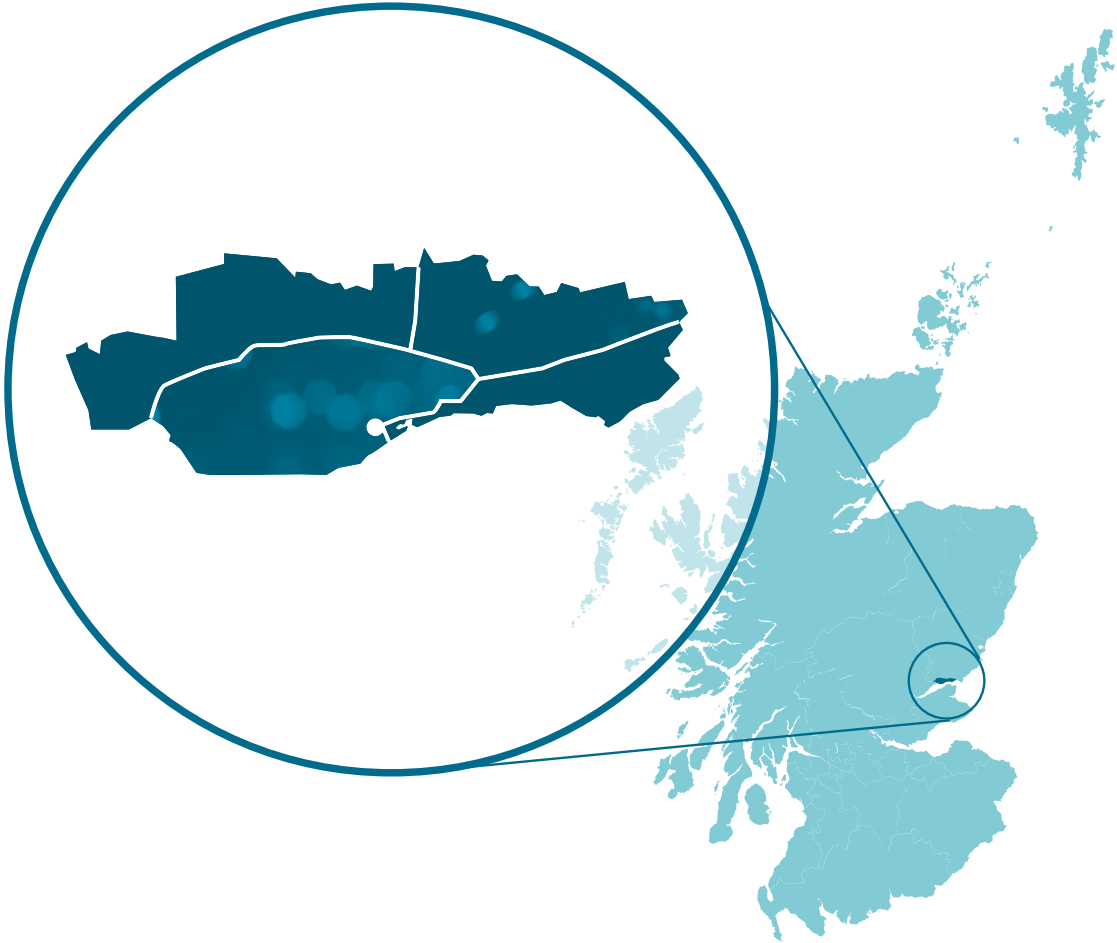


Best Value Assurance Report

Dundee City Council



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

Prepared by Audit Scotland
September 2020

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.

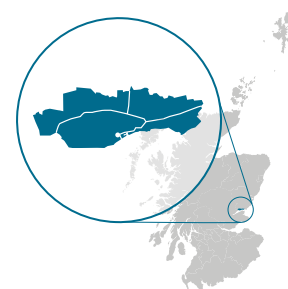
Our work includes:

- 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



Commission findings	5
Audit approach	6
Key messages	9
Part 1. Does the council have clear strategic direction?	11
Part 2. How well is the council performing?	21
Part 3. Is the council using its resources effectively?	33
Part 4. Is the council working well with its partners?	44
Part 5. Is the council demonstrating continuous improvement?	56
Recommendations	63
Appendix. Best Value audit timeline	64

