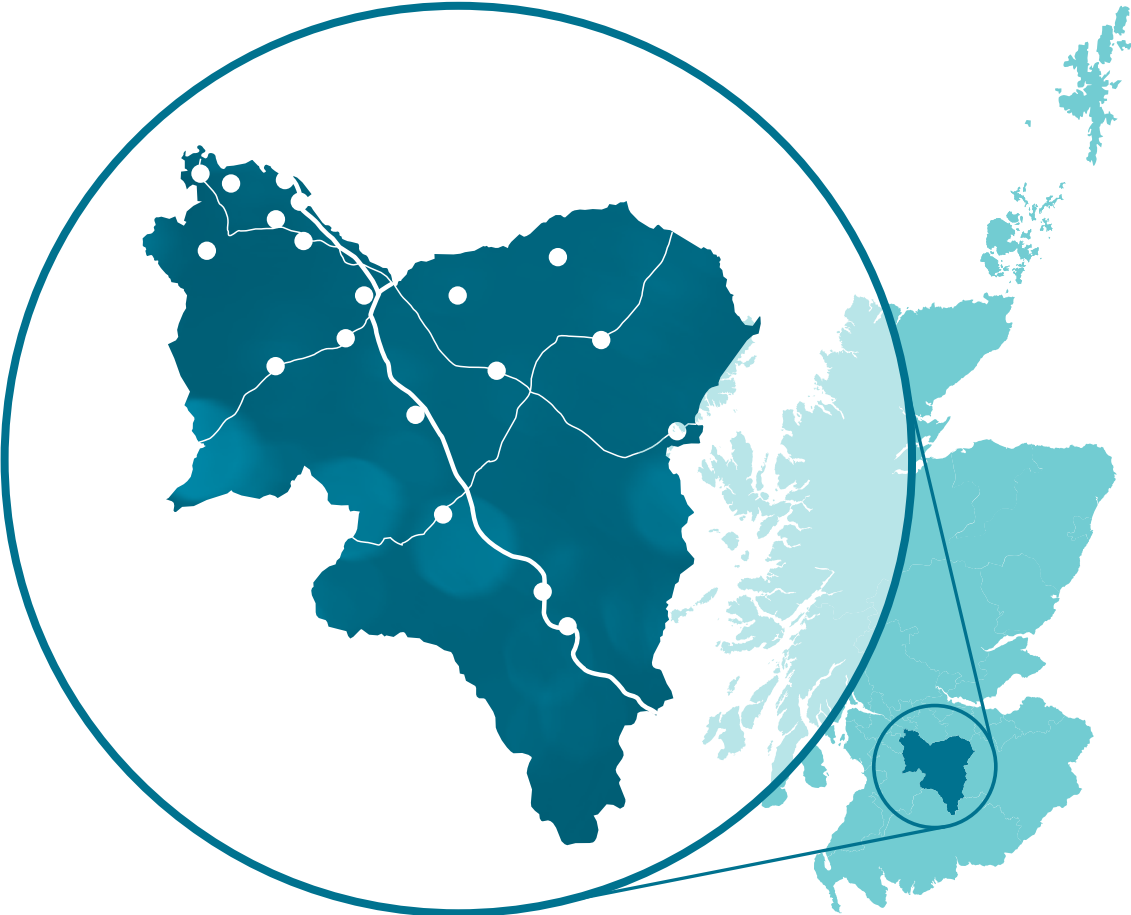


Best Value Assurance Report

South Lanarkshire Council



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

Prepared by Audit Scotland
March 2019


The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. We hold councils in Scotland to account and help them improve. We operate impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and we meet and report in public.

We expect councils to achieve the highest standards of governance and financial stewardship, and value for money in how they use their resources and provide their services.

Our work includes:

- securing and acting upon the external audit of Scotland's councils and various joint boards and committees
- assessing the performance of councils in relation to Best Value and community planning
- carrying out national performance audits to help councils improve their services
- requiring councils to publish information to help the public assess their performance.

You can find out more about the work of the Accounts Commission on our website: www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/about-us/accounts-commission 

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. We help the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission check that organisations spending public money use it properly, efficiently and effectively.

Contents

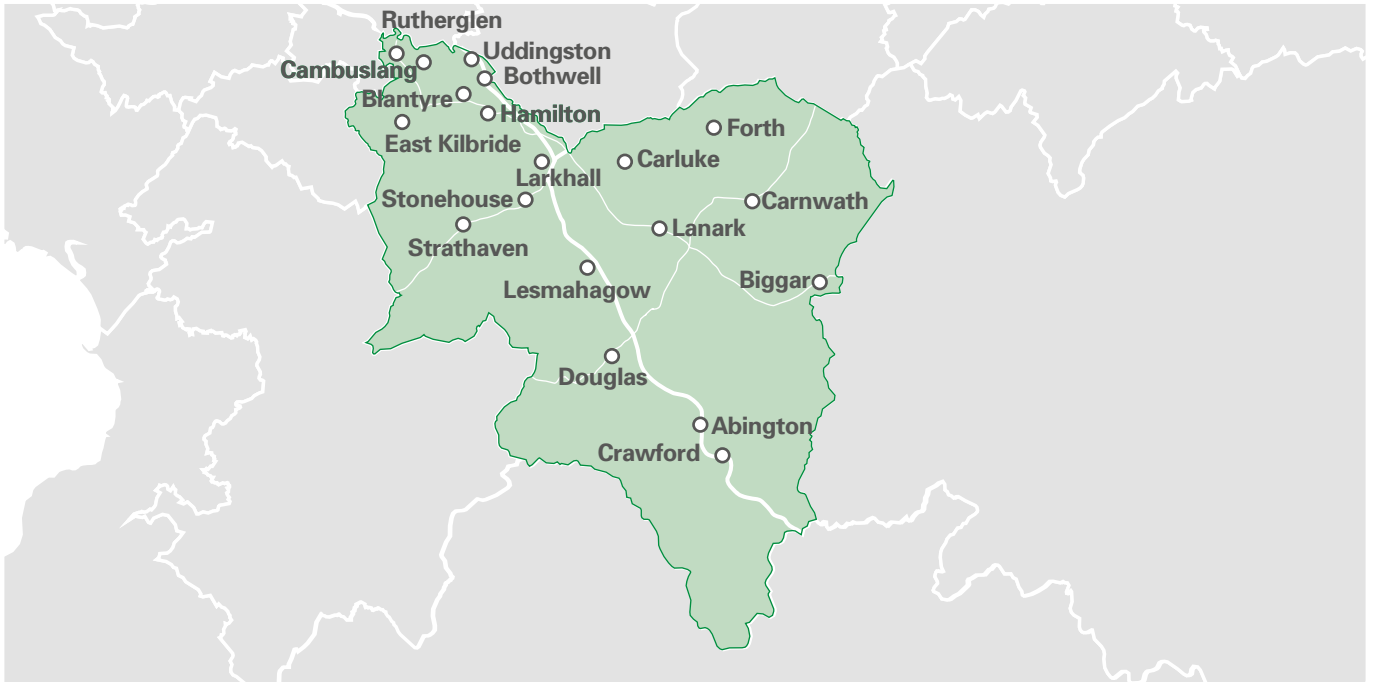


Key facts	4
Commission findings	5
Audit approach	6
Key messages	8
Part 1. Does the council have clear strategic direction?	9
Part 2. How well is the council performing?	15
Part 3. Is the council using its resources effectively?	24
Part 4. Is the council working well with its partners?	34
Part 5. Is the council demonstrating continuous improvement?	42
Recommendations	48
Appendix. Best Value audit timeline	49

Links

-  PDF download
 -  Web link
-

Key facts



Area



Population



Workforce
(number of full-time
equivalent employees)



Elected members
24 Scottish National Party
17 Scottish Labour
14 Conservative and
Unionist
8 Independent
1 Scottish Liberal Democrat



Council houses



2018/19
revenue budget¹



2018/19
capital budget²




Budget gap
2019–22

1. Revenue budget covers day-to-day costs such as wages.
2. Capital budget covers the cost of major projects such as schools and roads.


Commission findings




- 1** The Commission accepts the Controller of Audit's report on Best Value in South Lanarkshire Council. We endorse the recommendations set out by the Controller of Audit in his report and expect the council to act upon them.
- 2** Our previous [Best Value audit report in 2009](#)  noted strong leadership, clear direction, a strong culture of continuous improvement and a well-performing council. We are pleased to note the council continues to demonstrate all of these elements and is making significant progress in fulfilling its duty of Best Value and improving outcomes for its communities.
- 3** The council's sound approach to managing its finances and its capital programme, and redesigning its services, will act as a strong basis to ensure financial sustainability in the face of the challenges that lie ahead. We note the recent approval of a long-term financial strategy, which is a crucial element of such sound financial management. Better accuracy in how revenue budgeting reflects activity and greater clarity in how the council uses its reserves will further enhance its approach.
- 4** We underline the Controller's recommendations towards ensuring that service redesign is driven by community engagement and by a better understanding by the council of how citizens view its services. We also amplify the recommendation that the council reviews its governance structures to help build the capacity of communities to be involved in such redesign. Both of these recommendations reflect our expectation that the council and its partners make better progress towards their obligations under the Community Empowerment Act.
- 5** Further, more transparent public scrutiny by members of performance reports will also enhance the relationship between the council and communities.
- 6** It is clear that strong leadership continues to be a feature of the council. Such leadership can be enhanced by members making more effective use of the training and development support that has been made available. We encourage members to regard such support as an important element of their leadership responsibilities.
- 7** We are particularly pleased to note the council's comprehensive approach to organisation-wide workforce planning which has many elements of good practice and is an essential element of comprehensive service redesign.
- 8** We encourage the council to continue this good progress. The Controller of Audit will monitor this through the annual audit and keep the Commission informed accordingly.

Audit approach



1. The statutory duty of Best Value was introduced in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. The audit of Best Value is a continuous process that forms part of the annual audit of every council. Findings are reported each year through the Annual Audit Report. The Controller of Audit will also present a Best Value Assurance Report to the Accounts Commission at least once during the five-year audit appointment for each council. This is the first assurance report on South Lanarkshire Council. The findings from the previous [Best Value report on the council in 2009](#)  are summarised in [Part 5](#). The council's recent history and Best Value audit timeline is outlined in the [Appendix](#).

2. This report seeks to provide the Commission with assurance on the council's statutory duty to deliver Best Value. We are looking for councils to demonstrate Best Value by showing that they are continuously improving how they provide services. The pace and depth of this improvement is key to how well councils meet their priorities in the future. Depth of improvement is the extent to which services implement improvements across a council.

3. Our work covers many Best Value characteristics in the statutory guidance but does not cover them all. Our audit approach is proportionate and risk-based, that is it reflects the context, risks and performance of the individual council. It also draws on the information from audit and scrutiny work we have carried out in previous years. Our [2017/18 Annual Audit Report](#)  was the starting point. In keeping with this approach, we conducted some initial work to identify risks and council initiatives to build into the scope of our audit. This included:

- reviewing previous audit and inspection reports
- reviewing key council documents and committee papers
- reviewing media coverage, including local press and relevant social media platforms
- meeting with senior officers.

[Exhibit 1 \(page 7\)](#) shows the key areas of focus for our audit.

4. We carried out the detailed work for this report in October and November 2018. We:

- interviewed elected members, senior officers, representatives from trade unions and a sample of the council's partners, such as the police service, the fire and rescue service and the third sector

- observed council, committee and partnership meetings
- reviewed documents and analysed data, including Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data
- held focus groups with staff and the public.

Exhibit 1

Key areas of focus for our audit



The council's vision and strategic direction, including how well the leadership of the council works together to deliver priorities that reflect the needs of the community.



The effectiveness of the governance, decision-making and scrutiny arrangements.



An overall assessment of outcomes and performance and the reporting of these, including the council's public performance reporting.



How the council plans its use of resources including asset management, financial planning and workforce planning to support the delivery of its priorities.



How the council delivers services through partnership and collaborative working, including progress with health and social care integration.



Community engagement and responsiveness and how this impacts on the council's priorities and activities.



How effectively the council's self-assessment framework drives continuous improvement in service priorities.

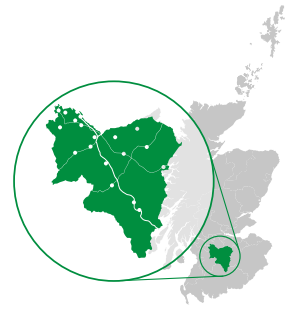
Source: Audit Scotland

5. Our analysis of the LGBF data reflects the 2016/17 results published by the Improvement Service in April 2018. Following recent publication of the 2017/18 LGBF data, we confirmed that this shows a broadly consistent level of performance to our analysis in this report.

6. We will continue to audit Best Value at the council over the course of our audit appointment. This will include following up on the findings from this report and more detailed audit work on other Best Value characteristics as appropriate.

7. We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and assistance provided to the audit team by all elected members, officers and other stakeholders during the audit.

