

Perth & Kinross Council

Best Value Thematic Review 2022/23



Prepared by Audit Scotland

11 December 2023

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Key messages

- 1** The Council's leadership continues to set out a clear vision and priorities in the revised Corporate Plan. Each Plan priority has a series of actions which are being monitored through performance indicators, but targets have not been set in all of these, with many of these to be determined when appropriate strategies are revised.
- 2** Performance Reporting has been revised in August 2023 following the revised Corporate Plan and provides a good overview of performance. A Corporate Delivery Improvement Plan has been introduced which sets out improvements for the year ahead.
- 3** Based on Local Government Benchmarking Framework data, Perth & Kinross Council's performance has improved since 2018/19, but its relative ranking compared to other councils has deteriorated. This includes grading of care service inspections.
- 4** The Council is working with its community planning partners to reduce inequalities through delivery of the Community Plan, which was developed with the revised Corporate Plan.
- 5** The previous Best Value review identified that the Council could do more to involve communities in strategic planning. We found that it was committed to community engagement and had built on experiences during Covid-19.
- 6** The Council's Transformation and Change Strategy 2022/23-2027/28 is extensive and ambitious. A council-wide workforce plan exists but lacks context and detail and an asset management strategy is being developed.
- 7** We note that there was no formal reporting to committee of progress against the previous Best Value recommendations, and that reporting to management on progress has not been completed since June 2021. There has been slow progress in implementing some of these actions, with Covid-19 and revisions to Corporate Plans affecting this.

Scope of the audit

- 1.** This report covers the thematic aspect of the Best Value audit requirements. The Commission has directed auditors to report on the effectiveness of the leadership of the development of the Council's strategic priorities.
- 2.** In carrying out the work auditors have considered the following questions:
 - How clear is the new Council vision and its priorities?
 - How is performance managed and how the Council is performing?
 - How effectively have the views of citizens and communities been reflected in the priorities and decisions taken by the Council?
 - How effectively do the Council priorities reflect the need to reduce inequalities and climate change?
 - How good are the delivery plans and is there alignment of financial, workforce, asset and digital plans with the Council's priorities?
 - Overall, how effective has the leadership (political and officer) been in setting clear priorities and a sustainable approach to delivering them?
- 3.** This report includes an update on the areas covered by recommendations in the [Best Value Assurance Report](#) (BVAR) published in August 2019.
- 4.** An improvement action plan is included at the [Appendix](#)
- 5.** of this report. This sets out audit recommendations in key areas, and the Council's planned response including responsible officers and dates for implementation.
- 6.** The coverage of the work is in line with the expectations of Councils for the seven Best Value themes set out in the [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003](#), [Best Value Statutory Guidance 2020](#).

Section 1: Council vision and priorities

The previous Best Value review identified that the Council had clear strategic objectives.

7. The [Best Value report](#) for Perth & Kinross Council was published in August 2019, prior to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Report concluded that “the Council has clear strategic objectives which have remained stable over a period of time and are supported by effective leadership”.

The 2022 Community Plan recognises the main challenges.

8. The local outcome improvement plan (LOIP), or Community Plan 2022-2032, was revised in 2022 by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). A self-assessment of the CPP commenced in May 2023 and will result in the development of a CPP Improvement Plan.

9. The LOIP focuses on four key area-wide actions, with specific locality-based action in two areas: Coupar Angus and Crieff South. The area-wide actions cover:

- Reducing Poverty.
- Physical and Mental Wellbeing.
- Digital Participation.
- Skills, Learning, Development and Employability.

10. The Plan identifies the main challenges facing Perth and Kinross.

11. Population and poverty. Perth and Kinross has an older population than Scotland as a whole and a third of households (36 per cent) face considerable economic challenges. For example, a quarter of households live in fuel poverty due to rurality and other factors and 12 percent of families in Perth and Kinross are living in houses where energy efficiency is poor.

12. Access to services. Access to key services (measured by travel time to those services) is poor. In Perth and Kinross, there are 37 data zones classed in the 10 percent most access-deprived category in Scotland, including Rannoch and Aberfeldy, which is the most access deprived data zone in the whole of Scotland. These 37 data zones represent 21 percent of the population of the Council.

13. Health and Wellbeing. People living in Perth and Kinross typically report higher levels of satisfaction with their community than the Scottish average. Levels of life expectancy and mortality are better in Perth and Kinross than the national average and the incidences of hospitalisation with conditions such as coronary heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cancer are lower. However, the Scottish Household Survey indicates an increasing proportion of adults with a long-term physical or mental health condition, which at 42 percent is above the national figure of 30 percent (2018).

14. Mental wellbeing and service provision in Tayside was subject to an independent inquiry, which highlighted issues around trust and respect between, and among, service users and providers. Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership is leading on the Perth and Kinross response to the inquiry report and its recommendations.

15. Digital access. Many households across Perth and Kinross lack one of the three aspects of digital participation: connectivity, technology and capacity. Superfast Broadband in Perth and Kinross was available in 88 percent of all premises in the area, which ranks 25th out of all local authority areas in Scotland. 79 percent of the geographical area of Perth and Kinross had 4G signal outdoors from at least one mobile network provider: this is one of the lowest levels of geographical coverage in Scotland.

16. Skills and employment. In 2021 Perth and Kinross achieved broadly similar academic achievements for school-leavers, compared to Scotland as a whole. Ongoing economic challenges and a continued focus on community empowerment means that there is an even greater need for adult and community learning. The increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in Perth and Kinross also increases the need for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and other linked opportunities.

17. The hospitality, tourism, care and agricultural sectors are all experiencing workforce shortages. The reliance on lower skilled work is reflected in gross weekly earnings. In December 2021, the average pay for an individual who works in Perth and Kinross was £575, compared to £622 for Scotland as a whole. Weekly earnings have been lower than the Scottish average for 8 out of the last 10 years.

The Corporate Plan clearly sets out the Council's priorities and is both appropriate and focused.

18. The Council's website includes the latest Council Plan: Corporate Plan 2022/23 to 2027/28. The Council has a clear vision "where everyone can live life well, free from poverty and inequality". The Plan identifies seven key priorities. These priorities are based around improving the lives of citizens. The priorities are:

- Tackling poverty.
- In partnership with communities.
- Physical and mental wellbeing.

- Children and young people.
- Tackling climate change.
- Vulnerable people.
- Stronger and greener economy.

The Corporate Plan is consistent with the Community Plan.

19. Challenges have not been explicitly restated in the Council's revised Corporate Plan in 2022, but the Council has recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis resulted in additional challenges, affecting levels of poverty and the equalities gap. We consider that the Community Plan (Local Outcome Improvement Plan) and the Council's Corporate Plan are consistent, even though the "read across" between the two documents is not clear, with digital participation, and overall IT ambitions being far less conspicuous in the Corporate Plan than the LOIP or as reported in the previous Best Value report ([paragraph 86](#)). The overall objectives between the two plans are different ([Exhibit 1](#)).

Exhibit 1

The main objectives of the Community Plan and the Corporate Plan are different.