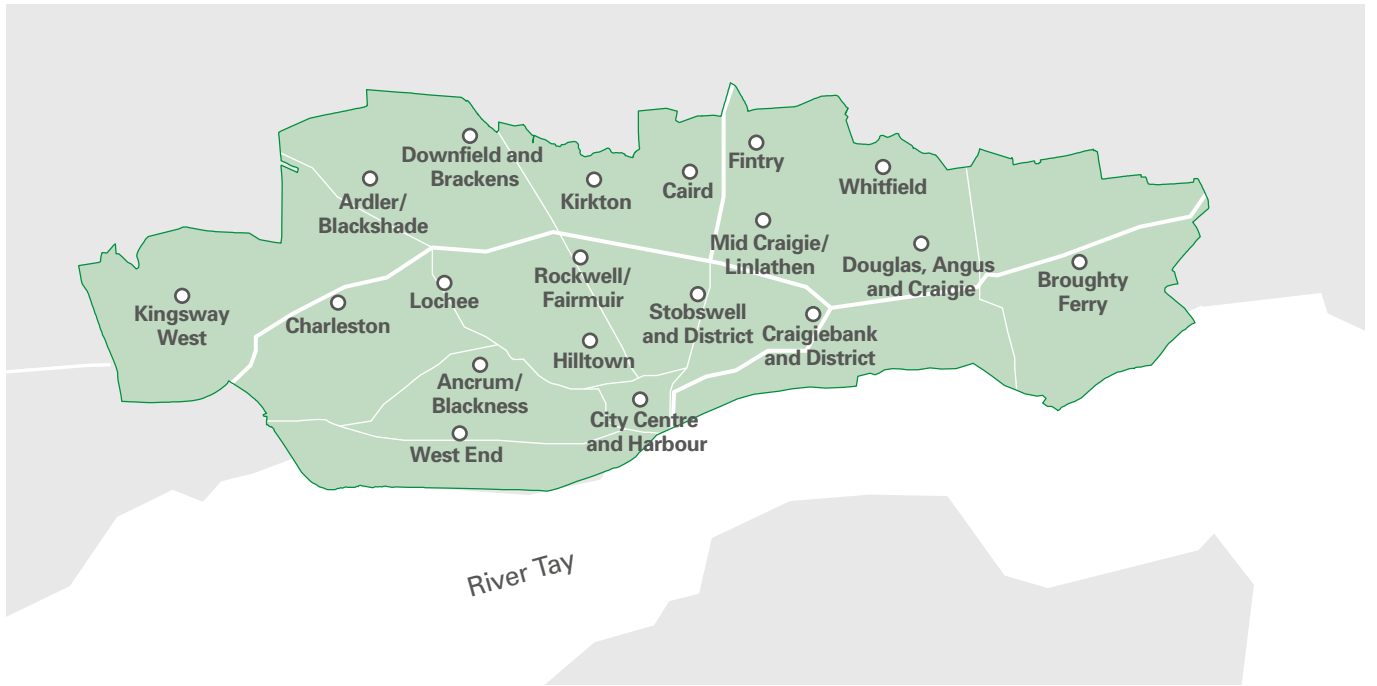
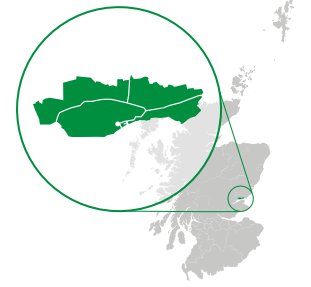
Links

-  PDF download
-  Web link

Exhibit data

When viewing this report online, you can access background data by clicking on the graph icon. The data file will open in a new window.