Key messages



- 1** South Lanarkshire Council performs well and since the last Best Value report in 2009 has demonstrated a steady pace of improvement. The council has a comprehensive and structured approach to continuous improvement. There is evidence that service redesign and capital investment are improving outcomes for citizens and resulting in efficiencies that will help ensure financial sustainability.
 - 2** The council benefits from effective leadership and clear strategic direction. Officers and councillors work well together in the interests of the residents of South Lanarkshire.
 - 3** The council demonstrates improved performance in many services but there are other areas where improvement is still required. Service satisfaction survey results from service users differ from those from national household surveys, and the reasons for this need to be understood and addressed.
 - 4** The council acknowledges that it needs to review the number and quality of its targets and how it measures progress towards achieving these. This will allow it to provide elected members with a clearer picture of performance against its strategic objectives.
 - 5** The council works well with a range of public-sector, business and academic partners to improve outcomes for citizens. Partners have a shared vision but the links between the council's Connect Plan and Community Plan could be clearer. The Community Planning Partnership Board needs to take a more active role in driving partnership working.
 - 6** The council needs to improve how it uses community engagement to shape services. It has recently established a Community Participation and Empowerment Team to review its approach to community participation and engagement.
 - 7** The council understands its responsibilities under the Community Empowerment Act, and there is a history of transferring assets to community groups. But the council and its partners have been slow to progress elements of this Act, including the preparation of locality plans.
 - 8** The council demonstrates sound financial management. It has a strong track record of delivering large-scale capital projects on time and on budget. The council has a good process in place for long-term financial planning. Future financial plans are challenging but the council is well placed to address projected funding gaps.
-

Part 1

Does the council have clear strategic direction?



The council has effective leadership and clear strategic direction. Officers and councillors work well together in the interests of residents of South Lanarkshire.

The local context

8. South Lanarkshire is the 11th-largest council area in Scotland. Its area, some 700 square miles, covers the upper reaches of the River Clyde as far as Glasgow and extends into the Southern Uplands. It borders Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, West Lothian and Scottish Borders council areas.

9. As at June 2017, the population of South Lanarkshire was 318,170, making it the fifth-largest local authority in Scotland. The population is mainly concentrated in the towns of the urban north, the largest of which are East Kilbride, Hamilton, Rutherglen and Cambuslang. The remainder of the area has a dispersed settlement pattern with several large market towns and many small villages often located around historic mining and quarrying areas. Eighty-nine of the 431 data zones (population units) across South Lanarkshire are among the 20 per cent most-deprived data zones in Scotland.

10. Much of the area is rural with a significant proportion of the land area given over to agriculture. The urban north was historically reliant on traditional and heavy industries, in common with the neighbouring Glasgow City and North Lanarkshire Councils. Now the main employment sectors are the public sector (including health and education), retail, manufacturing and construction.

11. The council's population is expected to increase by about 2.4 per cent over the next ten years. This compares to the Scotland-wide projection of a 3.2 per cent increase. In common with other councils, the age profile is expected to be increasingly skewed towards those over 65. The proportion of South Lanarkshire residents aged over 65 is expected to increase by about 10,000, to 22.4 per cent of the population, over the next ten years.

12. As at June 2017, South Lanarkshire had 145,182 households. This number is projected to increase by 6.1 per cent, to 152,891, by 2026. The council provides just under 25,000 dwellings.

13. Scottish Government figures show that 74.7 per cent of the population aged 16-64 years were in employment in 2016. This compares with 74.3 per cent for Scotland as a whole. In 2016, about 22 per cent of the working population was employed in the public sector, slightly below the median Scottish figure.

14. In the urban north of South Lanarkshire, transport links, including the motorway network, are very good, with the cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh within easy travelling distance. Owing to the rurality of the south, residents have more difficulty in accessing transport and services than those in the urban north.

The council has a clear vision, and this is reflected in budget and operational decisions

15. In December 2017, the council refreshed its strategic plan *Connect 2017–22* ([Exhibit 2, page 11](#)). The plan sets out the council's vision – 'to improve the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire' – and the six values that are considered fundamental to the way the council operates. The refreshed plan also redefines the council's five key ambitions, which are underpinned by the 11 objectives embedded in resource directorate and service plans and reflected in budget and operational decisions.

16. The Connect Plan was informed by PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legislative, Environmental) analysis of the major influences on services and communities. It aims to address the needs of growing communities in South Lanarkshire, across both urban and rural settings.

17. The council carried out a consultation on the proposed Connect objectives through a survey promoted on its website and *The Reporter* (an annual publication produced by the council and delivered to all households, providing residents with information on services and service developments). However, the response to the survey was disappointing, with 297 responses received and only six surveys completed by those aged 18-24 and 15 by over-65s. The council accepts that it needs to improve the consistency and quality of consultation ([Part 5](#)).

The council and its partners have a shared vision but the links between their plans could be clearer

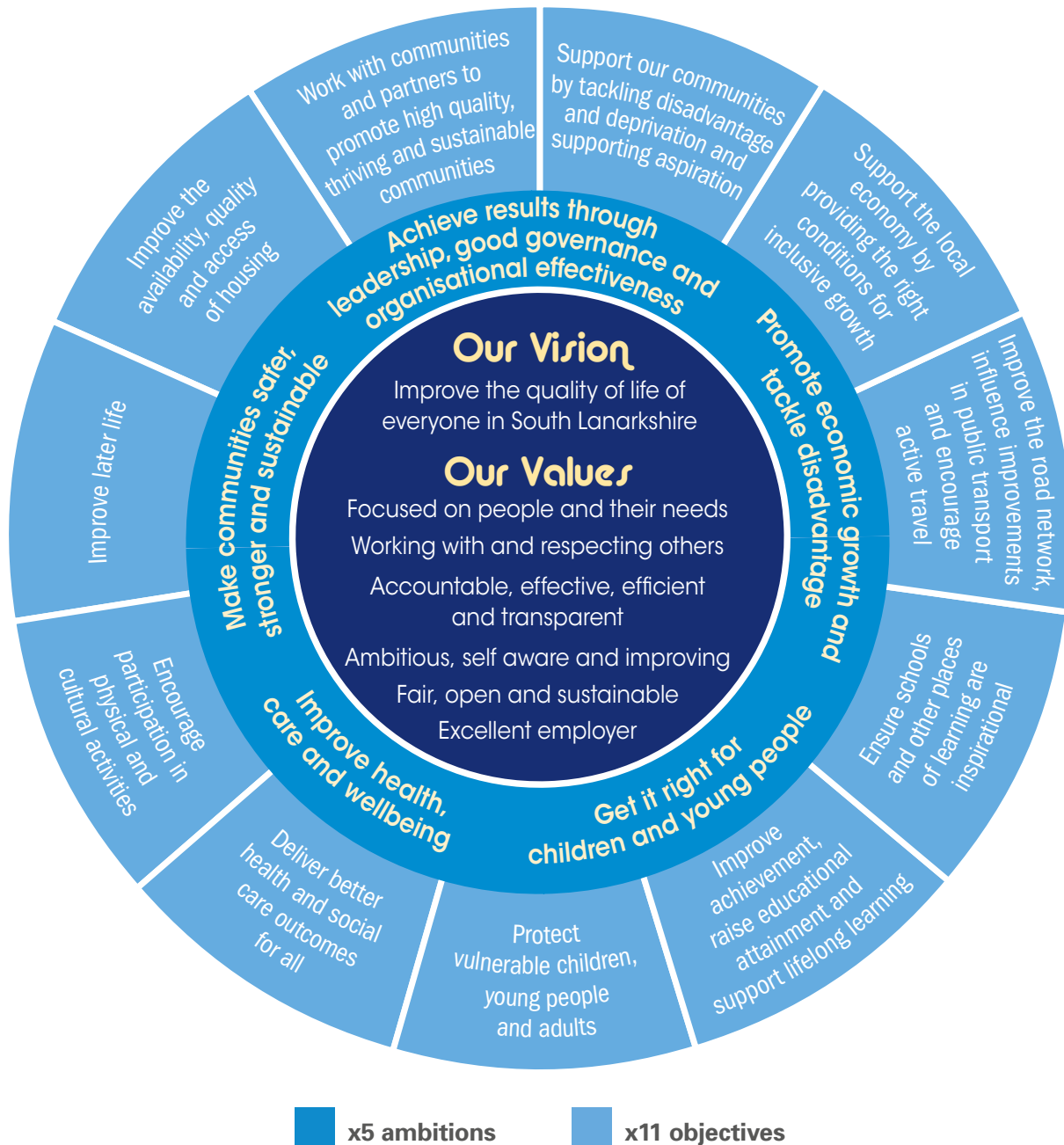
18. The council leads the South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP). The CPP published its Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), called *Community Plan 2017–2027*, setting out its vision and objectives.

19. The overarching objective of the plan is 'tackling deprivation, poverty, and inequality'. It is a broad objective consistent with the council's wide-ranging vision 'to improve the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire'. Four of the five ambitions set out in the Connect Plan overlap with the Community Plan's groups for targeted activity. These four ambitions focus on children and young people, promoting economic growth and tackling disadvantage, improving health and wellbeing, and community safety.

20. While the Community Plan's overall objective and the vision of the Connect Plan are not mutually exclusive, it is not immediately obvious how they are connected and what their common focus is. For example, activities under the Community Plan specifically target children and young people, whereas the

Connect Plan’s vision refers to all residents in the council area. To increase the impact, the links between the two plans need to be clearer with a sharper focus on the key areas of activity. The Connect Plan should also concentrate more on involving the community in decision-making through community engagement.

Exhibit 2
Connect 2017-22



The council's Corporate Management Team provides effective leadership

21. The 2009 Best Value report criticised the council for not advertising senior vacancies externally to allow open competition for posts. All the current Corporate Management Team (CMT) have been appointed since that time and all posts were subject to external competition.

22. CMT members were consistent in the way they interpreted and explained the council's vision and strategic priorities and those of the CPP. Heads of service were also able to demonstrate how service plans were designed with the council's objectives in mind.

23. Elected members and staff were positive about the CMT. Members acknowledged the fiscal challenges facing the council but, across all political groups, were balanced in their assessment of the council's performance, both past and present. Members were also confident in the leadership provided by the CMT and found executive directors to be well informed, responsive and accessible.

24. Focus groups comprising middle managers and other staff were similarly supportive of the CMT's approach. These groups were generally engaged in their roles and enthusiastic about service delivery. However, some staff felt that the CMT is not as visible to front-line staff as they would like. The council should ensure that existing good practice is shared across all resource directorates.

25. The CMT demonstrates the skills and expertise to deliver the council's strategic objectives and is supported by effective heads of service who have a good understanding of how their service contributes to the strategic objectives.

Officers and councillors from all parties work well together

26. Since the council's formation in 1996 the administration had been formed by the Scottish Labour Party. The May 2017 local government elections did not return any party with an overall majority and the Scottish National Party formed a minority administration. Therefore, members and officers have had to adapt to a new way of working.

27. Over the past year there has been a number of defections from the main groups, for various reasons, to an 'independent' group. This group is now large enough to influence decisions. Notwithstanding the political differences between the various groups, our discussions with members and officers suggest that there is a good degree of cooperation and consensus between members on the vision and objectives of the council. There is also consensus on how to apply resources to achieve these objectives.

The decision-making structure of the council operates effectively but the powers delegated to the Executive Committee are being reviewed

28. The decision-making structure of the council was approved at the first meeting of the new council in May 2017 ([Exhibit 3, page 13](#)) and was largely unchanged from that operating under the previous administration. All committees and forums report to the council through the Executive Committee. Discussions with members across the groups led to a consensus view that the structure was appropriate for the council's needs.

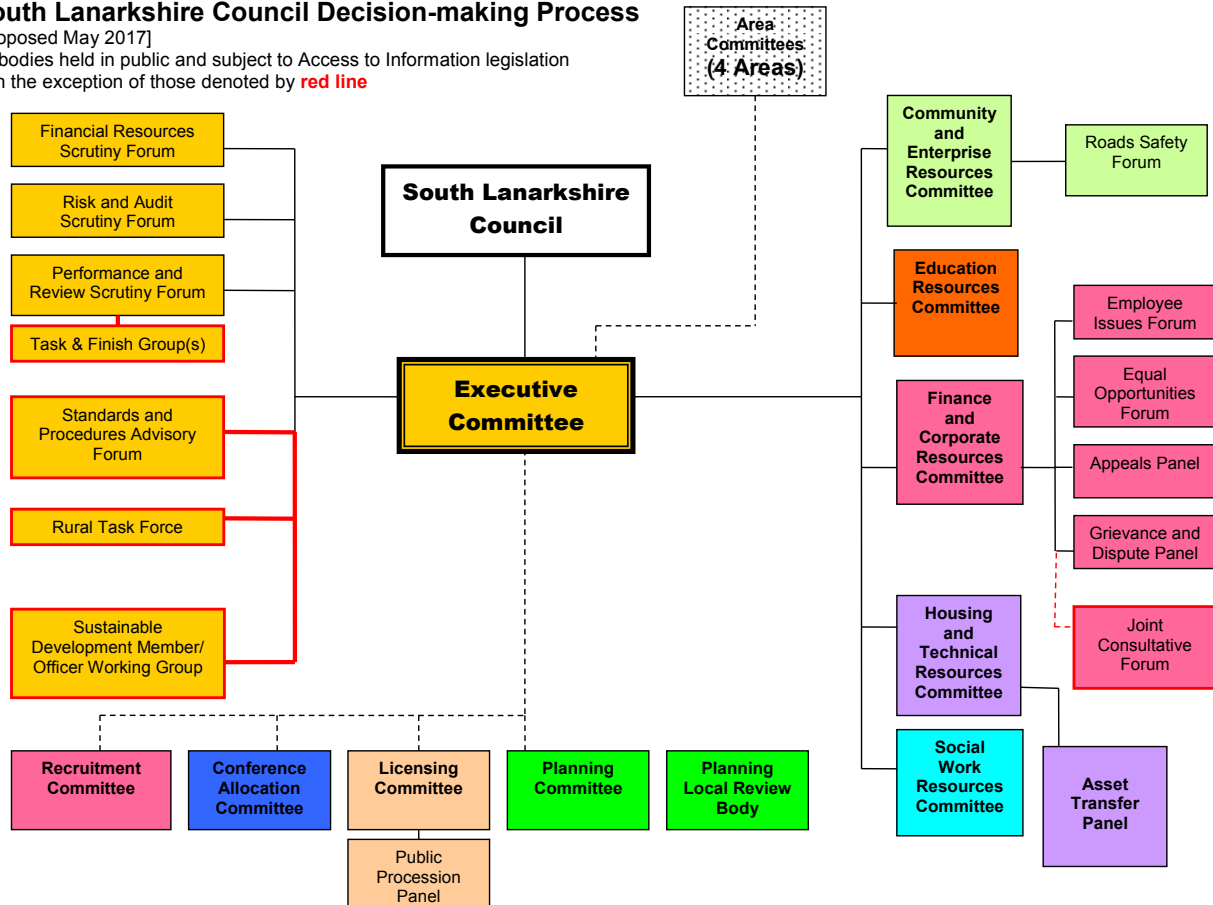
Exhibit 3

South Lanarkshire Council decision-making structure approved after the May 2017 elections

South Lanarkshire Council Decision-making Process

[Proposed May 2017]

All bodies held in public and subject to Access to Information legislation with the exception of those denoted by **red line**



Source: South Lanarkshire Council decision-making structure approved after the May 2017 elections

29. The Executive Committee of the council consists of 28 members, which represents the political balance of the council. Non-administration parties are represented by 17 members. However, some members have expressed concern about the extent of executive decision-making powers delegated to this committee. This concern principally relates to the approval of savings packages by the committee, independently of the council agreeing the annual budget and council tax. The leader of the council has agreed to a review of the powers delegated to the committee and we support this review.