Community Plan objectives	Corporate Plan objectives
Reducing Poverty – Year 1	Tackling poverty
Physical and Mental Wellbeing Actions – Year 1	Supporting and promoting physical and mental wellbeing
Digital Participation Actions – Year 1	
Skills, Learning, Development and Employability Actions – Year 1	Developing a resilient, stronger and greener local economy
Locality Partnership Working	Working in partnership with communities
	Tackling climate change and supporting sustainable places
	Enabling our children and young people to achieve their full potential
	Protecting and caring for our most vulnerable people

Sources: [Perth and Kinross Community Plan: Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2022 to 2032 \(pkc.gov.uk\)](#) and [Corporate Plan Introduction - Perth and Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](#)

Consultation included citizens, community planning partners and staff and the Plan was well-communicated.

20. The Council considered viewpoints from communities, elected members, partner organisations and staff about what is important for Perth and Kinross in the design of the Corporate Plan. This included in-person events and online consultations. The Council received feedback from over 1,000 people on the priorities. 76 percent of people responding online agreed with the vision and the vast majority agreed with the seven priorities.

21. Based on this feedback, the Council made changes to the wording of several priorities and outcomes and included a graphic of the priorities instead of a list. This consultation process was included as a case study in the [Local Government in Scotland Overview 2023](#). The Council undertook a communications exercise to ensure staff, elected members and citizens were aware of the Plan. This included presentations, discussions, briefing papers/blogs and intranet announcements.

Section 2: Performance

The [Best Value review in 2019](#) identified that outcomes for the community were improving.

22. The previous [Best Value report](#) contained a comparison on national performance indicators. This showed Perth & Kinross Council's performance "generally improved between 2013/14 and 2017/18, but the Council's performance relative to all Scottish councils fell slightly over the same period".

23. The Report noted that "business management improvement plan (BMIP) processes existed", but that "reasons for performance falling below the set target and associated improvement actions were less clear". The Council could make more explicit the linkages between underperforming service performance indicators and the associated actions in the BMIPs.

24. The Report also found that "overall annual performance reporting to elected members and the public should be more transparent, more balanced and clearer about progress towards strategic objectives. When reviewing the Council's Annual Performance Report, it was difficult to judge how well the Council performs overall."

Performance reporting has been aligned with the new Corporate Plan and addressed weaknesses in previous reporting.

25. In December 2022, the Council approved a new Corporate Plan for 2022/23-2027/28.

26. [Performance indicators](#) now focus on the Plan's seven main priorities. The [Corporate Annual Performance Report](#) (APR) for 2022/23 contains 53 identified performance indicators. The [Executive Summary](#) provides an overall snapshot of Council performance and what has improved and deteriorated compared to last year.

27. Services' Annual Performance Reports underpin the Annual Performance Report, and these are also available on the Council's website: "PK Performs".

The Council's new performance framework focuses less on LGBF data.

28. The performance framework which accompanies the new Corporate Plan identifies 53 key indicators against the seven priorities. Out of the total of 53, 12 of these indicators align to the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) with more focus on other data sources including local data and data from the Health and Care Partnership. However, a [LGBF briefing](#) is provided to members each year.

The Council has still to develop targets for some performance indicators.

29. Each plan priority has a series of actions which are being monitored through multiple performance indicators. The number of actions for a priority range from two to four with performance indicators varying from six to ten. The indicators recognise whether the Council can “inform”, “influence” or “control” the performance measure.

30. There are some areas where performance indicator targets have not been set, with many of these to be determined when appropriate strategies are revised.

Overall performance is reported to committee and is being refocused at a strategic level.

31. The Annual Performance Report is considered at the Scrutiny and Performance Committee, typically in September each year and also at full Council.

32. The Business Management Improvement Plan (BMIP) for the coming year and Annual Service Performance Reports for the previous year are presented to the appropriate service committee. For example, the Environment, Infrastructure and Economic Development Committee considered the relevant 2022/23 BMIP and 2021/22 Performance reports in June 2022.

33. In May 2023 an elected member briefing note indicated that the Council is changing the way it reports performance to committees and “moving to an approach whereby performance and improvement information are reported at an organisation / strategic level”.

34. The aim of this new approach is to better reflect the new Corporate Plan priorities and common areas of work across services, rather than focusing on individual service-based performance. As well as the Corporate Annual Performance Report a Corporate Delivery Improvement Plan has been introduced which sets out improvements for the year ahead.

On-line access to performance data is good.

35. Performance reports are available and easily found on the Council’s website. The Council’s website has an online performance area “PK Performs”. This details how the Council is performing against the Corporate Plan for 2022-2027 as well as the Annual Performance Reports.

Perth & Kinross Council’s performance has improved since 2018/19.

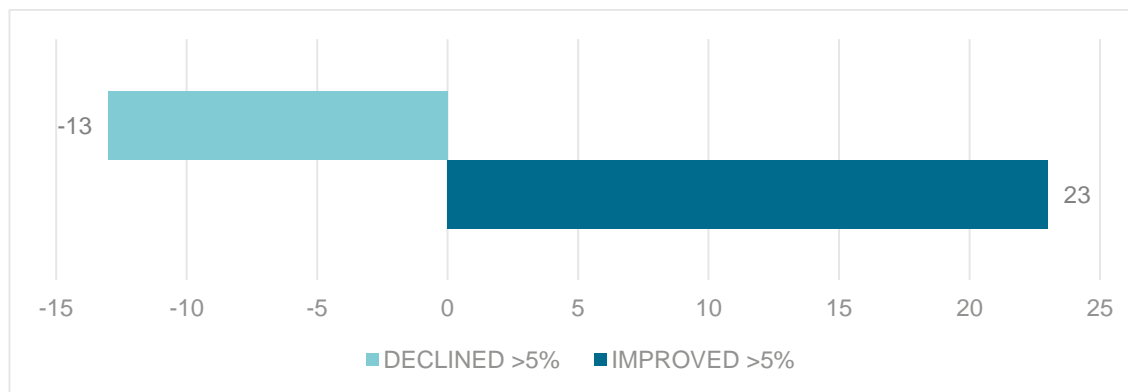
36. There are 88 Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicators relevant to Perth and Kinross that can be used to compare annual performance. 21 are cost indicators and the remaining 67 indicators measure (non-cost) performance. Of these 67, 12 had no comparative data. Of the remaining 55, a comparison since 2018/19 shows that 23 of these indicators

improved by 5 per cent or more and 13 indicators deteriorated by 5 per cent or more with the remaining 19 indicators remaining relatively unchanged ([Exhibit 2](#)).

Exhibit 2

Comparison of 55 LGBF indicators from 2018/19 to 2021/22

23 indicators have improved by more than 5 per cent



Source: LGBF benchmarking data

37. The key areas where performance improved included:

- Children Services indicator 7 - The percentage of Pupils from Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 6 (SIMD) increased by 67 percent from 12 to 20 percent. The national average is 23 percent.
- Children Services indicator 6 - The percentage of Pupils from Deprived Areas Gaining 5+ Awards at Level 5 (SIMD) increased by 40 percent from 35 to 49 percent. The national average is 52 percent.
- Economic Development and Planning indicator 9 - Town Vacancy Rates reduced by 66 percent from 8 to 3 percent. The national average is 11 percent.