Key facts



Area



Population



Workforce
(number of FTE employees)



Elected members

- 14 Scottish National Party
- 8 Scottish Labour
- 3 Conservative and Unionist
- 2 Scottish Liberal Democrat
- 2 Independent



Council houses



2020/21
revenue budget¹

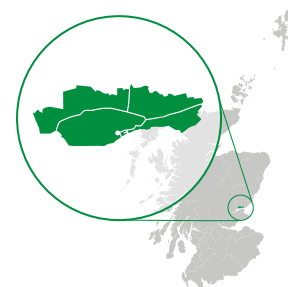


2020–25
capital budget²



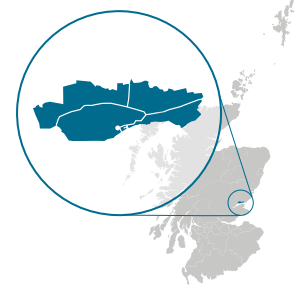
Pre Covid-19
budget gap
2020–23


Commission findings




- 1** The Commission accepts the Controller of Audit's report on Best Value in Dundee City Council and endorses his recommendations.
- 2** Much of the work for this audit was undertaken before the Covid-19 emergency. As such the report does not consider the additional and sizeable pressure that this has placed on the council. The Commission is, however, of the firm view that the principles of sound financial management, good governance, public accountability and transparency remain vital. Accordingly, we intend that our reporting of the Best Value audit will help the council deal with the significant challenges that it faces.
- 3** We are pleased with the good progress made by the council since the previous Best Value report in March 2010. The council has strong leadership, is self-aware about how it performs, and its services are improving in many areas. It has sound financial management and makes good use of longer-term financial planning, which are essential in managing future financial pressures effectively. The council, as part of the Dundee Partnership, has successfully delivered high profile capital investment projects to transform areas of the city, most notably the redevelopment of the Dundee waterfront.
- 4** Despite progress, Dundee continues to face complex and deep-rooted challenges. The city has the highest rate of drug related deaths in Scotland, and pressures around poverty and mental health remain significant. The Commission sees this situation as one of critical importance. The financial sustainability of the integration joint board (IJB) remains a risk and this will be exacerbated by the pressures emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important that the council works with its partners to ensure the financial sustainability of the IJB.
- 5** The council is aware of these challenges and, in striving with its partners to address them, it needs to increase its pace of change. It needs to understand, and demonstrate more clearly, the social impact of its capital investment and prevention and early intervention initiatives on inequality and poverty, particularly in the less advantaged areas of the city. It also needs to move from incremental to transformational change across all its services, and, in particular, in education, make quicker progress in narrowing the attainment gap for more vulnerable or disadvantaged children.
- 6** We urge the council to put workforce plans in place for all services to ensure it has the required skills and capacity to deliver its aspirations. This is particularly important given the impending retirement of the chief executive.
- 7** We encourage the council to address these findings and the Controller of Audit's recommendations. The Controller will monitor progress through the annual audit and inform us appropriately.

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 Dundee City Council. Progress since the previous [Best Value 2 Pathfinder Audit \(2010\)](#)  report on the council is discussed in [Part 5](#). The council's recent history and Best Value audit timeline is outlined in the [Appendix](#) to the report.

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 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 themes 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 [2018/19 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 and intelligence
- 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.

Exhibit 1

Key areas of focus for our audit



The council's vision and strategic direction

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



Effective use of resources

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



Partnership and collaborative working

How the council delivers services through partnership and collaborative working, including progress in tackling specific challenges such as poverty, drug misuse and fairness.



Public engagement and responsiveness

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



Community participation

How well the council has responded to the requirements of the Community Empowerment Act and the arrangements put in place to encourage and support community participation.



Performance and outcomes, including public performance reporting

A review of the council's assessment of its outcomes/performance, as reported to councillors and through public performance reporting. This may be supplemented by audit analysis of LGBF data where it is considered appropriate to support the report.

Source: Audit Scotland

4. The detailed work for the report was undertaken between January and May 2020 and included:

- document review and analysis of performance and outcomes data
- interviews with elected members, senior officers, representatives from trade unions and a range of partners, including the third sector
- attendance at community group meetings and other community-based events, and
- other discussions with staff.

Impact of Covid-19 outbreak on the audit approach

5. The majority of the desk-based work for this report was completed by the end of February 2020 and the audit team were due to start the on-site interviews with

key officers, elected members, partners and other stakeholders during the week beginning 16 March. However, these meetings had to be cancelled owing to the impact of the Covid-19 (coronavirus disease) outbreak in Scotland.

6. The outbreak has brought unprecedented challenges to organisations around the country. It is not yet known what long-term impacts these will have on populations and on the delivery of public services, but they will be significant and could continue for some time. The scope of our work does not cover the impact of Covid-19 on the council but we have included limited narrative in some parts of the report, where the immediate impact is known.