Elected members need to improve the public scrutiny of key decisions, performance and financial reports

30. The scrutiny arrangements approved after the May 2017 elections were as follows:

- Five resource directorate committees are chaired by SNP councillors. Each committee is responsible for deciding on resource-specific issues relating to the services within that resource directorate, including finance.

- The Financial Resources Scrutiny Forum (chaired by a Scottish Labour Party councillor) is responsible for scrutinising the council's revenue budgets, the capital programme and trading services.
- The Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum (chaired by the council leader, SNP) is responsible for overseeing the council's approach to Best Value and performance.
- The Risk and Audit Scrutiny Forum (chaired by a Scottish Conservative and Unionist councillor).

31. At a meeting in June 2018, the council approved the reconstitution of the Risk and Audit Scrutiny Forum as a formal committee of the council. This change was made in response to a recommendation in the external auditor's 2016/17 Annual Audit Report. The Risk and Audit Scrutiny Committee has now been delegated decision-making powers, including the power to approve the internal audit strategy and annual plan, the annual governance statement and the annual accounts. This committee is also responsible for liaising with and considering reports from the external auditors. At the same meeting, the council approved the establishment of the Petitions Committee. The stated intention of this committee is to improve the ability of local communities/residents to engage with the council.

32. Our discussions with members and observations of public meetings indicate that an element of scrutiny and challenge happens outwith committees on a less formal basis. Members need to ensure that all key decisions are seen to be subject to an appropriate level of challenge and scrutiny at public meetings. This includes sufficient discussion and scrutiny of performance and financial reports.

Elected members have a responsibility to take advantage of the training opportunities provided

33. It has been nearly two years since the 2017 local government elections, which saw 35 newly elected members. Members must now review their personal training and development needs to ensure that they have the skills required to effectively fulfil their roles. They should consider the 2016 report [*How councils work: Role and working relationships in councils – Are you still getting it right?*](#) . This report stresses the importance of training and development for helping councillors to acquire the skills and tools they need to carry out their complex and evolving roles.

34. Corporate Services has assembled a comprehensive training and development programme for members. This was informed by an analysis of training needs conducted with the leaders of each political group, and feedback from elected members. Members have a responsibility to take advantage of the training opportunities provided; however, training sessions are sometimes poorly attended. It is important that members understand the financial and other information presented in reports to committees and are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to scrutinise and challenge effectively. Members should, with the assistance of the personnel service, review their personal training and development needs and agree a plan to ensure that they have the skills required to effectively fulfil their scrutiny and challenge roles.

Part 2

How well is the council performing?



The council demonstrates improved performance in many services but there are other areas where improvement is still required. Service satisfaction survey results from service users differ from those from national household surveys, and the reasons for this need to be understood and addressed.

The delivery of the Connect objectives is embedded in the activity of all resource directorates

35. Each of the council's five resource directorates are required to produce an annual resource plan. These plans provide an overview of the resource directorate's main areas of activity, summarise service achievements in the previous year, and set out plans for maintaining and improving services in the year ahead.

36. The resource plans link to the 11 Connect objectives by identifying which objectives are relevant to each resource directorate and what actions are being taken to achieve them ([Exhibit 4, page 16](#)). A range of resource measures and corporate measures have been developed to enable progress and delivery to be monitored.

37. The five resource plans prepared for 2017/18 identified the Connect objectives relevant to each resource directorate and actions required to contribute towards achieving the objectives.


The council is reviewing internal reporting measures to provide elected members with a clearer picture of performance against Connect objectives

38. The council manages and reports performance using a system called IMPROVe. IMPROVe uses a traffic light system to show the status of each performance measure. The system is used to track progress against the objectives set out in the Connect Plan and the actions identified within the individual resource plans.

39. Performance against resource measures is reported to the appropriate resource committee and performance against corporate measures is reported to the Executive Committee. Progress reports submitted to the Executive Committee include a summary of performance against measures for each Connect objective, along with details of the main achievements for that objective.

Exhibit 4

Summary of 2017/18 resource plan objectives, actions and measures

Resource directorate	Objectives	Actions	Resource measures	Corporate measures
 Community and Enterprise	7	59	154	74
 Education	7	81	179	33
 Finance and Corporate	1	60	165	44
 Housing and Technical	7	45	104	32
 Social Work	5	65	112	31
Total	n/a	310	714	214¹

Note: 1. 214 corporate measures were originally identified in the 2017/18 resource plans. However, following an internal peer review some revisions were made to the corporate measures identified and 219 are now reported to the Executive Committee.

Source: South Lanarkshire Council's 2017/18 resource plans

40. The progress report for quarter four of 2017/18 reported on 219 measures to the Executive Committee. Of these, 91 per cent were marked as green, suggesting that they were on track to achieve target performance levels. However, the 2017/18 Annual Audit Report, published in September 2018, found that:

- It was not always clear how targets or timescales had been met.
- Many of the targets set were lower than the performance level achieved in previous years.

41. The external auditor concluded that this limited the usefulness of the progress reports in demonstrating performance and how the council is delivering continuous improvement.

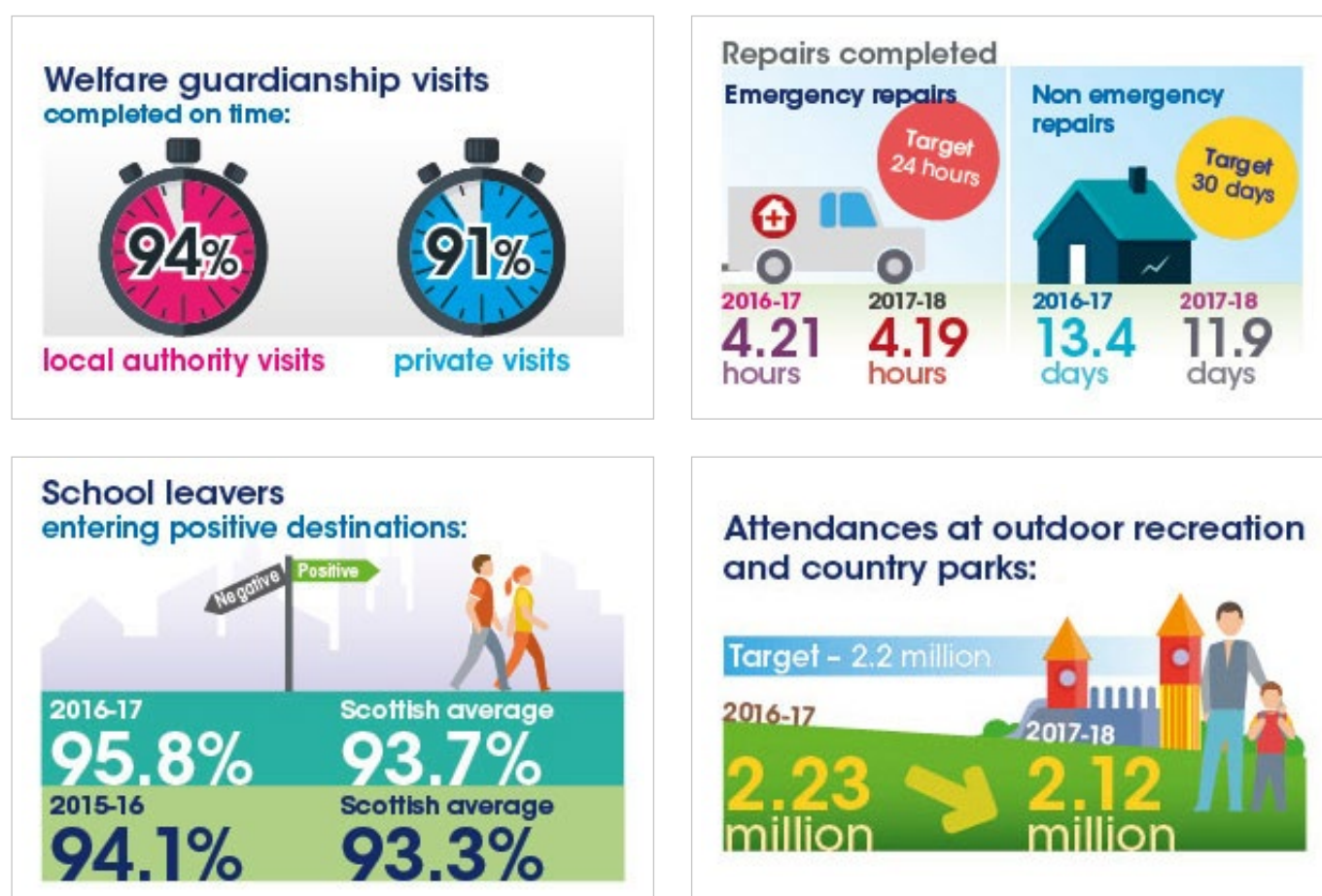
42. In response, the council acknowledged the need to review the number and quality of measures and targets included in IMPROVe and is carrying out a review. This review will coincide with the mid-term review of the council plan, objectives and next steps due to be taken in 2019. A revised approach is expected to be fully implemented for the 2019/20 reporting year.

The council has improved how it reports its performance to the public, and further development is planned

43. The council has recently improved its approach to public performance reporting. In 2017/18, it introduced 'spotlights' performance pages on its website, designed to give the public an overview of council performance ([Exhibit 5](#)). This is an improvement from its lengthy annual performance reports, which consisted mainly of text.

Exhibit 5


Examples of annual performance spotlights infographics for a sample of Connect objectives




Source: South Lanarkshire Council website: Annual performance spotlights pages

44. Spotlights use infographics to present information on the council's performance, making it more accessible for the public. However, further development is required to ensure that the information provided is consistently of high quality. All infographics should include sufficient information to clearly show whether targets have been met, and whether performance is improving or deteriorating.

45. The infographics show performance against certain measures for each of the council's 11 strategic objectives. Further improvement is planned to allow users to easily access detailed information for each infographic. This should include trend information and supporting data to provide a complete and balanced picture.

46. The council provides more detailed information about service performance to supplement the spotlights pages on its website, but this information is not yet directly linked to the infographics. The information presented in the [public performance reports](#)  section of the website includes details of performance over the last three years and comparisons with Scottish averages where applicable. The information reported in these pages provides a comprehensive picture of service performance.

The council uses the Local Government Benchmarking Framework to identify areas for improvement

47. The [Local Government Benchmarking Framework](#)  (LGBF) brings together a wide range of information about how all Scottish councils perform in delivering services, including cost of services and residents' satisfaction. The framework also enables the council to compare its performance against the Scottish average and other councils. The final 2016/17 LGBF data published by the Improvement Service in April 2018 has been used for the analysis in this report.

48. In September 2018, the council published its annual report on its performance against LGBF indicators ([Exhibit 6, page 19](#)). The report includes whether performance against these indicators has improved or declined since the previous year. It also includes a comparison of the council's performance with the Scottish average. It explains what may have accounted for the improvements or deterioration in performance and sets out what actions are required for improvement where needed. For instance, it sets out actions that could be taken to address the increases in sickness absence levels and school exclusion rates.

49. The council's review of LGBF data includes a comparison of its performance with the Scottish average but not a comparison of performance against its LGBF family groups. These are groups of councils facing similar challenges based on population density and deprivation.

Performance since 2011/12 has fluctuated but there have been considerable improvements in the last two years






50. [Exhibit 7 \(page 19\)](#) shows an audit analysis of the council's performance relative to all other Scottish councils. Although there are over 70 performance indicators in the LGBF, this analysis is based upon 35 single-year, mainly outcomes-based, indicators that were reported on, as part of the LGBF, every year within the six-year period shown. Where a council failed to supply data for one of the 35 indicators we have excluded this council from our analysis, so reported totals may not equal 100 per cent.