38. The areas of deterioration include:

- Housing indicator 3 - The percentage of council dwellings meeting Scottish Housing Standards reduced by 52 percent from 97 to 47 percent. The national average is 69 percent.
- Housing indicator 2 - The percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids increased from 0.9 to 1.3 percent. The national average is 1.6 percent.

39. At a national level, significant changes were experienced with rent voids (housing indicator 2), but the other major changes in Perth and Kinross were more unique. The improvements in educational attainment are a consequence of the focus of the Council on education: “Enabling our children and young people to achieve their full potential”.

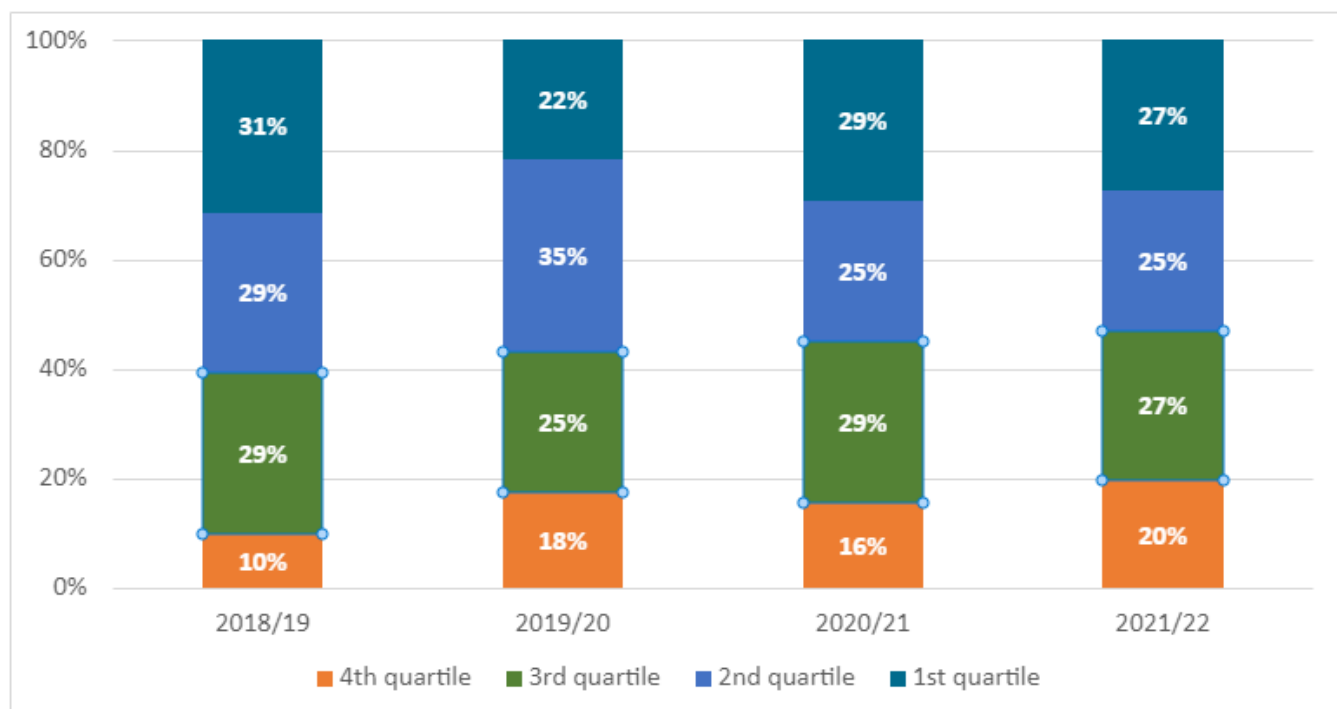
Performance compared to other councils has deteriorated.

40. An overall comparison of LGBF performance to the other 31 councils across Scotland shows a reduction in the number of indicators where Perth and Kinross features in the top two quartiles ([Exhibit 3](#)). Over the period 2018/19 to 2021/22, the percentage of indicators in the top two quartiles decreased from 60 to 52 per cent. A total of 51 indicators are included in this comparison, as four indicators don't have data for 2019/20.

Exhibit 3

LGBF data comparison across all 32 Scottish councils

The Council's relative performance has been decreasing with 52 per cent of indicators in the top two quartiles in 2021/22.



Source: Audit Scotland analysis of LGBF data.

41. Changes over the four years include improved rankings for:

- Proportion of Scottish Welfare Fund budget spent. The Council moved up from 24th to 3rd.
- Proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use. The Council moved up from 20th to 5th.
- Average number of days taken to complete non-emergency repairs. The Council moved up from 20th to 8th.

42. Areas where the Council's ranking moved down include:

- Street cleanliness score. The Council moved down from 3rd to 26th. Short-term resourcing issues, redeployment of staff to higher priority

areas, such as on-street refuse collection, and slippage targets have all contributed to this. However, public satisfaction with street cleanliness is still high.

- The proportion of pupils entering positive destinations. The Council moved down from 3rd to 24th.
- The proportion of care services graded 'good' (4) or better in Care Inspectorate inspections. The Council moved down from 7th to 25th. The Council notes that “there was a significant decline (12 percentage points) between 2020/21 and 2021/22 and concluded that this may be linked to people's experience during the Covid-19 pandemic which saw services often delivered in different ways due to restrictions. In some instances, services had to be closed completely”.

The Council undertakes a Best Value assessment.

43. The previous BVAR Report found that “The Council undertakes self-evaluation and is receptive to third-party evaluation and inspection, but that its self-evaluation could be more explicit about improvement plans”.

44. The Council prepares a [Best Value Themes Report](#) annually and this covers assessment of progress on overall areas of:

- Vision and leadership.
- Governance and accountability.
- Effective use of resources.
- Partnership and collaborative working.
- Working with communities.
- Sustainability.
- Fairness and equality.

45. The Themes Report identified many of the developments in planning that this report references, it also includes performance indicators on staff sickness absence, gender pay gap and asset condition.

46. Self-evaluation at service level was not evident in the Best Value Themes Report, although the Transformation and Change Strategy 2022/23 – 2027/28 has examples of review activity in many areas. Annual performance reports and BMIP reports contain actions and commitments which demonstrate considered improvement at a service level.

The Council demonstrates full compliance with the SPI Direction for 2022/23.

47. The Accounts Commission issued a new [Statutory Performance Information Direction](#) in December 2021 which applies for the three years from 2022/23. It requires a Council to report its:

- performance in improving local public services (including those provided with its partners and communities), and progress against agreed desired outcomes (SPI 1). The Commission expects this reporting to allow comparison both over time and with other similar bodies (drawing on Local Government Benchmarking Framework and/or other benchmarking activities)
- own assessment and audit, scrutiny and inspection body assessments of how it is performing against its duty of Best Value, and how it has responded to these assessments (SPI 2).

48. On the basis of the preceding paragraphs, we believe that the Council has fully complied with the Direction. The Corporate Annual Performance Report provides a balanced overview of performance and Perth and Kinross Performs provides an accessible analysis which allows the public to determine performance.