7. To ensure the completion of the Best Value audit work did not impinge upon the council, and its partners, in response to the Covid-19 outbreak, we reduced the number of planned interviews to cover priority areas and held them virtually in May and June. The interviews with the leaders of each of the political groups and the representatives from partner organisations were prioritised and rescheduled wherever possible.

8. We had originally planned to hold two focus groups with staff in customer facing roles to hear their views on working for the council. However, the restrictions imposed on social interaction made this impractical. We therefore covered this area during our discussions with trade union representatives to get their views on the experiences of their members.

9. Despite the restrictions placed upon the on-site fieldwork, we were still able to gather sufficient evidence to support the audit judgements in this report.

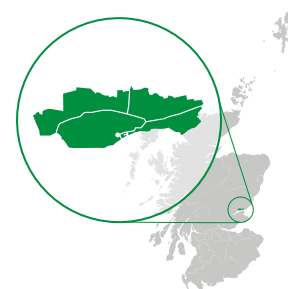
Follow-up of report

10. 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.

Acknowledgement

11. 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

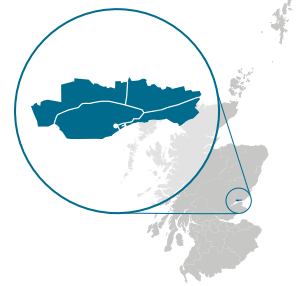


- 1** The council has demonstrated a steady pace of improvement since the last Best Value audit in 2010. The council and its partners have a clear and ambitious vision for Dundee, with the City Plan and the Council Plan showing how they aim to improve life in the city. They understand that the key to this is addressing Dundee's high levels of poverty and inequality.
- 2** The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive provide effective leadership, and officers and councillors work well together. The Dundee Partnership has been successful in regenerating and reinvigorating the city centre through projects such as the Dundee Waterfront development, including the V&A Museum of Design Dundee and the new Dundee Railway Station. Progress is also being made in regenerating the wider city through projects such as the new Regional Performance Centre for Sport and the Michelin-Scotland Innovation Parc joint venture.
- 3** Council services are improving, and at a greater rate than its family group of peers. However the council recognises the pace of improvement needs to accelerate if some priorities are to be delivered, particularly its aspiration to reduce poverty and inequality.
- 4** The council demonstrates a clear focus on continuous improvement across its activities. It uses self-assessment effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses and where improvement is required. However, regular performance reports for councillors, which include current performance data on all services, are still being developed.
- 5** The council has innovative ideas and there is a large volume of improvement activity taking place. The council needs to ensure that it has the capacity and skills to deliver its aspirations, and its improvements may need to be prioritised. Workforce plans need to be progressed for all services to help demonstrate this.
- 6** In 2019 the Dundee Drugs Commission made recommendations for a new approach to services which aim to reduce drug use and deaths, a significant longstanding challenge in the city.
- 7** Financial management is effective with budgets focused on the council's priorities. The council has made good progress in financial planning with the approval of a long-term financial strategy in 2019.

- 8** Delivery of the council's Changing for the Future transformational change programme (C2022) will be critical to delivering future financial plans. A cumulative funding gap, prior to the Covid-19 impact, of £32 million is projected by the end of 2022/23 with a longer-term funding gap of £78 million by 2029/30.
 - 9** The Dundee Partnership has embraced the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Eight Local Community Planning Partnerships deliver local projects to communities. Citizens' views informed how £1.2 million was spent on local projects in 2018/19.
 - 10** The council's self-evaluation against Best Value characteristics, demonstrates a mature organisation that honestly appraises its own strengths and weaknesses and identifies where improvement is required.
-

Part 1

Does the council have clear strategic direction?



The council and its partners have an ambitious vision for Dundee, the City Plan and the Council Plan set out how they aim to improve life in the city. They understand that the key to this is addressing Dundee's high levels of poverty and inequality.

The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive provide effective leadership, and officers and councillors work well together.

The local context

12. Dundee is the fourth largest, and second most densely populated, city in Scotland. It has a population of around 150,000 people living within its area of 20 square miles. Geographically, it is the smallest local authority area in Scotland and borders Fife Council, Perth and Kinross Council and Angus Council.