51. Of the indicators included in the analysis, the council's relative performance improved between 2011/12 and 2016/17. Performance fluctuated in the period between 2011/12 and 2014/15 but there have been considerable improvements in the last two years. Many improvements in local outcomes have been achieved through long-term initiatives, linked to the capital programme, so should be sustainable in the future.

52. As part of the audit analysis the council's performance was compared with its LGBF family groups. This showed that its performance was in line with its performance against the Scottish average.

Exhibit 6

South Lanarkshire Council's analysis of 2016/17 LGBF results

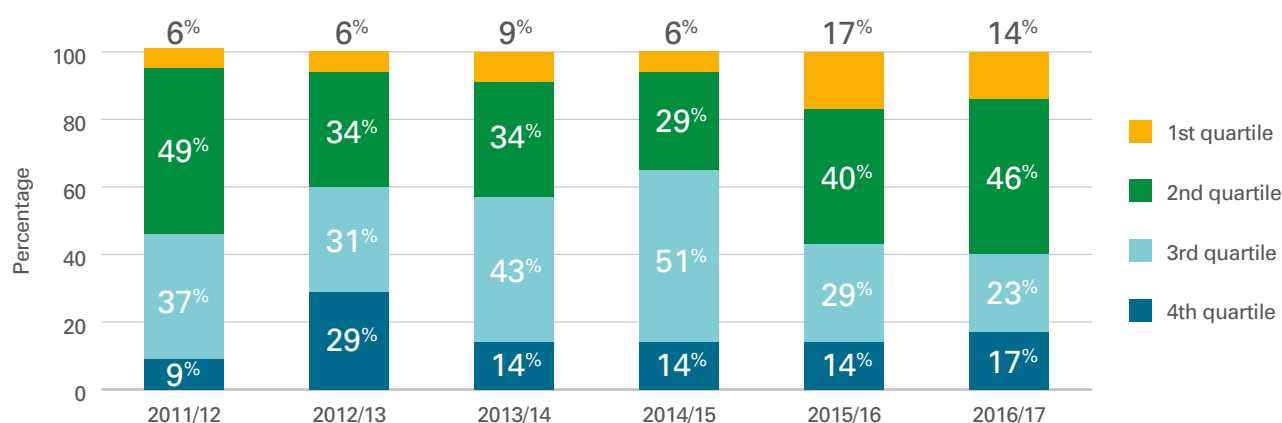
 Performance in South Lanarkshire Council	Number of indicators	
	2015/16	2016/17
 Improving performance	31 (47%)	38 (52%)
 Declining performance	31 (47%)	28 (38%)
 No change in performance	3 (5%)	2 (3%)
 N/A info not available	1 (1%)	5 (7%)

 South Lanarkshire Council compared to Scottish average	Number of indicators	
	2015/16	2016/17
 Better than Scottish average	37 (56%)	37 (56%)
 Worse than Scottish average	27 (41%)	27 (37%)
 Same as Scottish average	2 (3%)	2 (3%)
 N/A Info not available	0	5 (7%)

Source: Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum (September 2018)

Exhibit 7

South Lanarkshire Council's LGBF performance relative to other Scottish councils, 2011/12 to 2016/17



Note: Measuring council performance involves considering how all councils are performing, from lowest to highest for each indicator. From this, it is possible to see how one council compares with all other councils. Relative performance against other councils is divided into four equal bands, or quartiles. The first quartile contains the best-performing councils for that indicator and the fourth quartile contains the poorest-performing councils.

Source: Audit Scotland; and Local Government Benchmarking Framework, Improvement Service, April 2018

The council demonstrates improved performance in many services but there are other areas where improvement is still required

53. Areas of generally strong performance include corporate assets and economic development. Specifically, the council was ranked second in Scotland for:

- the proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use
- the percentage of unemployed people supported back into work through council-funded employability programmes.

54. Education has been a long-standing priority for the council and is an area in which it has made significant investment over a number of years. The council is performing well in LGBF indicators relating to education. [Exhibit 8 \(page 21\)](#) shows that there has been a trend for year-on-year improvements in performance against several key indicators. In addition:

- Education attainment has improved since 2011/12. LGBF indicators at [Exhibit 8](#) are all in the top two quartiles of Scottish performance.
- There was an improvement in the proportion of 16 to 19-year-olds participating in learning, training or work. This was in line with the Scottish average of 91 per cent in 2016/17.
- However, the rate of school exclusions was 28 per 1,000 pupils in 2016/17. This is slightly higher than the Scottish average of 27 per 1,000.

55. One area where the council's performance is in the bottom quartile is the length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs to council dwellings. This represents a deliberate policy by the council, following consultation with tenants, to set a local target of 30 days to complete non-urgent repairs. The rationale behind the policy is to drive efficiency through concentrating resources on specific geographical areas on a rotation basis. Officers have also advised that the policy has improved the quality through a higher proportion of 'right first time' jobs further improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

56. The council's level of self-directed support spending and child protection re-registrations during 2016/17 both placed the council in the bottom quartile. As part of the council's response to the LGBF 2016/17 results, it highlighted these areas of poor performance and identified improvement actions.

The council is in the bottom two quartiles for eight of the nine service satisfaction indicators

57. The LGBF includes indicators that assess residents' satisfaction with council services. These are based on results from national surveys. LGBF data shows that the council is in the bottom half of all councils in Scotland for eight of the nine satisfaction indicators ([Exhibit 9, page 22](#)). The reasons for these results should be understood and addressed.

58. The council carries out its own customer satisfaction surveys with service users, and the results from those surveys show higher satisfaction rates. However, the council accepts that there should be a wider focus, beyond service users, that considers views from other residents who may not currently be using those services, to provide meaningful data to help shape future services.



Foundation apprenticeships

The council was recently successful in a bid to deliver foundation apprenticeships as a lead provider. The ambition is to increase the number of local pupils involved in the programme from 44 to 250.

Source: Skills Development Scotland website



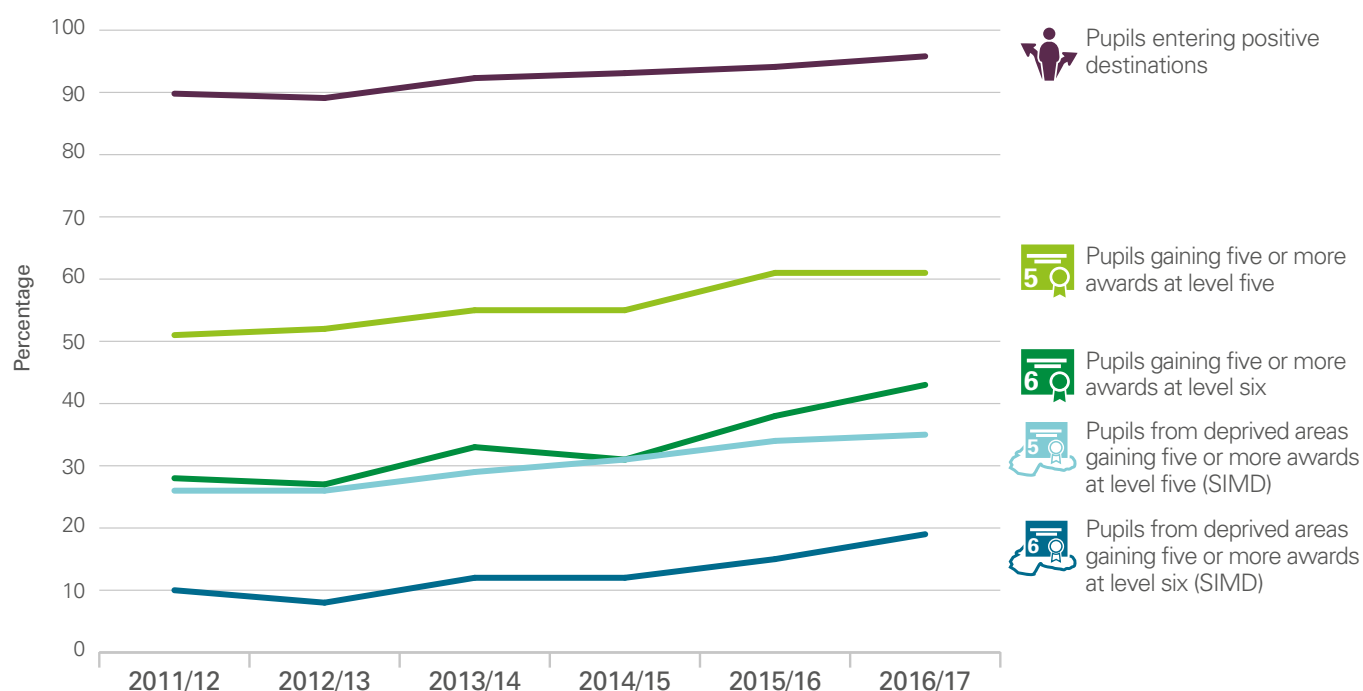
Nurturing School Award

In 2018, Trinity High School in Rutherglen became the first secondary school in the UK to win the National UK Nurturing School Award in recognition of the high quality of support offered to students.

Source: UK Parliament website

Exhibit 8

Selected LGBF education indicators, 2011/12 to 2016/17



Source: Local Government Benchmarking Framework, Improvement Service, April 2018

The council's next staff survey should be carried out and the results used to drive improvement

59. The council undertakes two-yearly staff surveys. The last survey was completed in 2016 and generated a response rate of 34.8 per cent. The results did not highlight any areas of widespread dissatisfaction among staff but did identify areas that need attention, including employee communication, management style, policy and procedures, and job and career development. In response to the results of the survey, each resource directorate developed an action plan to address the corporate issues and any other areas of improvement in its services.

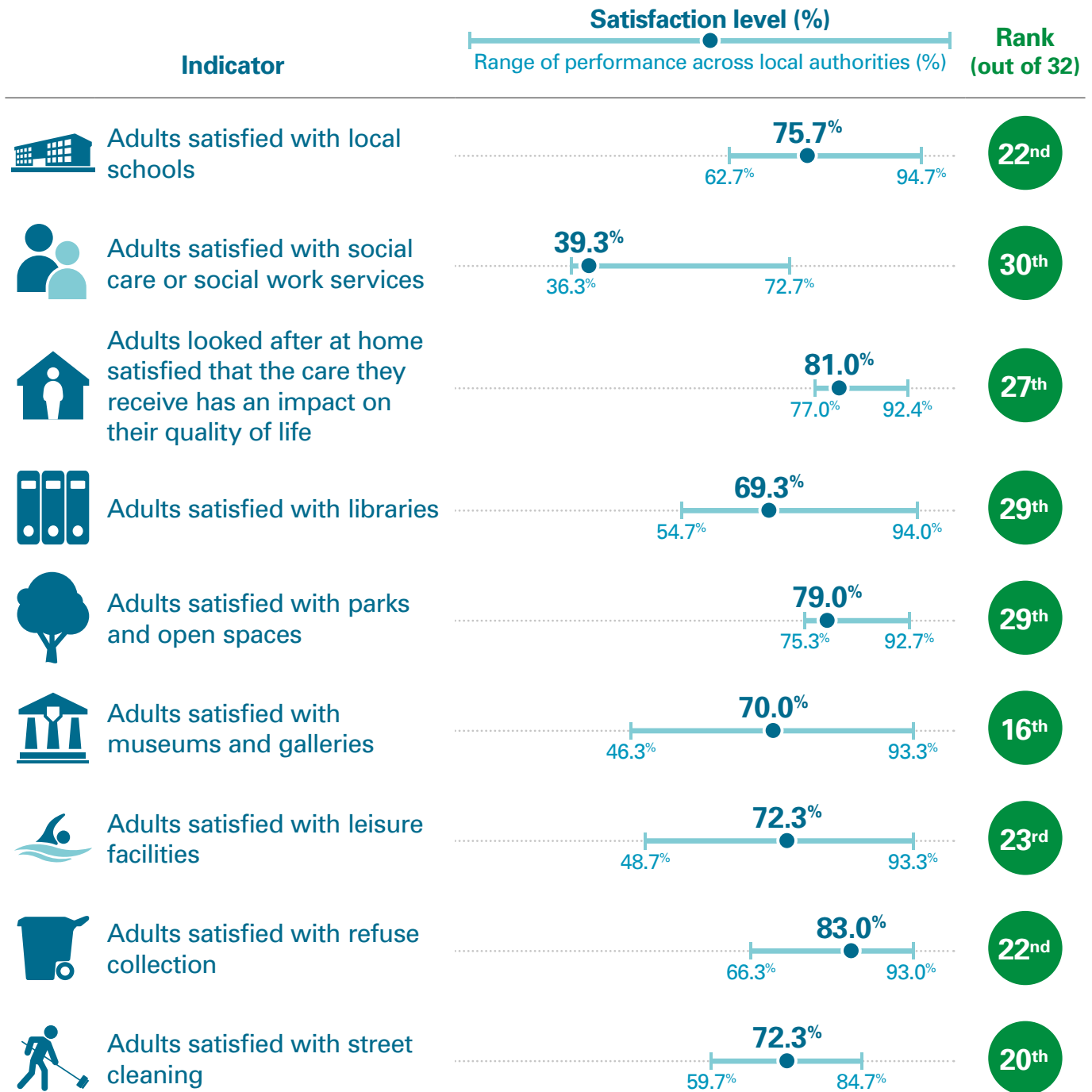
60. A staff survey was due to be completed in 2018 but has not yet been undertaken. It is expected to be carried out early in 2019. Specific attention should be given to staff engagement, which was highlighted by staff focus groups as an area of concern.