Section 3: Citizen and community engagement

The previous Best Value review identified that the Council could do more to involve communities in strategic planning.

49. The previous [Best Value Report](#) identified that “there are good examples of community engagement at service level, but the Council could do more to involve communities earlier in strategic planning discussions and demonstrate the outcome of engagement. The Council is aware that it needs to do more to embed community empowerment in the way the Council and its communities work together”.

Community empowerment is a key principle in the new Corporate Plan.

50. The new Corporate Plan includes priorities with linked actions. Working in partnership is one of the seven priorities ([paragraph 17](#)). The key actions include:

- Establishing locality multidisciplinary teams working with community planning partners and residents to identify and address local solutions to local needs.
- Developing and expanding the approach to working with communities to identify local actions and priorities and deliver on these together.
- Delivering internal cultural change programme ensuring all staff contribute to our commitment to engage with and be accessible and responsive to our residents and communities.

51. The Council is committed to engaging with communities and empowering them to make a difference in their own area. It has a dedicated webpage with details on multiple ways to get involved.

The Council has involved the local community in decision making.

52. The Council has seven Action Partnerships. These comprise community representatives, local councillors and representatives of different services that operate in that local area. Each Action Partnership has a Local Action Plan which identifies the key issues and inequalities within that area and the key actions that the members wish to take to deal with them.

53. The community participation requests scheme allows people and groups to request to participate in a process to improve an outcome for their community. No requests were received in 2021/22. This has been identified as being underutilised and an improvement action has been set.

54. The Perth and Kinross Offer is an approach based on the ambition that everyone in Perth and Kinross has something to offer and looks to harness the excellent work undertaken during the pandemic. The aim is to provide “a one-Council approach implemented by multidisciplinary teams involving strong partnerships”. It is a “whole community approach with support and services centred around needs, where communities and staff are empowered to innovate and provide solutions that offer greater sustainability and ownership”. Examples of the offer include:

- **Health and Wellbeing café** - the aim was to create an informal way to provide support, advice and connections to services for people with care needs and their family, friends, and carers. The initiative took advantage of an offer from a Perth city centre café to offer social care staff use of the building one afternoon a week. The staff team embraced the chance, and this became the weekly Health and Wellbeing Café.
- **Housing “think yes” fund** - the aim was to empower staff working directly with vulnerable tenants to identify and fund direct solutions to issues which may have otherwise led to a breakdown in tenancies. The “think yes” fund allocated a pot of money in each housing locality. Staff were given the freedom and flexibility to use the fund to assist tenants in a variety of situations, which would help them meet their tenancy obligations. Fifty-four tenants were helped who might otherwise have defaulted on their rent or given up their tenancy for other reasons.

55. The Consultation Hub provides residents of Perth and Kinross with an opportunity to get involved in decisions made by the Council and its partner organisations that affect their communities. Future actions are informed by the responses. The consultations cover a range of areas. Recent examples include:

- Invergowrie Natural Flood Management Study
- Victory Park, Bridge of Earn – Consultation
- Rent Setting 2023–24 - Your Rent, Your Say, Your Priorities
- Perth and Kinross Local Housing Strategy for 2022-27

56. The Kinross Local Area Committee is piloting a new approach to localised decision making and improving local outcomes. A workshop to evaluate progress and impact took place in early August 2023.

57. The local community in Kinloch Rannoch is currently discussing establishing a community-based Care at Home service with the Health and Social Care Partnership.

There is steady progress with asset transfers to community groups.

58. In 2022/23, the Council received 14 expressions of interest under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, with 9 cases remaining live. It is anticipated that 4 of the expressions of interest received will develop into full Community Asset Transfer requests in 2023/24.

Participatory budgeting is being used but the Council has yet to achieve the 1 percent target.

59. The Community Investment Fund (CIF) has made £1.6 million available since 2018/19 for funding for new community led projects and initiatives to help improve equalities across Perth and Kinross, with priorities determined by local people and communities through the Local Action Partnerships (LAP) and Ward Panels.

60. COSLA and the Scottish Government developed a framework agreement that at least 1 percent of local government budgets should be subject to participatory budgeting by the end of 2021. The investment fund has now been awarded for 2022/23 with a budget of £0.4 million and total applications of £0.8 million. This budget represents 0.1 percent of the Council's net revenue budget for general services. Some examples of where the fund has been invested include:

- £2,200 to Inchtute and Kinnaird Parish Church for a warm spaces project
- £2,000 to Blairgowrie & District Seniors Outings for a cost-of-living and mobility project
- £4,568 to Remake Scotland for a Repairs Café.

61. The Local Action Partnerships are developing a Participatory Budgeting exercise in 2023/24 to develop and deliver actions to address climate change in local communities.

Covid-19 mitigation and recovery were the focus for the first year of the revised Community Learning and Development Plan.

62. The Perth and Kinross Learning and Development Plan 2021-2024 was developed during the Covid-19 pandemic. As the Plan progresses the Council intends to review it yearly and continues to focus on mitigating the impact of Covid-19.

63. It seeks to continue to embrace the new ways of working developed during the pandemic. This includes relying less on buildings, being less bureaucratic, changing the rules on who makes decisions, working more closely with the community to support people in need and working faster to get people the help they need in time.

64. The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the ability of local groups to organise themselves to support the most vulnerable people in their communities and the willingness of people to volunteer informally to support the emergency response. The Council is attempting to ensure this momentum continues by launching grant schemes through the Local Action Partnerships. For example, Eastern Perthshire LAP has provided £13,473 to community groups across the three ward areas. These grants have ranged from upgrades to community assets, such as sheds and halls to funding for family learning activities.

65. Some of these changes will be supported through the Perth and Kinross Offer. As well as giving staff the opportunity to be more flexible there is also a requirement for elected members to work to facilitate solutions to community problems and to work collaboratively. Examples of this include:

- **Supporting Community Food Groups** - The aim was to address issues of food insecurity and food poverty caused by lockdown, self-isolation, and restrictions in place at the start of the pandemic on an area basis. Community groups across Perth and Kinross mobilised quickly at the start of the pandemic to respond to local issues around access to food and there was practical support in the communities where it was most needed. While the restrictions of the pandemic have eased, the need for these groups has continued.
- **Visitor Rangers** - The aim was to support responsible tourism as staycations soared during the pandemic. Welcoming people to Perth and Kinross safely and with consideration for residents and the environment. A team of Visitor Rangers covered the tourism hotspot areas. There was a public communication campaign and online resources to provide clear information ahead of and during the tourist season to support a safe and welcoming experience in Perth and Kinross. Communities reported that the presence of the Rangers made a welcome difference by helping educate visitors, as well as helping to make residents feel safe.

Section 4: Reducing inequalities and tackling climate change

The previous Best Value review identified that an approach to inequality was being developed.

66. The previous [Best Value Report](#) found that “A place-based approach to tackling inequality is being embedded through the seven local action partnerships made up of community, elected and stakeholder representatives” and that equality and fairness were key aspects of the Perth and Kinross Offer.

Removing inequality and addressing the climate emergency are clear priorities for the Council.

