

MEETING: 12 MARCH 2020

REPORT BY: SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK:
NATIONAL BENCHMARKING OVERVIEW REPORT 2018/19**

Purpose

1. This paper introduces for the Commission's information the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) National Benchmarking Overview Report 2018/19 and introduces representatives of the LGBF Board who will present the draft report at today's meeting.

Background

2. The Commission has maintained a close interest in the development of the LGBF. This interest reflects the Commission's ongoing commitment to encourage sector-led benchmarking and improvement, as well as its statutory responsibilities in directing local authorities to publish performance information and securing the audit of Best Value.
3. The Commission published in December 2018 its three-year Statutory Performance Information Direction. The Direction sets out the performance information that the Commission requires councils to publish and applies for the information covering the three years from 1 April 2019. A core theme of the Direction is the Commission's continued encouragement of the LGBF project. In their annual audit reports in autumn 2020, auditors will be reporting on progress made by councils against the Direction.

National benchmarking overview report 2018/19

4. The Improvement Service published this report on 31 January 2020. This is in effect the annual report of the LGBF project. It is attached in **Appendix 1**.
5. David Martin, Chair of the LGBF Board (and Chief Executive of Dundee City Council) and Emily Lynch, Programme Manager, Improvement Service, are present at today's meeting to present the report. They will undertake a short presentation summarising the conclusions of the report and providing an update on the progress of the project.
6. The Commission can therefore today consider the report as part of its consideration of the draft of the Commission's Local Government Overview report which is elsewhere on today's agenda.

Liaison with the LGBF Board

7. The Commission formally liaise with the LGBF Board annually around the publication of the LGBF annual overview. At its meeting on 7 February 2019, the Commission welcomed David Martin and Emily Lynch who presented the report. At the meeting, the Commission:
 - Noted advice from the LGBF representatives, in response to queries from Commission members:
 - On progress being made in relation to developing the reporting of outcomes by partnership and place.

- On reporting evidence of robust use of LGBF data by councils and professional associations.
 - On progress with improving the customer satisfaction data used by councils
 - On progress with reporting outcomes for children, including in relation to child protection, in particular noting the forthcoming thematic LGBF report in this regard and the LGBF's Board's desire for continued dialogue with the Commission in this regard.
 - That the Board would consider how the carer perspective features in its work.
- Agreed to note the Commission's continued interest in these areas.
 - Agreed the importance of continued dialogue with the Board and support for the project.
8. Subsequently, on 15 August 2019, the Chair and Deputy Chair met David Martin and Emily Lynch. A letter sent subsequently by the Chair to David Martin is in **Appendix 2**.
 9. As well as this formal liaison, the Secretary of the Commission attends quarterly meetings of the LGBF Board as an observer and updates the Commission appropriately through the Secretary's regular update report.

Conclusion

10. The Commission is invited to consider the attached LGBF National Benchmarking Overview Report 2018/19 and accompanying presentation by David Martin and Emily Lynch, and in particular consider any implications for the Local Government Overview report.

Paul Reilly
Secretary to the Commission
3 March 2020

Appendix 1: Draft National Benchmarking Overview Report 2018/19

See separate paper

David Martin
Chair
Local Government Benchmarking Board
Dundee City Council
City Chambers
City Square
DUNDEE
DD1 3BY

4 September 2019

Dear David

Meeting between Commission and Local Government Benchmarking Framework, 15 August

It was good to meet on 15 August and explore our areas of common interest. Elma and I were pleased to note the continuing positive progress of the project and we will convey accordingly to the Commission.

I thought it would be helpful to set out a summary of our discussion:

1. Use of benchmarking data in overview and Best Value reporting

We noted the continuing development in how the Commission features LGBF and other benchmarking data are used in its overview and Best Value work. The Commission is keen that we continue to hear the Board's views in this regard.

2. Councils' use of benchmarking data

We noted your work in gauging how councils are making use of LGBF and benchmarking data. We agreed the importance of ensuring that such data are regarded as a resource by officers throughout councils. For the Commission's part, we advised that we will continue to promote the benefits of the project when opportunities arise, for example in our liaison with the Scottish Local Government Performance Management Forum.

We discussed how Scottish Government priorities fit with our respective work. We also considered the practical experience of information requests from throughout Government and the workload that this can entail for councils. For the Commission's part, as Andrea will know this is an area we are working on through the Strategic Scrutiny Group.

3. Customer/citizen satisfaction

We discussed the potential of a principles document being produced by the Commission in relation to community engagement or public performance reporting, similar to that of the recent such publication of the Strategic Scrutiny Group in relation to community empowerment. I agreed that we would consider this further.

4. Thematic reporting

We noted that the LGBF Board continues to consider the balance between one-off thematic reports and reporting through its annual report.

In turn, we will consider possible areas of interest for thematic reports. We did however note that our five-year work programme is a point of reference for the LGBF Board.

5. LGBF strategic plan progress and priorities

We noted that the Board is giving thought to areas of interest in the longer term and in particular encouraging professional interests on the Board to be applying thinking in their own areas. We noted that you are taking forward work on public safety and protection and on economic development, but will not be proceeding at this point with any work on procurement.

6. Outcomes and community planning outcome profiles

We noted your ongoing work in this regard. You advised of your keenness in making better use of local outcome improvement plans, not only by CPPs themselves but also Ministers.

7. Statutory performance information

We noted that auditors will be reporting in October 2020 on the performance of councils against the first year of the requirements of the Commission's 2018 Statutory Performance Information Direction.

8. Best Value: auditing and statutory guidance

We noted the aim of the Commission to revise its approach to auditing Best Value in time for appointing a new round of auditors in 2021, to which end the Commission will be engaging with stakeholders in coming months and into 2020.

9. Police and Fire and Rescue

We discussed the potential of more geographical benchmarking work in the Scottish police and fire and rescue services. I will raise this interest with Caroline Gardner, Auditor General for Scotland, in her scrutiny role in this regard.

I trust that you will acknowledge all of these as areas of continuing mutual interest. The Commission Secretary will continue to act as an observer on your Board. Meantime, I wish you well in taking forward the Board's work.

Yours sincerely



Graham Sharp
Chair

Copy to: Emily Lynch, Programme Manager, Improvement Service