The council and its partners have made progress towards achieving the objectives of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

61. The Community Plan (LOIP) 2017–2027 is underpinned by partnership improvement plans (PIPs). These contain detailed action plans and performance measures for each of the CPP's key thematic areas that contributes to the overarching objective of 'tackling deprivation, poverty, and inequality'. The performance measures include 82 statistical measures to track how activities are affecting progress towards achieving outcomes.

Exhibit 9

South Lanarkshire Council's performance against LGBF service satisfaction indicators



Note: Satisfaction levels are based on average responses to Scottish Household Surveys for 2014 to 2017, except for adults satisfied with social care or social work services and adults looked after at home satisfied that the care they receive has a positive impact on their quality of life. This information was taken from the Scottish Health and Care Experience Survey for 2013–16 and 2015–16, respectively.

Source: Local Government Benchmarking Framework, Improvement Service, April 2018

62. In October 2018, the CPP reported that performance against 45 of the statistical measures was on target, nine had a minor shortfall against target and seven had a major shortfall against target (statistics were not yet available for 21 measures). Performance was improving quickest against the 'Health and Care' and 'Sustainable Economic Growth' measures, but progress was slower against the 'Community Safety' and 'Getting It Right for South Lanarkshire's Children' measures.

63. It is too early to make any overall assessment of delivery against the overarching objective, but initial performance reporting suggests that progress is being made by the council and its partners in improving local outcomes. As reported above, the link between the Connect Plan and the Community Plan could be clearer.

The Care Inspectorate's most recent joint inspection reports highlight some areas of good performance but also areas for improvement

64. In 2015, the Care Inspectorate published a joint inspection report on services for children and young people. It found that the lives of many children and young people growing up in South Lanarkshire were improving because of the services delivered to them by the council and its community partners.

65. It highlighted that services were supporting most children effectively and providing them with a positive start in life. However, it also found that life chances of some of the most vulnerable children and young people were not improving sufficiently well. Across nine quality indicators, one was assessed as very good, four were assessed as good and four were assessed as adequate. The Care Inspectorate recommended areas for improvement and is monitoring progress.

66. The Care Inspectorate published a joint inspection report on services for older people in 2016. It found that most older people achieved positive personal outcomes and were generally content about the care and support they received.

67. The Health and Social Care Partnership was performing well in some areas, such as shifting the balance of care, with older people being supported to remain at home. However, it found that improvements were needed in some areas; for instance, action should be taken to decrease rates of emergency admissions and reduce levels of delayed discharge. Of nine quality indicators, three were assessed as good and six were assessed as adequate. The Care Inspectorate made several recommendations for improvement, and progress is being monitored by the Care Inspectorate link inspector in partnership with Healthcare Improvement Scotland.

68. Following this joint inspection report, levels of delayed discharge continued to increase up to October 2017. There was a significant decrease in delayed discharges between October 2017 and March 2018. Through the rest of 2018, there was an increasing trend of delayed discharges, but levels remained largely lower than those seen in 2017. Levels of emergency admissions remained high, however management has advised that the number of bed days associated with these admissions has decreased.

Part 3

Is the council using its resources effectively?



The council demonstrates sound financial management. It has a strong track record of delivering large-scale capital projects on time and on budget. The council has a good process in place for long-term financial planning. Future financial plans are challenging but the council is well placed to address projected funding gaps.

The council has a well-established budget-setting process that supports elected members in scrutinising savings plans

69. The development of the annual revenue budget includes consultation with the public, staff, unions and elected members. A session is held for all elected members in November each year to advise them of the proposed budget and savings package for the coming year. Elected members can then scrutinise budget proposals and make amendments until the approval of the final budget in February.

70. The budget proposals, including the detailed savings package, are also published on the council's website in November each year. Comments and suggestions are invited from members of the public via a dedicated email address, savings@southlanarkshire.gov.uk ✉. Published proposals do not attract many responses from the public. However, there is some evidence that comments received in previous years have resulted in changes being made to council proposals.

71. To ensure that elected members from all political parties are provided with the same information, a central record is maintained of all queries and officer responses arising during the budget-setting process. Elected members from all political groups were positive about the budget-setting process and the support provided by officers.

72. In February 2018, the new council approved a revenue budget of £684.5 million. The 2018/19 budget was based on a three per cent increase in council tax and included savings of £15.2 million. The approved budget included funds for several new initiatives including school holiday clubs and breakfast clubs.

73. The budget-setting process works well and supports elected members in agreeing the budget. There is a clear focus during the budget-setting process on how resources can be best used to contribute towards the 11 corporate objectives.



Scotland Excel PCIP assessment

The council's Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) assessment was carried out in September 2018.

The council's score increased from 71 per cent (in 2016) to 78 per cent and therefore remained in the top performance band F1.

Source: South Lanarkshire Council

The council's financial management is effective, but it needs to ensure that all budgets accurately reflect anticipated activity

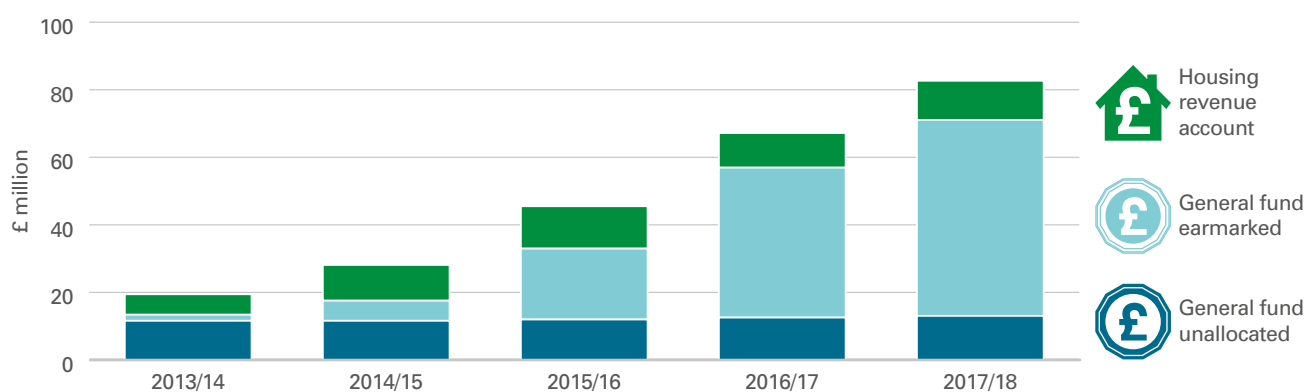
74. In February 2017, the council approved a revenue budget of £673.3 million for 2017/18, which was an increase of £5.5 million on the base budget set for 2016/17. A package of savings, totalling £35.0 million, was incorporated into the budget.

75. The council has a history of delivering services within budget and reported an underspend for 2017/18 of £28.0 million (4.2 per cent), over and above the delivery of the approved savings. Underspends have also been reported against the revenue budget in recent years, which have resulted in the general fund balance increasing from £19.4 million at 31 March 2014 to £82.7 million at 31 March 2018 ([Exhibit 10](#)).

76. The external auditor reported in the 2017/18 Annual Audit Report that the most significant elements making up the underspends each year were higher than budgeted council tax income, and lower than budgeted loan charge payments. The council has reviewed these budgets for 2018/19 to more accurately reflect anticipated activity. It has also improved budget-monitoring reports to provide elected members with an earlier indication of the projected annual outturn.

Exhibit 10

Analysis of general fund over the last five years










Source: South Lanarkshire Council annual accounts 2013/14 to 2017/18

The council has adequate levels of reserves to respond to unexpected events

77. The council's reserves strategy was included within the Revenue Budget Strategy – 2018/19 which was approved by the Executive Committee in June 2017. It states that the council should 'consider allocating surplus funds to augment the uncommitted general fund levels marginally per annum when possible, with a view to increasing the reserve to approximately £13.5 million over time (2 per cent of revenue budget)'. At 31 March 2018, the uncommitted general fund balance was £13.0 million ([Exhibit 11, page 26](#)).

Exhibit 11

Usable reserves

Reserve	31 March 2017 £ million	31 March 2018 £ million	
 General fund unallocated	12.5	13.0	↑
 General fund earmarked	44.4	58.0	↑
 Housing revenue account balance	10.3	11.6	↑
 Repair and renewal fund	5.9	7.2	↑
 Capital fund	21.6	18.2	↓
 Insurance fund	3.3	4.5	↑
 Total usable reserves	98.0	112.6	↑

Source: South Lanarkshire Council 2017/18 annual accounts

78. During 2017/18, the overall level of usable reserves held by the council increased by £14.6 million to £112.6 million ([Exhibit 11](#)). This level of usable reserves is similar to comparable councils.

79. The financial position is currently sustainable and will remain so in the foreseeable future. The council has an adequate level of reserves, is containing its expenditure within annual budgets and has credible medium-term financial plans in place.

The council should review its approach to earmarking the general fund balance

80. A significant proportion, £37.0 million (64 per cent), of the £58.0 million 'earmarked' general fund balance is allocated for 'use in future budget strategies' to reduce the need for savings between 2018/19 and 2020/21. In the 2017/18 Annual Audit Report, the external auditor reported that it was not clear whether all the earmarked elements of the general fund related to known or predicted expenditure. There is a risk that amounts have been earmarked that could be released to the uncommitted reserves to be used for Connect priorities. The council should review its approach to earmarking and reassign any amounts for which there is no clearly identifiable specific commitment to general reserves.

The council has a good process in place for long-term financial planning

81. The Accounts Commission's April 2018 [*Local government in Scotland: Performance and challenges 2017*](#)  review highlights the importance of medium- to long-term financial planning given the continuing pressures that councils will face into the future. In this review, the Accounts Commission recommended that, for areas where the level of Scottish Government funding is not known, councils should plan for a range of possible scenarios. By doing this, they would be prepared for various levels of funding.

82. Historically, the council's financial strategy has been delivered through a series of short-term financial plans and policies, typically having a span of one to three years. As part of its approval of the revenue budget strategy for 2018/19 in June 2017, the Executive Committee requested that a longer-term strategy be prepared.

83. The council's long-term financial strategy was approved at the August 2018 meeting of the Executive Committee. The strategy identifies budget pressures, future risks and uncertainties, and projects budget gaps to 2028/29. Given that funding settlements are only made annually, it is difficult for the council to plan with absolute certainty. To address this, the strategy includes scenario planning and a risk assessment of the likely impact of any changes in assumptions.

84. The long-term financial strategy highlights that the council faces a challenging situation in the medium to long term because of reduced funding in real terms, rising costs and an increase in demand, particularly for social care services. Taking all these factors into consideration, the council predicts that it could face funding gaps of up to £35 million (based on the worst-case scenario) in each year from 2022/23 to 2028/29. Such funding gaps would present challenges, but the council is well prepared to address them.

85. Management has advised that the financial strategy will evolve over time to ensure its full integration with the longer-term capital programme, asset management plan and treasury management strategy to support the delivery of the council's longer-term objectives. It will also be used to demonstrate the long-term impact of local and national policy decisions on council finances.

Management has restructured finance and personnel functions to provide better support for services

86. A recent service review resulted in the restructuring of the finance section as part of the introduction of an integrated finance model. This was done to foster a more coordinated approach to financial planning and budgeting across all resource directorates to support the delivery of council objectives as financial constraints become more pressing.

87. The personnel service was also subject to a service review and all personnel staff have been centralised in a single team. This has enabled a more coordinated and consistent approach to workforce planning and administration across all services.

The council's capital planning process prioritises projects that support the delivery of Connect objectives

88. The council has an overarching Corporate Asset Management Plan which focuses on what level of investment is required to address any service delivery issues. It also addresses the risks associated with non-investment in assets. This enables the council to prioritise those areas that contribute most directly to delivering the corporate objectives when developing the three-year rolling general fund capital programme.

89. The council approved a three-year general fund capital programme, covering 2017/18 to 2019/20, of £255.9 million in February 2017. The most significant elements of the programme, along with the main Connect objectives to which they contribute, are set out in [Exhibit 12](#).

90. The council approved housing capital programmes of £36.2 million for 2017/18 and £44.9 million for 2018/19. These prioritised projects contributed most directly to the Connect objective to improve the quality and access of housing. These included new-build housing projects as part of the council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan commitment to deliver 1,552 new homes by 2022. Up to the end of 2018, 375 new homes had been completed with a further 176 in construction.

Exhibit 12

Highest value projects in the 2017/18 to 2019/20 general fund capital programme



£72.9
million

Glasgow City Region City Deal roads projects

Connect objective:
Improve the road network, influence improvements in public transport and encourage active travel



£44.4
million

Primary schools modernisation

Connect objective:
Ensure schools and other places of learning are inspirational



£36.0
million

Glasgow City Region City Deal community growth area projects

Connect objective:
Support the local economy by providing the right conditions for inclusive growth



£29.5
million

Roads investment plan

Connect objective:
Improve the road network, influence improvements in public transport and encourage active travel



£17.6
million

Social work residential care facilities

Connect objective:
Deliver better health and social care outcomes for all



£11.4
million

Street lighting improvement

Connect objective:
Improve the road network, influence improvements in public transport and encourage active travel

The council has a strong track record of delivering large-scale capital programmes on time and on budget

91. Over the last 20 years, the council has made significant capital investment to improve its asset base, support the delivery of its corporate priorities and boost the local economy. This has included investments in its school estate ([Case study 1](#)), existing and new housing stock, the roads infrastructure and social work care facilities. These capital programmes have been funded by, for instance, borrowing, general and specific capital grants (including City Deal funding), capital receipts and developer contributions.