67. Of the Council’s seven strategic priorities, one addresses climate change directly “Tackling climate change” and four of them reflect the equality agenda:

- In partnership with communities
- Tackling Poverty
- Vulnerable people
- Children and young people.

68. The Council has recognised that the cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic have meant the equalities gap is widening. With an increased demand for services at a time when there are reductions in resources, the Council has learnt from the pandemic that working together with communities works best to deliver priorities.

The Council works with a range of different partner organisations to deliver their equalities programme.

69. The Local Outcomes Improvement Plan focuses on inequalities which are stubborn and require new collaborative approaches. It has five strategic priorities which includes Poverty and Physical and Mental Health.

70. Each strategic priority is supported by a range of outcomes. These outcomes have a series of actions, and the Plan identifies how the impact will be assessed, but there are no actual targets set. The Local Outcomes Improvement Plan sets out what the Community Planning Partnership will do, and the Perth and Kinross Offer is designed to show how it will work within the Council.

71. There are seven Local Action Partnerships (LAPs) across Perth and Kinross. The LAPs are responsible for developing a Locality Plan targeted on key inequalities, within the wider CPP strategic priorities.

72. The Council's approach to supporting local community planning is being reviewed as part of the Transformation and Change Programme. A report is due to be considered by the Council in February 2024.

A poverty taskforce has devised a plan to help deal with the cost-of-living crisis.

73. In October 2022, a Poverty Taskforce was created which is looking at ways to mitigate causes of poverty. They have undertaken several initiatives since their creation and have a dedicated project officer from August 2023 to support their work.

74. The Council has devised a seven-point plan to help deal with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Measures include:

- Target financial packages of support to help households in Perth and Kinross that need it most.
- Help residents to manage and pay their bills through the provision of information and advice on benefits, money, and debt to those who risk not being able to meet their basic needs.
- Support residents with energy efficiency measures which result in lower bills.
- Help people to access emergency and community food so that they need not go hungry.
- Identify and support the most vulnerable residents to ensure they keep warm and well-nourished.
- Find out what local communities need and build their capacity to deliver local services and reach out to residents to ensure their basic needs are met.
- Co-ordinate with partner organisations across the private, public and third sector to maximise the impact of our collective efforts to keep our residents warm and well-nourished and ensure their basic needs are met.

Equality impact assessments and Fairer Scotland assessments are completed.

75. The Council uses an integrated Impact Assessment Tool, and this creates an Equality and Fairness Impact Assessment (EFIA). An EFIA is carried out at the start of any development of a new or revised policy.

76. The results of impact assessments allow services to highlight any barriers or discrimination that may affect people using services and identify ways to mitigate this. The Council publishes a copy of the impact assessment on its website. Human rights are part of the Equality and Fairness impact assessments.

77. The Council engages with equality groups and communities through the Equalities Strategic forum, Community Equalities Advisory Group or more specific networks if required.

The latest equality performance report available online from the Council covers 2020-2021.

78. As required under the Specific Equality Duty Regulations (Scotland) 2012, the Council reports its progress on equality by publishing a Mainstreaming Equalities Report setting out aims and outcomes for meeting equalities commitments. The Council published its Mainstreaming Equality Report 2021-25 which set out 16 outcomes, banded under four equality aims:

- Perth and Kinross is a safe, welcoming and accessible area.
- Perth and Kinross visibly celebrates equality and diversity.
- We will keep our community informed and engage with them about our services, opportunities and support available to them.
- We will increase people's awareness of equality and diversity.

79. The Council publishes a performance report providing details of how it has achieved these outcomes through a mix of case studies and infographics. The last performance report was for 2020/21 which was prior to the new outcomes agreed in April 2021. There has not been a further performance report published since 2020/21, despite the Council committing to publishing a performance report annually.

Council targets on carbon reduction are clear.

80. The Council recognised a climate emergency in June 2019 and set a target to decarbonise operations in-line with a 1.5°C trajectory and Scottish Government targets. These include a commitment to achieving a 75 percent reduction in emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero by no later than 2045.

81. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2021) has six overarching principles:

- Achieving net zero aligned with the Paris Agreement and the Scottish Government Targets, with the ambition of achieving them sooner.
- Building a more resilient Perth and Kinross.
- Ensuring climate change action is fair and the transition to a green economy benefits all.

- Enhancing biodiversity.
- Engaging young people and empowering them to take action against climate change.
- Empowering business and communities to take climate action in line with the Perth and Kinross Offer.

82. Each priority has several strategic commitments to support it including:

- Deliver action across priority themes of transport, buildings and energy, waste and the circular economy, business and industry, land use, climate resilience and engagement & education.
- Undertake an annual review of climate action plan and adapt as required.
- Mainstream climate resilience into all Perth & Kinross Council asset reviews and decisions.
- Encourage and support children and young people to have their say on influencing the climate change response including by supporting their participation in the Climate Commission and Citizens Panels.
- Act as an enabler to community-based climate action.

There is a Climate Change and Sustainability Committee.

83. The Perth and Kinross Climate Change Commission (PKCCC) was formed in May 2022 and had their first meeting in July 2022. The Commission is an independent active leadership and support network for cross-sector collaboration and action on climate change. The Council has also established a Climate Change and Sustainability Committee to ensure that its plans, programmes and strategies deliver on its obligations and duties towards climate change, sustainable development, and biodiversity.

84. An annual performance report is prepared and submitted to a full Council meeting to update on progress made on the Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

The impact of carbon reduction has not yet been reflected in financial planning or reporting.

85. The Council has not yet been able to fully cost the Climate Strategy and Action Plan but has been clear that funding will be the most significant challenge to becoming net zero, "given the current absence of further external funding sources, the achievement of net zero will not be possible, at the required pace".

86. The Council has assessed that the cost of adaptation and mitigation for buildings, fleet and infrastructure will be around £1 billion.

Section 5: Alignment of delivery plans

The previous Best Value review identified that the Council had a workforce, digital and a medium-term financial plan.

87. The previous [Best Value Report](#) identified that the Council:

- had a workforce plan covering the period 2018-2021 and its framework for managing workforce change and the “job families” approach have been designed to develop a flexible workforce.
- had a Digital Strategy 2016-2020 that contained the expected elements but did not fully reflect the Council’s ambition to become the most digitally innovative Council in Scotland.
- had a five-year medium-term financial plan (MTFP) and a ten-year provisional composite capital budget, but that the Council should consider developing a longer-term financial plan for the five to ten-year period. A new Strategic Investment and Improvement Board was being created.

The Council is moving away from service planning and refocusing on corporate planning and reporting.

88. As noted in [paragraph 32](#), the Council is changing the way it reports performance to committees and “moving to an approach whereby performance and improvement information are reported at an organisation / strategic level.” As part of this new approach, the Council has agreed to remove the requirement for Service Annual Performance Reports and Business Management Improvement Plans from 2023/24.

89. The aim of this new approach is to better reflect the new Corporate Plan priorities and common areas of work across services, rather than focusing on individual service-based performance.

The Council has a transformation programme that is extensive and ambitious.

90. The Council’s Transformation and Change Strategy 2022/23-2027/28 is extensive and ambitious and covers all aspects of the Council under four main aims:

- Transforming our customer’s experience.
- Transforming the shape and structure of our organisation.

