch outcomes within the LOIP and in pursuit of this has audited the extent to which the council allocates resource and aligns structure appropriately.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The Best Value audit supports the council to deliver all the stretch outcomes within the LOIP and in

	pursuit of this has audited the extent to which the council allocates resource and aligns structure appropriately.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The Best Value audit supports the council to deliver all the stretch outcomes within the LOIP and in pursuit of this has audited the extent to which the council allocates resource and aligns structure appropriately.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	The report and action plan meet the requirements of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Best Value Audit of Aberdeen City Council](#)

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Best Value Action Plan

Appendix B – SQA Analysis 2021/22

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Fraser Bell
Title	Chief Officer – Governance
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Theme	Recommendations	Actions	Lead Chief Officer	Target Completion Date
Strategic Direction	<p>To help them carry out their Best Value responsibilities, elected members should:</p> <p>1. Look to build upon the broad consensus relating to the council and LOIP vision and priorities to explore the potential for creating more opportunities for cross party working (paragraph 41)</p> <p>2. Take advantage of the learning and development opportunities provided by the council (paragraph 46)</p>	<p>Continue to develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members' Services Working Group focus on learning and development • Personal Development Plans being developed for each elected member to feed into the identification of training needs and learning programme. • MS Teams site has been created to cover all aspects of elected member development providing a central point for up-to-date information and booking onto virtual sessions. • A method to record elected members CPD established to enable a single point of reference and for reporting purposes. <p>To be developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh of Terms of Reference of Members' Services Working Group. • Induction programme for newly elected members in May 2022. 	<p>Isla Newcombe</p> <p>Isla Newcombe</p> <p>Isla Newcombe</p> <p>Isla Newcombe</p> <p>Fraser Bell</p> <p>Isla Newcombe</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Sept 2021</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Dec 2021</p> <p>Dec 2021</p> <p>May 2022</p>
Performance	<p>To supplement current council and CPP performance reports, and aide public understanding and scrutiny, the council should produce an annual performance report more clearly reporting the</p>	<p>Continue to develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of existing annual performance reports for the LOIP, Locality Plans and the Council Delivery Plan <i>(nb. given the publication of the Population Needs Assessment and the refresh of the</i> 	<p>Martin Murchie</p>	<p>Mar 2022</p>

Theme	Recommendations	Actions	Lead Chief Officer	Target Completion Date
Partnership Working	To fulfil its duties under the Community Empowerment Act 2015, the council should continue to consult with communities and articulate how it intends to meet its target to allocate one per cent of revenue funding through participatory budgeting (paragraph 127)	Continue to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The delivery of our Engagement, Participation and Empowerment Strategy. YouDecide approach to Participatory Budgeting and our Fairer Aberdeen Board to allocate funds to support community regeneration to meet our 1% target. 	Derek McGowan Derek McGowan	December 21 March 23
Continuous Improvement	The council should carry out post project reviews of major projects, including capital developments, to ensure lessons can be learned timeously and applied to future projects (Case Study 2 and paragraph 148)	Continue to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close out Project Evaluation and Post Occupancy review and benefits realisation post Covid-19 impact. To be developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timing of project reviews and consideration of project type. Lessons learned (hold points) throughout a project's life cycle. Consideration of project reviews to capture all relevant issues and wrap together in a single document. 	John Wilson John Wilson John Wilson John Wilson	June 22 June 22 June 22 June 22
Continuous Improvement	The council should review of the number and focus of their improvement projects to: 1. focus on improving core services areas that support the longer-term ambitions of the LOIP;	Continue to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny of core services performance through reporting to and review by Committees, quarterly reports to the Performance Board and ECMT, identifying formal improvement project as required. 	All Chief Officers	Complete

Theme	Recommendations	Actions	Lead Chief Officer	Target Completion Date
	<p>2. reflect the views of residents; and</p> <p>3. respond to short-term priority responses to Covid-19 (paragraphs 70 and 151)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Housing Improvement Group will oversee a programme of required improvements in housing. • Void Property Management and Complaints Management action plans will be implemented and performance scrutinised. • The Tenant Participation and Engagement Strategy will be refreshed and implemented • Tenant Participation Group and Tenant Groups will continue to scrutinise and drive performance improvement. • Commissioned Void Property repairs will be scrutinised and completed. • Reporting of education service performance to Education Operational Delivery Committee. • Put in place reporting arrangements to monitor the response to the recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on the Curriculum for Excellence. <p>To be developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of identification of improvement projects in service plans for 2022/23. • Review of LOIP and rationalisation of improvement projects to ensure the Council and Partnership are focused on priority issues for improvement. 	<p>Derek McGowan</p> <p>Derek McGowan</p> <p>Derek McGowan</p> <p>Derek McGowan</p> <p>Mark Reilly</p> <p>Eleanor Sheppard</p> <p>Eleanor Sheppard</p> <p>Martin Murchie</p> <p>Martin Murchie</p>	<p>March 2023</p> <p>October 2022</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2023</p> <p>March 2022</p> <p>Nov 2021</p> <p>Sept 21</p> <p>Feb 2022</p> <p>Complete</p>

Theme	Recommendations	Actions	Lead Chief Officer	Target Completion Date
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised CPA Improvement Programme to support delivery of the LOIP and achievement of the improvement aims over the next two years. 	Martin Murchie	Complete