Case study 1



The council has replaced the entire primary school estate with modern accommodation

In 2004, the council began its Schools Modernisation Programme with the intention to replace the entire school estate with modern accommodation 'fit for learning in the 21st century'. This included the modernisation (refurbishment and new building) of 129 primary schools at a cost of £869 million, in line with budget.

As at March 2018, 126 of these schools had been completed. All were completed and opened by the planned date. The remaining schools will open during the 2018/19 academic year to complete the programme. The modernised schools have been widely welcomed by head teachers, teachers and parents as 'providing a vibrant and stimulating education environment' for primary age children.

The successful completion of the Schools Modernisation Programme is a key element in the delivery of a range of Connect objectives including aspirations to 'ensure schools and other places of learning are inspirational' and 'improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning'.

Source: South Lanarkshire Council
























92. The council has successfully delivered projects totalling almost £1.5 billion (95 per cent of approved programmes) over the last ten years ([Exhibit 13, page 30](#)). There has been no significant slippage or overspends on major capital projects.

93. The council's successful management and delivery of capital projects has had a direct impact on the lives of citizens and has played a significant role in improving the economic wellbeing of the area.

94. Because of its extensive capital programmes, the council has the fourth-highest borrowing of any Scottish local authority, £913 million at 31 March 2018. This is largely in line with other local authorities of a similar size.

Exhibit 13

Delivery of capital programmes over last ten years

	General fund capital programme			Housing capital programme		
	Budget £ million	Delivery £ million	Delivery (%)	Budget £ million	Delivery £ million	Delivery (%)
2008/09	119.2	114.4	 96%	38.5	38.5	 100%
2009/10	150.2	134.8	 90%	40.4	39.6	 98%
2010/11	128.5	122.0	 95%	42.0	40.6	 97%
2011/12	120.1	118.1	 98%	40.9	37.1	 91%
2012/13	116.0	114.9	 99%	55.3	50.8	 92%
2013/14	127.8	125.3	 98%	39.6	41.8	 106%
2014/15	109.5	98.1	 90%	38.5	37.1	 96%
2015/16	102.3	95.7	 93%	40.1	42.1	 105%
2016/17	83.3	80.1	 96%	38.8	43.9	 113%
2017/18	78.2	55.5	 71%	40.6	36.9	 91%
Last 10 years	1,135.3	1,058.9	 93%	414.8	408.5	 98%

Note: The three years when the council delivered more than 100 per cent of the approved annual housing capital programme relate to the acceleration of work in-year because of the availability of resources (staff and finances) to complete additional work.

Source: South Lanarkshire Council general fund and housing capital outturn reports 2008/09 to 2017/18

The council has taken advantage of City Deal funding to bring forward capital projects

95. The Glasgow City Region City Deal was the first in Scotland and involves eight councils working together to deliver infrastructure, innovation and employment projects to improve their economic performance. Launched in August 2014, the £1.1 billion deal includes £500 million from the UK and Scottish governments over a 20-year period, plus £130 million from the eight councils. It is estimated that the deal will attract an estimated £3.3 billion of private-sector investment, create 29,000 permanent jobs and increase gross value added – that is, the value of all the goods and services that the region produces without taxes or subsidies – by £2.2 billion per year.

96. The availability of City Deal funding has enabled South Lanarkshire Council to bring forward the following capital projects:

- **Community Growth Areas: a £62 million scheme to deliver a number of education, transport and community infrastructure projects**
The strategic business case for the Community Growth Areas (CGAs) project was approved by the City Deal Cabinet Office on 18 August 2015,

with the outline business case being approved on 15 December 2015. The CGAs project has been separated into four areas: Newton, Hamilton, Larkhall and East Kilbride. Within each area, several subprojects are being carried out within the overall CGAs budget allocation.

- **Cathkin Relief Road: building of a new £21 million single-carriageway road**

This road is complete and opened to traffic on 24 February 2017. The focus is now on the delivery of the remaining complementary works.

- **Stewartfield Way: a £63 million upgrade to dual both carriageways and improve traffic flow**

The strategic business case was approved by the City Deal Cabinet Office on 18 August 2015. A paper was presented to the City Deal Chief Executive's Group to update it on the project's progress. The paper confirmed that the cumulative assessment exercise is now complete, which will help to determine future transport needs for the area. The main infrastructure works are expected to start in summer 2023, with completion anticipated in spring 2025.

- **Greenhills Road: a £23 million project to dual two sections of the road and to improve junctions and bus infrastructure**

The outline business case for the project was approved by the City Deal Cabinet Office on 18 October 2016. The full business case has now been submitted to the Project Management Office for review and submission to Cabinet for approval.

97. These projects are being funded by the City Deal capital grant (86 per cent) and council contributions (14 per cent). The City Deal capital grant is expected to be received in instalments over a period of up to 30 years.

98. Up to the end of 2017/18, the council had spent £23.0 million on these projects and had received a grant allocation of £21.8 million (accounting for 95 per cent of spending to date). This is above the 86 per cent level of funding due from the City Deal and reflects both the availability of funding and the good progress made by South Lanarkshire Council in the early years of the programme in comparison with other member authorities. The overall level of City Deal funding received by the council will reflect the originally approved amounts, but the early receipt of this money has reduced the council's borrowing costs.

The council has a comprehensive and coordinated approach to workforce planning

99. Staff numbers have reduced, from 13,493 (full-time equivalent (FTE)) at the time of the last Best Value review in 2009 to 11,852 (FTE) by June 2018. This reduction was due to a combination of the merger and centralisation of departments and job roles, and the use of technology to streamline working practices. The council has reduced staff numbers through redeployment and staff turnover and has not used a large-scale voluntary early release scheme.

100. The council has a comprehensive and coordinated approach to workforce planning, which includes an organisation-wide, three-year workforce plan. The plan details how workforce planning relates to the council's priority objectives and includes a profile of the current workforce to support succession planning, that is arrangements for replacing key employees when they leave. This profile includes

information on age, gender, disability, ethnicity and turnover. The plan also identifies workforce-related challenges facing the council and the steps, actions and framework required to create a modern, sustainable workforce.

101. The strategic workforce plan is delivered through three-year resource directorate workforce plans with profiling for each service area. Each resource directorate used the corporate workforce planning template to produce their own plans. The plans were prepared in line with the council's workforce planning toolkit, which reflects the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development's national guidance.

102. The plans set out the efficiency savings required, findings from service reviews, implications for the workforce and the approach to succession planning. Each resource directorate workforce plan sets out priority areas for action in relation to workforce numbers, required skills and new working practices. These plans include timescales and consider budget implications for the proposed actions.

103. The workforce plans are further supported by the council's learning and development strategy and learning and development plans for each resource directorate. In addition, learning and development boards have been formed within all resource directorates. These boards focus on the key workforce and employee development issues for each directorate including workforce planning.

The council has well-developed redeployment and succession planning arrangements that support the service review programme

104. The management of any reductions in staff numbers is key to the successful delivery of actions set out in resource directorate workforce plans. The council's collective agreement with trade unions sets out that the council will look to redeploy all displaced staff through its Switch 2 redeployment programme or through staff turnover, such as retiral, or the backfilling of vacant positions.

105. Switch 2 was developed to match at-risk staff with suitable roles to prevent competition between staff for the same role. A long lead time for any staff reductions enables employees to apply for suitable posts within the council as they become available. This approach has several benefits. For example, it means that individuals whose posts are no longer required are not negatively affected by failing to secure a remaining post. Furthermore, it means that managers get new staff who have chosen to work within their teams.

106. This approach has proved to be successful for redeploying staff and preventing competition among staff, and trade unions have been positive about the approach adopted.

107. Another key aspect of the council's arrangements for workforce management is its succession planning to alleviate the impact of future workforce pressures. In recent years, this has involved over-recruiting and early recruitment in areas with an ageing workforce or other emerging staff pressures. Examples include:

- Health and safety team – early recruitment of two additional staff to be trained, including on-the-job training from experienced colleagues, so that the additional staff members are ready to succeed existing staff when they retire.
- Roads team – targeted recruitment to reduce the average age and improve the gender balance of the existing workforce.

- Early years workers – appointment of additional staff on permanent contracts in preparation for the impact of the full roll-out of the initiative to increase the number of funded early learning and childcare hours from 600 to 1,140 per year.
- Homecare workers – systematic over-recruitment of homecare workers to counteract the national issue of high staff turnover in homecare roles.

108. Recently there has been significant pressure on recruitment. The council has therefore prioritised recruitment campaigns for service critical roles. This has impacted upon recruitment times for other posts and this was highlighted by some staff focus groups as an area of frustration. The situation is being closely monitored by the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services and reported to CMT meetings to ensure that these recruitment issues are resolved as a priority.

The council has shown a commitment to dealing with staff fairly and equitably

109. Some examples of the council's commitment to dealing with staff in a fair and equitable manner include:

- effective working relations and open communication with trade unions
- first local authority in Scotland to introduce a menopause policy
- running transgender awareness sessions for managers and head teachers to help them understand how they can better support trans staff and pupils
- use of a disability partnership to ensure that changes in services reflect the needs of disabled citizens and employees and do not exclude any groups.

The council is reviewing its service level agreement with South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Ltd

110. South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Ltd (SLLC) was formed on 1 April 2002 to manage the operation of sports and recreation facilities on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council. From 1 October 2010, the remit of SLLC was expanded to include the management of community and town halls, country parks, museums, libraries, outdoor resource bases and arts development.

111. During 2018, the council identified a need to review the terms of its service level agreement with SLLC to clarify its expectations of how SLLC should prioritise leisure and cultural services. This was prompted by the increasing pressure on budgets and the year-on-year reductions in the funding available to SLLC. The review is currently ongoing and will be concluded during 2019.




Equal pay

The council reached compensation agreements with almost 6,000 current and former employees who lodged equal pay claims.

The total cost of compensation payments was over £80 million.

The council was the first in Scotland to complete the process.

Source: *Equal pay in Scottish councils*, Accounts Commission, September 2017 



Living wage

Since 2011, the council has been paying the real living wage, and achieved accreditation as a living wage employer in 2016.

In November 2018, the council won the Living Wage Scotland Anchor Institution Award in recognition of its commitment to increasing the profile and take-up of the real living wage across South Lanarkshire.

Source: Living Wage Scotland website 

Part 4

Is the council working well with its partners?




The council works well with a range of public-sector, business and academic partners to improve outcomes for citizens. However, the Community Planning Partnership Board needs to take a more active role in driving partnership working.

The Community Planning Partnership Board needs to take a more active role in driving partnership working

112. The council works well with community planning partners but there is an opportunity to increase the impact of joint working. The 2009 Accounts Commission Best Value report on South Lanarkshire Council highlighted that partnership working was long established in South Lanarkshire and that there were many positive examples of joint working.

113. However, the report also recommended that the CPP could be strengthened by including a range of partners in addition to the main agencies. CPP membership has since been expanded, with other organisations and groups participating in joint working and thematic groups as appropriate. For example, South Lanarkshire Youth Council is a member of the Youth Partnership Group, and Victim Support South Lanarkshire is a member of the Community Safety Partnership.

114. The CPP Board set the joint vision and strategic objectives for the community planning partners in its Community Plan 2017–27. Delivery of the CPP objectives is split between six thematic groups and three subgroups, as seen in the [Community Planning Partnership Structure](#) .

115. Partners are enthusiastic and there are good examples of joint and collaborative working improving outcomes for citizens ([Exhibit 14, page 35](#)). However, the activities of the thematic groups should be better coordinated by the CPP Board to ensure that they contribute to achieving the Community Plan objectives. There is also a lack of clarity around the resourcing of community planning initiatives by the CPP, with little evidence of resource pooling, a requirement of the Community Empowerment Act.

116. While it is acknowledged that there are positive and effective relationships at group level, the CPP should build on these effective relationships and take a more active role in driving partnership working, monitoring outcomes and feeding back to groups.



CPP membership

- South Lanarkshire Council
- NHS Lanarkshire
- South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire
- Scottish Enterprise
- Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
- Skills Development Scotland
- Lanarkshire Chamber of Commerce
- Cambuslang Business Group

Source: South Lanarkshire Council website 

Exhibit 14

Examples of joint and collaborative working between community planning partners



Community
safety
partnership

Home safety visits

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service worked with the council's housing and social work teams to increase the number of home safety visits for vulnerable people.

Outcome

The CPP reported that this contributed to a 40 per cent reduction in the number of calls to emergency incidents.



Getting it right
for South
Lanarkshire's
children
partnership

ASPIRE youth employability programme

The council, Skills Development Scotland, local colleges, local training providers and other partners work together to support young people most at risk of leaving school without a job or entering further education or training programmes.

Outcome

The success of this programme is reflected in improvements in the LGBF indicators for the number of pupils entering positive destinations and youth employment levels.



Health and
social care
partnership
(HSCP)

Care home continence project

Teams in North and South Lanarkshire's HSCPs, NHS Lanarkshire and NHS National Services Scotland developed a pilot initiative to target the causes of incontinence. This is a known risk factor for skin damage, infection and falls in older people.

Outcome

The pilot reported a reduction in falls by 65 per cent, urinary infections were halved, and skin damage reduced by a third. Work is now under way to implement the roll-out of the project across Lanarkshire.