- Transforming our systems and processes.
- Transforming our spending and response to demand.

91. The transformation plans are grouped under three headings (People and Place, Our Organisation and Partners) and include the following projects:

- **Review of community engagement activity** - Internally and externally. Proposals for alignment of approach, co-ordination of activity and use of data and intelligence.
- **Decarbonisation** - Delivery of the Council's Climate Action Plan that will lead to the fair transition to a net zero and resilient Perth and Kinross Council estate and Perth & Kinross Council area.
- **Older People** – Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership (PKHSCP / the Integrated Joint Board) will deliver an approved strategic plan to change and improve care and support for a growing population of older people and their carers. Through a whole system/collaborative approach early intervention will be enhanced through self-management; avoiding admissions to hospital and keeping people at home; and integrating pathways of care across Primary, Secondary and Community.
- **Tayside Wide Mental Health Service Transformation** - PKHSCP will co-ordinate the strategic planning and transformation of mental health services across Tayside. Together across the three HSCPs, NHS Tayside and the three Local Authorities and with people living with mental health conditions, their families and carers and our staff, strive to build high quality mental health services that meet people's needs.
- **Leadership Review** - Introduce more flexible leadership arrangements and through transformation will introduce new modern, flexible models of service delivery.
- **Consolidation** - A consolidation of organisational services to identify gaps and areas of duplication, consolidating activities to improve efficiency, consistency and quality of service delivery.
- **One Public Estate (School Estate)** - A review of all estate (with partners) to reduce buildings and identify opportunities for co-location with partner organisations.
- **Culture and leisure – ALEOs** - A review of ALEOs and the culture and leisure activities across Perth and Kinross to ensure the most effective model of operation. Maximising opportunities for services to be as commercially efficient as possible.

There are clear links to Corporate Plan priorities within the Medium-Term Financial Plan

92. The Council approved a Financial Strategy in June 2022 which set out the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council over the short to medium term. These include real term reductions in funding, significant cost increases due to inflation and an increasing demand for services. These result in a recurring funding gap which has been funded from reserves for a number of years.

93. The Council acknowledges that this is unsustainable and that it needs to take corrective action to return to a position of long-term financial sustainability. It aims to do this through a number of strategies including its Transformation and Change Strategy but recognises transformation alone will not be sufficient to address the funding gap so budget cuts and service reductions will still be required.

94. The Financial Strategy aims to provide the link between the Council's long-term strategic objectives and its financial capacity but does not make specific reference to the Corporate Plan approved in December 2022. We have been advised that it was written this way so that it would be sustainable and transcend multiple plans. The Council's expenditure pressures, and savings proposals are clearly linked to Corporate Plan priorities within the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the three-year budget paper.

Cumulative funding gaps of up to £192 million are projected over the next six years.

95. The Financial Strategy is supported by the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan, approved in October 2023, covering the six years to 31 March 2030. The plan considers a range of key financial variables that impact on the Council's financial planning including funding levels, inflation and pay awards. These are grouped together under three scenarios: optimistic, mid-range and pessimistic and show that the Council needs to make cumulative budget reductions of between £7.6 million and £192 million by 31 March 2030.

The Council originally planned to use £27 million of reserves to fund its 2023/24 budget but subsequent updates have increased this to £42 million.

96. On 1 March 2023, the Council approved its 2023/24 general services revenue budget. Budgeted net expenditure of £450.5 million was approved after inclusion of budget pressures totalling £17.7 million and deduction of savings totalling £6 million. The Council used the following measures to balance its budget:

- increase Council Tax by 3.9% equating to £3.8 million.
- use of service concessions fiscal flexibility equating to £17 million.
- use of reserves totalling £9.9 million.

97. The Council has subsequently updated its 2023/24 budget to reflect additional budget pressures (£1.7 million), increased expenditure funded from additional government grant (£9.4 million), the impact of the 2022/23 outturn (£9.2 million) and additional expenditure to be funded from earmarked reserves (£3.9 million). The revised budget totals £474.7 million, of which £41.7 million will be funded from reserves

98. The latest budget monitoring report (as at 31 August 2023) notes that the Council is projecting a small overspend of £1.6 million (0.3 percent) against its budget).

A Council-wide workforce plan exists but lacks context and details.

99. The Council has a workforce plan: Corporate Workforce Plan 2021-23. There is no information in the plan about the challenges facing the Council workforce, or any data in terms of workforce numbers, deployment, age profile, or risks in individual employment groups. The Plan sets out the Council's ambitions around three themes:

- **Building in Agility** – During the pandemic it has been, and will continue to be, critical to have the ability to move resources to areas with the greatest need, often at short notice, and utilise the many skills and talents across the organisation to make a meaningful difference. Flexible and remote working is here to stay. Focusing on simplified governance and decision-making has empowered staff to work and make decisions more independently.
- **Evolving Our Talent** – Knowing our people and their values, skills, experience, and aspirations will enable us to retain, develop and mobilise our talent across the organisation. This will also help to identify any skills gaps so that we can focus on developing our own staff using effective succession planning or recruiting to these areas and creating a pipeline of future talent.
- **Refreshing Our Employment Offer** – Inspiring a future generation of public servants as well as our own staff who may also be looking for a change in career or to take on a leadership role. Continuing to develop technology and find digital solutions to apply, interview and induct employees is essential in this new era of work.

100. 18 priority actions have been identified in the Plan. The Council is developing a “Managing Workforce Change Strategy” as part of its transformation programme.

Recommendation 1

The Council should revise the workforce plan. This should set out the challenges facing the Council workforce; data in terms of workforce numbers, deployment, age profile; and risks and actions in individual employment groups.

The Council is developing an asset management strategy.

101. The transformation programme identifies that one of the projects is the “development of corporate asset management strategy and a review of “one public estate” including the school estate – including savings available through reducing the number and size of buildings.” A revised Corporate Asset Management strategy and plan is currently being drafted and is scheduled to be presented to the Council in December 2023. Included in this will be a high level 30 Year Investment Plan: this will provide a breakdown of estimated long-term investment requirements for the existing asset base and will inform long-term financial planning.

The Council has a digital strategy which supports its change programme and Corporate Plan.

102. An Executive Leaders short-life working group was created in 2022 to refresh the Digital Strategy. In-person and virtual workshops were created and included the extended leadership team (ELT), the transformation and change team, all service senior management teams and elected members.

103. The refreshed Digital Strategy 2023-2027 (Digital Perth and Kinross) and Delivery Plan were approved at the Finance & Resource Committee on 1 February 2023. The Strategy aligns with the Council’s Transformation and Change programme and supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

104. The strategy demonstrates the level of ambition for using digital, information and technology over the next 5 years and includes digital ambitions which align with the Corporate Plan, Financial Strategy and Transformation and Change Programme. The strategy is supported by the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan, which was shared at the Council’s Digital Board and more widely with leaders, business owners and decision-makers.