Source: South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership and thematic subgroups

The council and its partners' performance against the Community Planning Outcomes Profile indicators is mixed

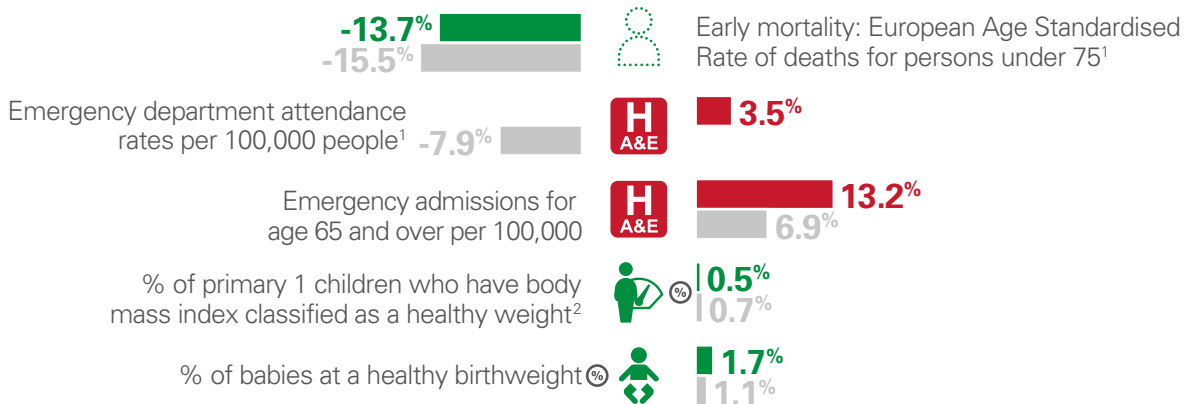
117. The South Lanarkshire CPP submits data to the Improvement Service's Community Planning Outcomes Profile (CPOP). The CPOP is a collection of measures designed to help assess whether residents' lives are improving.

118. South Lanarkshire's performance across the range of CPOP indicators has generally improved over the last ten years. However, performance over time compared with Scotland as a whole is mixed ([Exhibit 15, page 36](#)).

Exhibit 15

Change in performance for South Lanarkshire community planning outcomes

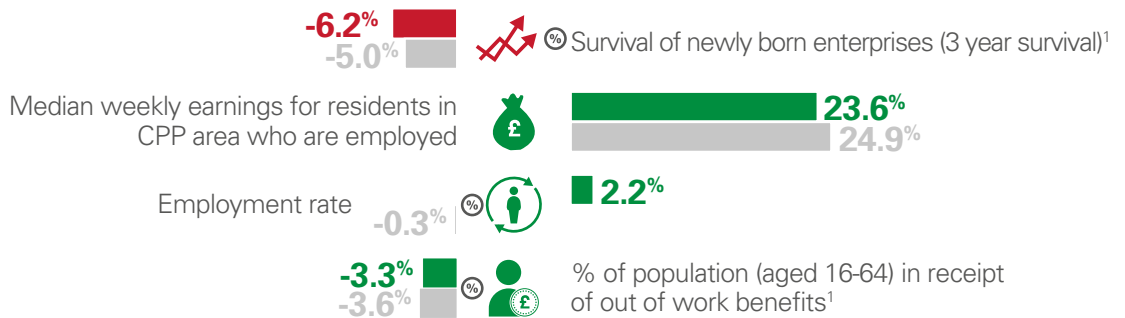
Health



Education



Employment



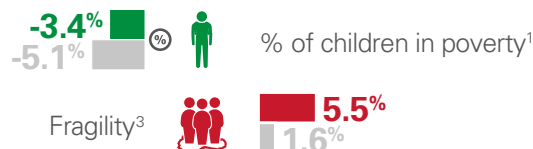
Environment



Community safety



Other



■ South Lanarkshire ■ Scotland

⊖ Percentage point change – raw data is not available therefore absolute changes are shown.

Notes:

1. Imputed and projected data has been calculated using different methodologies for different measures where raw data is not yet available.
2. Primary 1 BMI figures are based on a three-year rolling average.
3. Fragility is a weighted combination of three indicators: depopulation, rural depopulation and old age dependency ratio.

Source: Audit Scotland; and *Community Planning Outcomes Profile*, Improvement Service, 2016/17

The council and its partners have been slow to progress elements of the Community Empowerment Act

119. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gives people more influence over how their council and its partners plan services. The council has been slow to progress the community engagement and locality planning aspects of the Act to support citizens to shape local services.

120. Management has acknowledged that they need to improve the way in which they support communities to engage directly with the council. A dedicated Community Participation and Empowerment Team has recently been established to further develop participation of communities across South Lanarkshire.

121. The Act also requires that CPPs identify the areas within the council boundaries that have the poorest outcomes and publish 'locality plans' to improve outcomes for these communities. Statutory guidance required locality plans to be published by 1 October 2017. Although the council and its partners have identified nine priority areas that do less well, locality plans have not yet been produced.

122. The Act makes it easier for communities to take ownership of, or responsibility for, land and buildings through community asset transfers. South Lanarkshire has a history of transferring assets to community groups. Officers have a clear understanding of the council's obligations and responsibilities under the Act. There is also a clear process for assisting groups and assessing community benefits.

123. Since 2011, and prior to the Act, 14 applications for asset transfers had been received from various groups. There are currently a further nine applications in various stages of completion, including applications for the transfer of various properties to sports clubs, an outreach centre and an allotment group. The most recent transfer under the Act was an agreement to transfer a redundant property in Blantyre to the Blantyre Soccer Academy group.

The council is looking to extend its links with the third sector

124. The third sector is represented in the CPP by Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire (VASLan). The council is looking to extend its links with the third sector by involving other organisations. It is hoped that this will help the council to engage with hard-to-reach groups.

The council should review existing governance structures to ensure that they support community-based activity

125. The council has four area committees covering Cambuslang and Rutherglen, Clydesdale, East Kilbride and Hamilton. The 2009 Best Value report recommended that the council should 'determine the future role for area committees'. In response the council extended their role and remit so that they are now responsible for deciding on delegated matters, including local planning, community and other local grants. They also receive local performance reports, school inspection reports and other information related to their geographical areas.

126. As part of the council's efforts to encourage communities to participate across South Lanarkshire, it should review existing governance structures to ensure that they support community-based activity. This should include consideration of whether these arrangements help to build community capacity



Nine priority areas identified by CPP

1. Rutherglen South
2. Rutherglen Central and North
3. Cambuslang West
4. Cambuslang East
5. Blantyre
6. Hamilton North and East
7. Hamilton West and Earnock
8. Hamilton South
9. Larkhall.

Source: South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership website



Welfare reform workshop

In November 2018, the council hosted an event for community planning partners and third sector representatives to discuss new ways of engaging with the most vulnerable members of society. It focused on how best to target those who currently do not engage with the council.

Source: South Lanarkshire Council website

and support people to be more active in their community. The review should include consideration of whether further changes are required to the role and remit of area committees.

South Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire have made good initial progress in health and social care integration


127. The South Lanarkshire Integration Joint Board (IJB) was established in September 2015. The IJB became fully operational on 1 April 2016 when it began its strategic oversight of the delivery of health and social care services for the residents of South Lanarkshire.

128. The IJB approved the 2016–19 Strategic Commissioning Plan in March 2016. Because the plan was entering its final year, in March 2018 the IJB approved a refreshed plan for 2018/19. The plan identifies ten strategic priorities linked to the Scottish Government’s nine health and wellbeing outcomes.

129. The IJB has made good initial progress and there are examples of changes to models of service delivery designed to improve outcomes for residents. These include the extension of palliative care services through an additional 12 inpatient beds being opened in Kilbryde Hospice, East Kilbride. In addition, funds have been redirected into community services such as homecare, district nursing and other community-based support services. There is also evidence of performance improvements in the following areas:

- unscheduled bed days are decreasing year-on-year
- there has been a reduction in bed days lost as a result of delayed discharge
- the proportion of people spending the last six months of their lives in the community is increasing.

130. However, the IJB continues to face challenges including increasing levels of emergency admissions and unplanned hospital attendances.

131. In November 2018, the Auditor General and Accounts Commission issued the [*Health and social care integration: update on progress*](#)  report. This report highlights that, while some improvements have been made to the delivery of health and social care services, IJBs, councils and NHS boards need to show a stronger commitment to collaborative working to achieve the real long-term benefits of an integrated system. The IJB should review the key messages in the report to ensure that they are well placed to take the next steps in delivering health and social care integration.

The council is replacing existing care homes with new care facilities to reduce the reliance on nursing and residential care

132. The council delivers certain elements of the IJB’s Strategic Commissioning Plan (SCP) that relate to social care. The 2016–19 SCP included a direction to the council to ‘reduce reliance on nursing and residential care through the development of proposals to remodel a proportion of residential care beds to focus on transitional support and the “home for life” principle’.

133. In June 2018, the Social Work Resources Committee approved plans for the first phase of the new model, which involves a new-build care facility for the Hamilton/Blantyre locality. The new model will see four of the existing care homes replaced with three new facilities which will include intermediate care beds, respite beds and traditional residential care home beds.


134. The new facilities are designed to increase the opportunity for people to access different care approaches, for example the use of technology to retain independence for as long as possible. The intermediate care beds are intended to rehabilitate adults and older people and reduce the need for people to move into long-term or permanent residential care. This is in line with the Scottish Government's 2020 vision to shift the balance of care so that more people are looked after in their own home or in a homely setting.

135. The council should closely monitor the impact of the new care facilities to assess the extent to which they are delivering the intended outcomes and shifting the balance of care.

The council is working with partners to boost economic growth

136. The council's involvement in the Glasgow City Region City Deal ([Part 3](#)) has enabled it to take forward several roads' infrastructure, education, transport and community infrastructure projects. These projects are already delivering employment for local people and attracting private-sector investment in South Lanarkshire.

137. The council is a key member of the [Clyde Gateway Partnership](#) . This is a partnership between South Lanarkshire Council, Glasgow City Council and Scottish Enterprise, with funding from the Scottish Government. Its aim is to regenerate an area of 840 hectares in the east end of Glasgow and Rutherglen. The project started ten years ago and has resulted in the remediation of 245 hectares of contaminated land and 2,700 new homes being built, attracting 5,700 new jobs to the area and assisting 2,100 businesses.

138. At a focus group with members of the public, concerns were expressed about the current state of South Lanarkshire's town centres. In 2013, the Scottish Government commissioned a [national review of town centres](#) . This set out key recommendations for re-energising Scotland's town centres.

139. The council has recently prepared a strategy and action plan for Hamilton town centre. This set out a range of initiatives aimed at meeting the challenges facing the town. Hamilton was selected as the first town centre for action because of the existing plans for the Almada Street site ([Case study 2, page 40](#)) and the City Deal Community Growth Area activity. The strategy was developed in consultation with local elected members and residents, and consultations generated over 5,000 comments. This consultative model for developing a strategy for town centre redevelopment will be rolled out to other locations across South Lanarkshire in coming years.

Case study 2

Working with the University of the West of Scotland



In 2016, the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) signalled its intention to vacate its existing campus in Almada Street in Hamilton. As it had been unable to find a suitable site within South Lanarkshire, the UWS was considering moving outwith the area. The loss of the UWS would have had a considerable impact on the local economy. Consequently, the council engaged with the UWS to help it find a suitable site in South Lanarkshire.

With the assistance of the council, the UWS identified a suitable site at Hamilton International Park for a new state-of-the-art campus. However, because of the leasing restrictions on the site, which prevented the landlord leasing the site directly to the UWS, it required support and intervention from the council to progress the proposal. The UWS moved into its new Lanarkshire Campus in September 2018 in time for the start of the 2018/19 academic year.

The council and the UWS have also formed a joint venture to maximise the financial potential from their unused sites at Almada Street in Hamilton. Combining the former UWS campus with an adjacent council site will significantly increase the sale value, and the council's planning committee have approved plans for the 'Hamilton Urban Village' development. This development is expected to generate significant capital receipts for the council and the UWS and enable redevelopment in this area of Hamilton.

Source: South Lanarkshire Council

The council is working with partners to support local businesses

140. The council has worked with the Federation of Small Businesses, through the CPP, in recent years to support local businesses across South Lanarkshire. It is now engaging with the newly re-established Lanarkshire Chamber of Commerce to develop effective relations to support the businesses it represents. This should include a focus on better support for local businesses to win public contracts and consulting with local businesses on proposed changes that affect them.

141. In November 2018, the council ran a 'Meet the "Real" Buyer (South Lanarkshire)' event. This provided an opportunity for local businesses to speak to staff involved in commissioning work for the council. This focused on raising awareness among local businesses of the full range of activities that the council contracts out and was intended to encourage more local businesses to bid for work. The council is also the host authority for the Supplier Development Programme ([Case study 3, page 41](#)).



Lanarkshire Business Week

The council run this with North Lanarkshire Council. It involves a variety of public and private-sector partners providing a programme of events, workshops and networking opportunities for start-up, growing and established businesses within the Lanarkshire area.

The seventh Lanarkshire Business Week took place in 2018 with attendance from representatives from over 200 local businesses.

Source: Choose Lanarkshire website

Case study 3



The council hosts the Supplier Development Programme

South Lanarkshire Council hosts the Supplier Development Programme (SDP). This is a business support initiative providing training and information to help small and medium-sized local businesses to bid for public-sector contracts.

The SDP began as a partnership between local authorities in the west of Scotland. It developed over several years and now all 32 councils in Scotland are members. Other public-sector bodies that have joined include Forestry Commission Scotland, the Scottish Parliament, Caledonian MacBrayne and Scottish Enterprise.