105. Senior managers, wider staff and the Digital Board provided constructive assistance in identifying key themes. The activity is continuing with sessions planned at the Leadership Forum and Senior Management Teams, to ensure resources are prioritised appropriately to meet new and emerging demand. Progress is being monitored quarterly at the Digital Board and annually at the Finance and Resources Committee. The key themes include:

- Better use of technology and the internet of things to monitor care needs/delivery and managing housing stock.
- Creating more of a ‘one council’ joined-up approach.
- Targeting support to those at risk of digital exclusion.
- Using data gathered to improve service design and delivery.

Section 6: Leadership

The previous Best Value review identified that there is strong member and officer leadership.

106. The previous [Best Value Report](#) concluded that “there is strong member and officer leadership together with appropriate levels of challenge and scrutiny. The Council operates in a transparent manner and has effective member development and training arrangements. The current review of the Council’s governance structure should consider simplifying the decision-making model.”

Following the May 2022 local government elections, the Council now has a SNP minority administration.

107. In May 2022, local government elections were held across Scotland. 40 councillors were elected to represent the 12 wards of Perth & Kinross Council. The Council is now led by a SNP minority administration, which replaced the previous Conservative minority administration.

108. At the Council meeting held in May 2022, the Council agreed to retain the existing committee structure, with a number of minor changes to the names of seven committees to ensure these were aligned to the functions they performed, alongside a change to the number of members sitting on several committees. A new committee, Climate Change and Sustainability Committee, was also created. Following these changes, the Council currently operates with a total of 22 sub-committees, ten of which administer common good funds.

There has been a recent review of the management structure.

109. The Chief Executive took up post in November 2021 and is currently supported by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). In June 2023, a [change to the Executive and Strategic Leadership Structure](#) was approved. The new structure will see a reduction in the ELT from five posts to three and will now include a Chief Officer of Health and Social Care; Director of Strategy, People and Resources; and Director of Economy, Place and Learning. There will also be a reduction in the number of Heads of Service, reducing from 13 to 11 Strategic Lead posts.

There is effective collaborative working between members and officers.

110. Based on our observation of committee meetings we are satisfied that there remains effective collaborative working arrangements between members and with officers.

111. It is also clear that there is a good degree of co-operation and consensus between members on the vision and priorities for the Council. Members continue to have a clear focus on working in the interests of residents.

112. There is good communication between elected members and senior management through Leaders' meetings, Convenors' meetings, Member Officer Working Groups and all-member briefings were appropriate.

There are no significant issues identified with capacity and skills of senior officers or with the skills and development of members.

113. After the May 2022 local government elections, the Council ran an induction programme for new and returning elected members to ensure they accessed the relevant information and training they needed to fulfil their role.

114. The Organisational Development Plan 2020-23 includes a workstream on "Elected Member Development Plan" which aims "to ensure a consistent and structured framework is in place for Elected Member development". It proposes that individual development plans are created for Elected Members which will be reinforced with specific and general learning opportunities.

115. There is also a workstream in the Organisational Development Plan dedicated to "Developing Leaders" which is "not about managing others but about managing challenges." This workstream is open to all staff at any level.

Section 7: Progress on recommendations

The Council has made slow progress on recommendations reported in the 2019 BVAR.

116. The previous [Best Value Report](#) commended the continuing steady improvement of the Council since the first Best Value audit in 2008. The report noted the Council's clear strategic objectives and effective leadership had provided the basis for improvement. The report also commended the Council for the potential step change presented by the 'Perth and Kinross Offer', an approach setting out how the Council will improve in partnership with citizens and communities.

117. The report noted that the Council should use its approaches to self-evaluation and performance management to demonstrate better where it intends to improve and how it is progressing against its objectives. It also noted the Council's ambition to become the most digitally innovative in Scotland, with the Council updating its digital strategy.

118. We note that there was no formal reporting to committee of progress against the 2019 Best Value recommendations and that reporting to management on progress has not been completed since June 2021.

Recommendation 2

The Council should implement a process for routinely reporting Best Value action plan progress to committee.

119. The previous auditor (KPMG) did not include a summary of BV progress in either the 2020/21 or 2021/22 Annual Audit Reports. We obtained some information from them as part of our handover arrangements, but this did not include clear judgements on the status of each recommendation, so we have considered KPMG comments and completed our own assessment of progress.

120. [Exhibit 4](#) summarises our assessment of progress against each of the 8 recommendations. This shows that progress has been slow, with six recommendations now considered as complete, with further actions planned to complete the remaining two actions. However we note that Covid-19 pandemic and the development of a new Corporate Plan affected the progress in some areas.

Exhibit 4

Progress on 2019 Best Value Recommendations

BVAR Recommendation	Summary of progress
<p>It is important that the Council maintains the pace of development of the Perth and Kinross Offer as part of the framework and timeline it is currently developing</p>	<p><i>KPMG: “The Offer continues to progress positively, will need to keep up with the pace expected of a project of this importance and size, particularly following changes in Council leadership and elected members.</i></p> <p><i>The offer framework was approved by Council in December 2021.</i></p> <p><i>Since our previous report on the Offer, progress has continued despite the ongoing pressures and challenges of increasing inflation, the cost-of-living crisis and wider economic uncertainty. Following the change in Council leadership and elected members, the Offer will require continued focus and consideration in order to be successful.”</i></p> <p>Completed</p> <p>The Perth and Kinross Offer Framework was approved at the Council meeting on 15 December 2021. The Framework sets out the plan for taking forward the principles and aims of the Offer over a 5-year period (2022 to 2027), including a timeline of key milestones”.</p> <p>(Paragraph 53)</p>
<p>Following completion of its updated maturity assessment the Council should revise its digital strategy in line with its ambition</p>	<p><i>KPMG “The Council’s digital strategy spanned 2016-20, and progress was reported as being made to complete a revision which is scheduled for release during 2021. The ICT Transformation Board previously oversaw digital development, however, as part of the revision, the Board has been renamed to the Digital Board, with changed terms of reference and membership to improve oversight and challenge. As part of the revision, three separate audits have been carried out to inform developments, including from Audit Scotland and the Local Government Digital Office. The digital strategy 2023-27 was set out in a report to Finance and Resources Committee 1 February 2023.”</i></p> <p>Completed</p> <p>The Digital Strategy 2023-2027 and Delivery Plan were approved at the Finance and Resources Committee on 1 February 2023. The Strategy aligns with the Council’s Transformation and Change programme and supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>(Paragraphs 101-104)</p>
<p>As part of the ongoing governance review the Council should consider simplifying</p>	<p><i>KPMG “The Scheme of Administration and Standing Orders were both updated during 2021 to reflect the modern ways of working in line with the Council’s ongoing review of governance</i></p>

arrangements to improve decision-making

arrangements. A hybrid meeting structure was adopted by the Council following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

The Council has good governance arrangements, with sufficient scrutiny offered from Council members through the Scrutiny and Performance Committee, and from an internal audit service that is sufficiently independent from finance and service delivery.”

Completed

In June 2023, a change to the Executive and Strategic Leadership Structure was approved. The new structure will see a reduction in the ELT from five posts to three and will now include a Chief Officer of Health and Social Care; Director of Strategy, People and Resources; and Director of Economy, Place and Learning. There will also be a reduction in the number of Heads of Service, reducing from 13 to 11 Strategic Lead posts.