The SDP team delivers and facilitates training events throughout Scotland and provides web-based training. They hold an annual 'Meet the Buyer' event at Murrayfield Stadium. The 2018 event was attended by 2,100 delegates; it was one of the biggest free events of its kind in Scotland. It offers businesses a unique opportunity to meet a wide range of Scottish and UK public bodies and business support agencies.

The SDP team offers support to public-sector buyers and business associations to ensure that suppliers have access to training to help them bid for and win business. For example, the team runs workshops on information security management, equalities and diversity, and environmental policies.

Source: South Lanarkshire Council

The council is the host authority for a range of shared service arrangements

142. South Lanarkshire Council hosts the Clyde Valley Learning and Development Partnership. The partnership brings together eight local authorities in the west of Scotland to establish and deliver several shared approaches to training, learning and development. Since it was set up 11 years ago, the partnership has delivered a range of benefits to member authorities. This includes sharing best practice across councils and financial savings through the provision of joint training events and accreditation.

143. The council also works closely with North Lanarkshire Council and other public-sector partners through the Lanarkshire Business Gateway, Visit Lanarkshire and Choose Lanarkshire partnerships.

Part 5

Is the council demonstrating continuous improvement?



South Lanarkshire Council performs well and since the last Best Value report in 2009 has demonstrated a steady pace of improvement. The council has a comprehensive and structured approach to continuous improvement. There is evidence that service redesign and capital investment are improving outcomes for citizens and resulting in efficiencies that will help ensure financial sustainability.

The council needs to improve how it uses community engagement to shape services. It has recently established a Community Participation and Empowerment Team to review its approach to community participation and engagement, including improving the consistency and quality of consultations with residents.

The council has made steady progress since the last Best Value audit in improving service performance

144. The council was subject to an audit of Best Value and Community Planning in 2009. The Accounts Commission commented that 'South Lanarkshire is a council that performs very well, that benefits from strong leadership and clear direction and that displays many of the characteristics of best value.' The Commission also identified areas that the council should focus on to help it improve. [Exhibit 17 \(page 47\)](#) compares previous Best Value judgements with our findings from this review.

The council's Improvement Unit coordinate self-assessment and improvement activity

145. The previous Best Value report in 2009 recommended that the council 'review the continuous improvement activity taking place to ensure that it is being prioritised and coordinated effectively'. In response to this recommendation, the council established a dedicated Improvement Unit.

146. The Improvement Unit was established in 2009 and currently has four employees (3.8 FTE). The unit's activities are overseen by the Corporate Improvement Advisory Board (CIAB), a council-wide working group tasked with monitoring the improvement actions being advanced within the individual resource directorates. These include:

- coordinating and reporting on the annual service programme
- reviewing IMPROVe performance measures and targets, and compiling IMPROVe performance reports
- reporting LGBF performance and coordinating the council's actions to address areas of poor or deteriorating performance
- public performance reporting
- responding to Audit Scotland and other national reports.

147. The results of the improvement activity are reported by the CIAB to the CMT and, through the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum, to the Executive Committee.

The council uses a structured self-assessment and review programme to drive continuous improvement

148. The council uses the 'Empower' self-assessment model to identify areas for review. It is based on European Foundation for Quality Management and Public Service Improvement Framework principles.

149. The council initially began using Empower in 2011 and developed a three-year rolling programme for the first phase of service reviews, with all services, other than those subject to an external assessment, to be reviewed over a longer period. The second phase of Empower began in 2014 and was concluded in 2016 with the completion of the final service reviews.











150. A new approach to the delivery of Empower was adopted from 1 April 2016. This approach was designed to be proportionate and risk-based and intended to ensure that the service review programme targets areas of poor or deteriorating performance, where improvement is required. This replaced the three-year rolling programme with a one-year targeted self-assessment programme. Alongside this the CMT oversees a programme of cross-cutting service reviews to examine key service areas and explore options for significant changes in how services are delivered.

151. These reviews involved consulting with employees from across the council, as well as representatives from trade unions, in a partnership approach to service redesign. The primary focus was on transformational change to improve service delivery rather than financial savings. However, the impact of these reviews in streamlining service delivery has also delivered significant savings over several years ([Exhibit 16, page 44](#)).

152. Other recent activity included reviews of waste services and the energy efficiency of council dwellings. Improvement activity is reported to the CMT and the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum.

Exhibit 16

Service improvements and savings delivered through the council's review programme

Review	Details of review	Benefits reported by council
 <p>Customer contact review</p>	<p>In response to increased public demand for online services and a point of contact outwith normal business hours, the council reviewed their existing customer contact arrangements. The improvements included initial investment in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • procuring and implementing IT systems integration software to facilitate the use of online forms • rolling out self-service web forms integrated to back office systems for many council service areas • integrating council forms to national MyAccount citizen authentication service to improve customer experience • procuring and implementing a council text messaging solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Improved customer services  Delivered savings of about £1.2 million per annum through reduced staff, property and utilities costs
 <p>Property review</p>	<p>The use of accommodation was reviewed to identify opportunities to rationalise the property portfolio to ensure the most effective and economical use was being made of the council's estate. This resulted in the lease of four properties being terminated and two council-owned sites being released for redevelopment for a new nursery and social housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Reduced overall office accommodation by 9,200 metres  Reduced overall property costs by over £2 million per annum
 <p>Homecare mobile/agile working review</p>	<p>New digital technology was rolled out to social work to enable homecare staff to access and input real-time information on clients. This was intended to improve the accuracy of information available to social work staff and increase productivity by reducing paperwork and duplication of work when recording case details.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  More efficient utilisation of staff resources  Increased data security of sensitive information  Improved lone worker safety processed

Source: South Lanarkshire Council service review programme reports

The council is investing in digital technology to redesign and improve services

153. The council's 2017–20 digital strategy sets out how new technologies can be used to support the council in fulfilling its vision to improve the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire. The council has made progress against some of the key deliverables set out in this strategy including:

- introducing more flexible ways of working through laptops, tablets, phones, Wi-Fi investment, hot-desking and smaller office working

- introducing new digital channels for customer interaction, for example online web forms or the online MyAccount, which enables residents to check, for example, council tax balances and rent accounts.

154. The council has also engaged with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government in its efforts to digitally transform services and identify areas for development. As part of this engagement, the council is co-leader on four projects: digital maturity, digital transformation capabilities, common platforms, and mobile and flexible working.

155. Our public focus group identified some concerns related to digital exclusion as more services move online. Research in this area has found that a significant proportion of people who cannot access digital services come from the most deprived and vulnerable groups (referred to as the 'seldom heard' in the council's Community Engagement Framework). Tackling this issue could be helpful in addressing the CPP's objective of 'tackling deprivation, poverty, and inequality'. The council's digital strategy makes no mention of the problem of digital exclusion. Although the council has some arrangements in place to address digital exclusion, there is no overarching strategy and corporate approach to tackling this issue. The council should prepare a digital inclusion strategy to complement its digital strategy.

Management has been proactive in responding to recent external audit recommendations

156. Over the past two years, the external auditor has made a number of recommendations relating to Best Value characteristics. These include recommendations to:

- improve the clarity of financial and budget reporting
- strengthen the power and status of the audit committee
- revise the format of public performance reporting to provide information in a more easily accessible format
- modernise the operation of charities and revise existing governance arrangements.

157. The council has been receptive to these recommendations and has been proactive in taking the agreed actions.

The council needs to improve how it uses community engagement to shape services

158. Open, effective and consistent engagement helps to inform good decision-making. The way in which the council facilitates community engagement has developed over time and in many instances reflects statutory requirements or regulatory expectations.

159. The council uses a citizens' panel to consult with members of the public. The Citizens' Panel is a joint venture between the council, NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Communities Scotland and the South Lanarkshire Community Safety Partnership. These organisations have formed a partnership

to consult with residents of South Lanarkshire so that they can share research information and avoid overloading residents with surveys and consultation exercises.

160. The council has recognised that while current arrangements have some strengths there is a need to fundamentally revise its approach to community participation and engagement. This should include a focus on the different needs of rural and urban communities across South Lanarkshire.

161. Some good practice consultations were undertaken by the council and there is clear evidence that these exercises affected the approach adopted by the council. These included:

- Children's Services consultation on realigning children's services: this involved about 17,000 children, young people and parents, and informed the development of the Children's Services Plan 2017–20.
- Arrangements within the Housing and Technical resource directorate for consulting with tenants and residents: this recently received the 'Most Inspiring Scrutiny Group' award at the Tenants Information Services National Excellence Awards.
- A Social Work resource directorate consultation with key stakeholders: this was carried out as part of the development of the South Lanarkshire Local Autism Action Plan in response to the Scottish Strategy for Autism – Outcomes Approach (2015) and Revised Outcomes and Priorities 2018–21.
- A Community and Enterprise resource directorate consultation on a proposed park and ride strategy: this consisted of an online survey with 707 responses.

162. There is variability in the quality of consultations, including some instances where the timing of the consultation and the type of questions being asked limited the quality of the results. The council accepts that they need to improve the consistency of the quality of consultation and advised us that this is a key priority for the new Community Participation and Empowerment Team.

Exhibit 17

A comparison of Best Value judgements

Controller of Audit judgements in 2009 and 2019 show that South Lanarkshire Council has made progress but there are still areas that need to be improved.

Controller of Audit judgement 	Controller of Audit judgement 	View
Good service performance is underpinned by high levels of customer satisfaction	The council demonstrates improved performance over a range of services. However, LGBF service satisfaction indicators highlight that the council is performing below the Scottish average for eight of the nine indicators. The council reports different results from its own customer satisfaction surveys.	Part 2
Elected members set clear priorities and direction, but could contribute more effectively in a range of areas	Leadership is effective and there is good collaborative working in the council, with the CMT setting a good example by working effectively together. Officers and elected members from all parties have constructive working relationships.	Part 1
Make scrutiny and decision-making more open and transparent by having scrutiny forums in public	Scrutiny forums have been held in public since September 2009. However, elected members need to ensure that all key decisions are subject to an appropriate level of challenge and scrutiny at public meetings. This includes the discussion and scrutiny of performance and financial reports.	Part 1
Improve community planning by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involving more partners • reporting on more effective outcome measures 	The council works well with partners and there are many good examples of effective partnership and collaborative working with partners beyond the main public-sector agencies. However, the CPP Board needs to play a greater role in driving partnership working and setting the strategic direction for the thematic subgroups. The LOIP 2017–27 is underpinned by PIPs. These contain action plans and performance measures to track how activities affect the progress towards achieving outcomes.	Part 4
Develop a forward-looking workforce planning strategy	The council has a comprehensive and coordinated approach to workforce planning, including a three-year workforce plan and well-developed redeployment and succession planning arrangements.	Part 3
Fully implement the Community Engagement Framework	The council implemented a revised Community Engagement Framework in 2015. Our review identified examples of effective customer and stakeholder engagement. However, there were instances where the timing of consultation and the type of questions being asked limited the quality of the results. A priority of the new Community Participation and Empowerment Team is to improve the consistency of the quality of consultation.	Part 5
Improve the balance of public performance reporting	During 2017/18, the council introduced online ‘spotlights’ reports to improve the way in which it reports performance to the public. These use infographics to illustrate performance against the Connect objectives. Further improvements are also planned.	Part 2

Recommendations



To increase the impact of the council's efforts in achieving its strategic objectives, links between the council plan (Connect Plan) and the LOIP (Community Plan) should be made clearer with a sharper focus on the key areas of activity. Locality plans should be prepared without further delay.
([Paragraph 20 and 121](#))

Management should carry out the staff survey and use the results to drive improvement and share existing good practice.
([Paragraph 24 and 60](#))

Elected members need to improve the public scrutiny of key decisions, performance and financial reports.
([Paragraph 32](#))

Members should, with the assistance of the personnel service, review their personal training and development needs and agree a plan to ensure that they have the skills required to effectively fulfil their scrutiny and challenge roles.
([Paragraph 34](#))

Management should ensure that the indicators used to measure performance provide meaningful information and are appropriate to the reporting level.
([Paragraph 42](#))

Management should review arrangements for assessing resident satisfaction, to ensure these are providing meaningful data to help shape future services.
([Paragraph 58](#))

The Community Planning Partnership Board should take a more active role in driving partnership working, monitoring outcomes and feeding back to thematic subgroups.
([Paragraph 116](#))

The council should review existing governance structures to ensure that they support community-based activity.
([Paragraph 126](#))

Management should formulate a digital inclusion strategy to complement the council's digital strategy.
([Paragraph 155](#))

Management should implement revised arrangements for community engagement to improve how it is used to shape services. Consistent and high-quality consultation across all services should be part of this.
([Paragraphs 160 and 162](#))

Appendix

Best Value audit timeline



February 2009 – The audit of Best Value and Community Planning

The Accounts Commission found that South Lanarkshire Council performed very well, benefited from strong leadership and clear direction, and displayed many of the characteristics of Best Value. It also found that the council was very well placed to enhance its current good performance by addressing the areas highlighted as needing improvement.

March 2019 – Best Value Assurance Report

The Controller of Audit will present a Best Value Assurance Report to the Accounts Commission at least once during the five-year audit appointment for each council. This is the first assurance report on South Lanarkshire Council. The report seeks to provide the Commission with assurance on the council's statutory duty to deliver Best Value, with a focus on the Commission's Strategic Audit Priorities.

Best Value Assurance Report South Lanarkshire Council

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats,
along with a podcast summary at:

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 

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