(Paragraph 108)

The Council should consistently demonstrate how it uses performance management and performance reporting to drive continuous improvement

KPMG “The Council prepared its annual Planning Performance Framework, which is a national monitoring tool scrutinised by Scottish Ministers. The main purpose of this tool is to demonstrate how, as a planning authority the Council are working towards achieving a high-quality planning service. This includes both forward and backward consideration of performance, and steps to improve. The report clearly shows the performance against targets, whether delivered, or on target. The report made clear the planned service improvements for 2020-21 and discusses the intended outcomes. Specific actions were taken in respect of education and children’s services.”

Completed

The latest (20221/23) Corporate Annual Performance Report provides an overall summary of data on Council performance and what has improved and deteriorated compared to last year. There are areas where performance indicator targets have not yet been set and these will be determined as appropriate strategies are revisited.

A [Corporate Delivery Improvement Plan](#) has been introduced which sets out improvements for the year ahead.

The Council is changing the way it reports performance to committees and “moving to an approach whereby performance and improvement information are reported at an organisation / strategic level.”

(Paragraphs 30-33 and 87-88)

It also needs to make public performance reporting more transparent, clear and balanced. The Annual Performance Report

KPMG “As a result of the recommendation from the BVAR, the APR was redeveloped to improve transparency and balanced reporting. This included improved narrative describing the indicator, how it is measured, what influences performance. Furthermore, the

should include ambitious targets and be clear about the reasons for underperformance and planned improvement actions

performance over time, and against target are key inclusions which improve the transparency of the report.

The Council opted to remove the trend analysis which indicates a deterioration, or improvement of indicators. In our view, considering the continued impact of COVID-19 during the 2022 financial year, the decision to remove the trend analysis continues to be appropriate for this year, and reflects the Council's transparency on performance."

Completed

Our own review of the 2022/23 Corporate APR identified that there was an overall summary of performance which was balanced and contained targets for improvement.

(Paragraphs 30-33)

The Council should build on its strong financial management and consider developing a longer-term financial plan covering a five to ten-year period as part of its modernisation agenda

KPMG "We consider that the approach to financial management, including budget setting and monitoring is appropriate with clear supporting governance arrangements. The Council demonstrates good practice, in a local authority context, through regular financial reporting. We continue to highlight the good practice of budget flexibility, which encourages the Council to plan longer term."

"In November 2021, the Council considered a revised six-year plan for 2022-2028. The Council have built on existing strong financial management and have developed financial models to demonstrate long term planning. In addition to revenue long-term forecasting, the Council developed a thirty-year capital Investment Blueprint for the Future ("the Blueprint") plan which was presented on 6 October 2021."

"We consider the development of a six-year plan to be an appropriate response to longer term financial planning. However, in light of the recent global pandemic as well as wider economic uncertainty, the need to develop further long-term financial planning beyond six years is further highlighted. The revised Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2027/28 sets out the vision and corporate objectives of the Council, aligned with its values. The Financial strategy details the challenges faced by the Council and the various actions to be taken for the financial sustainability of the Council."

Outstanding

The Council has set provisional revenue budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 and has a Medium-Term Financial Plan. A review of strategic planning and resource management activity is underway.

(Paragraph 94)

The ongoing review of the community planning partnership should be wide-ranging and include the effectiveness of

KPMG "The community planning partnership board needs to take a more active role in leading partnership working and strategic direction. Community empowerment is not yet fully embedded in the way the Council and its communities work. The Perth and Kinross Offer is a new approach that aims to empower communities and give them more influence over what matters to

the board, outcome delivery groups and the local action partnerships

them. As part of the Council's response to equality it continues to have conversations with local communities which as at April 2021 included some key community driven actions. In addition, the Council is required to produce its local outcomes improvement plan, and this uses local challenges and intelligence to identify key inequalities. These are predominantly identified as poverty, mental and physical well-being, skills, learning and development, employment and digital participation."

Outstanding

A revised Community Plan was approved by the CPP Board in September 2022. The Council is reviewing and updating its approach to community engagement and empowerment as part of the Transformation and Change Programme including how the Council and wider CPP discharges its duties around local community planning.

A self-assessment of the CPP commenced in May 2023 and will result in the development of a CPP Improvement Plan.

(Paragraphs 7-16)

The Council should improve how it involves communities. This includes earlier involvement in strategic planning processes, more involvement in budgeting processes, and better promotion of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and providing appropriate resource to support the requirements of the Act

KPMG "As part of the five-year Transformation and Change strategy, meaningful engagement and communication are key. Engagement with the local community has been identified as a key focus to address service delivery and meet the needs of the local community. Communication and effective dialogue with staff, communities, public, private and sector partners has been identified as key to help strengthen the Council's understanding of delivery needs and how to allocate resources."

"The Offer framework, including Communications and Engagement Plan was considered and approved by Council in December 2021. The Offer is a key way the Council plans to engage with and involve communities and an update is provided above."

"The Council has continued to use its Consultation Hub as a way of engagement with communities and its stakeholders. The 2020-21 budget consultation is an example of how the Council continues to expand opportunities to engage with communities, which includes a number of other consultations on businesses and the effect of Covid-19, and review of audit social work and social care contributions policy. However we continued to make further recommendations."

Completed

The Community Plan and Corporate Plan were developed in consultation with communities, and this approach was included as a case study within the Local Government in Scotland Overview 2023. Working in partnership is one of the seven priorities in the Corporate Plan 2022-27. The Perth and Kinross Offer is a "whole community approach with support and services centred around needs, where communities and staff are empowered to innovate and provide solutions that offer greater sustainability and

ownership. The Council provided examples of how this worked, and it continues to embrace the new ways of working developed during the pandemic. This includes relying less on buildings, being less bureaucratic, changing the rules on who makes decisions, working more closely with the community to support people in need and working faster to get people the help they need in time.

There is a dedicated webpage with information on community asset transfers and participation requests.

(Paragraphs 19-20 and 51-56)

Appendix

Improvement Action Plan

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>1. Workforce Planning</p> <p>The Council has a workforce plan, but it lacks context and detail.</p>	<p>The Council should revise the workforce plan. This should set out the challenges facing the council workforce; data in terms of workforce numbers, deployment, age profile; and risks and actions in individual employment groups.</p>	<p>A detailed People and Culture Plan will be taken to the Finance and Resources Committee by June 2024.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Strategic Lead – Strategic Planning, People and Performance</p> <p>Target date: 30 June 2024</p>
<p>2. Best Value Reporting</p> <p>The Council has made slow progress on recommendations reported in the 2019 Best Value Assurance Report.</p>	<p>The Council should implement a process for routinely reporting Best Value action plan progress to committee.</p>	<p>An annual update will be provided through the Corporate Annual Performance Report which is reported to the Scrutiny and Performance Committee and the Council in September. This will also sit on our website as part of the supporting information which is accessible to the public. In addition, we will report six monthly to the Executive Leadership Team.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Strategic Lead – Strategic Planning, People and Performance</p> <p>Target date: 30 September 2024</p>

Perth and Kinross Council

Best Value Thematic Review 2022/23

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