13. Life expectancy in Dundee is the second lowest of any city in Scotland (73.9 years for males and 79.4 years for females). Like all other areas it has an increasingly ageing population with 16 per cent of residents aged over 65, and eight per cent aged over 75.

14. The city has high levels of poverty ([Exhibit 2, page 12](#)) and over a quarter of children are in poverty (after housing costs) in seven of the eight electoral wards in Dundee City. A key contributor to this is unemployment with only 65 per cent of adults in work, 40 per cent of those employed by the public sector. There is also a significantly higher proportion of employees in Dundee who are employed in lower- paid occupations, 37 per cent compared to the Scottish average of 29 per cent. However, a slightly higher proportion of people in Dundee, compared to the rest of Scotland, earn more than, or equal to, the living wage.

Exhibit 2

Dundee has high levels of poverty and unemployment (2019)

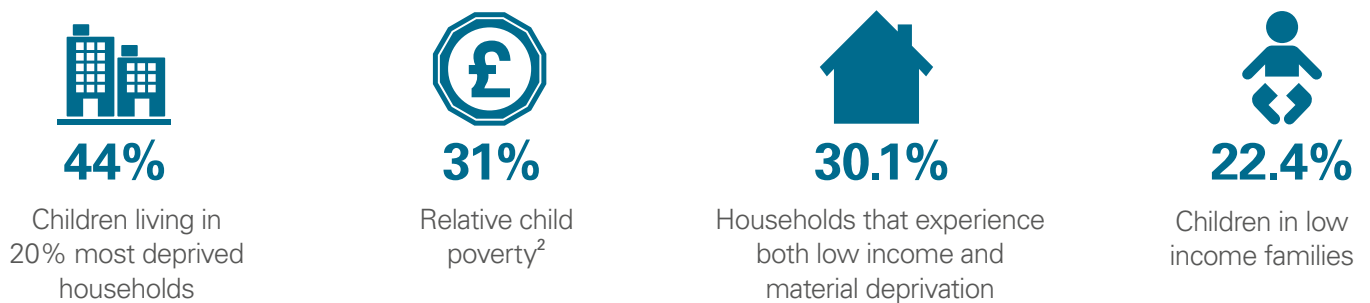
Cost of living

	Households managing well financially		41%		Median rent in private sector	£550 per month	
	Food bank use (2017)	4,701	Vouchers issued		Households with content insurance		57%
	Households which are fuel poor ¹		31%		Households with no savings		34%

Social Security and benefits



Child poverty



Notes:

1. A child is living in poverty if they live in a household whose income falls below a given threshold: The threshold for relative poverty is set at 60% of the average (median) net household income* in the year in the year in question. This threshold can fluctuate from one year to the next. www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk
2. A child is living in poverty if they live in a household whose income falls below a given threshold: The threshold for relative poverty is set at 60% of the average (median) net household income* in the year in the year in question. This threshold can fluctuate from one year to the next. www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Source: An Action Plan to Reduce Social Inequalities & Poverty in Dundee (2019)

15. Dundee's profile of deprivation shows that the city is among the most deprived areas in Scotland ([Exhibit 3](#)). The most recent Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data, from 2020, identified that 70 data zones, out of 188, in Dundee are within the 20 per cent most deprived in Scotland and parts of Claverhouse, Douglas, Downfield, Fintry, Hilltown, Lochee, Menzieshill, St Mary's and Whitfield fall within the five per cent most deprived areas.

Exhibit 3

The distribution of deprivation in Dundee compared with Scotland's other city councils

Dundee's profile of deprivation shows that the city is among the most deprived areas in Scotland.



Note: The top of the shape shows the proportion of the population in the least deprived areas, working down to the proportion of the population in the most deprived areas.

Source: Open Data Manchester using Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), 2020. SIMD is the official tool for identifying the most deprived areas in Scotland. It looks at multiple aspects of deprivation such as resources and opportunities as well as low income.





16. The Drugs Commission's [Responding to Drug Use With Kindness, Compassion and Hope Report](#) (August 2019) and the [Independent Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Tayside Trust and Respect report](#) (February 2020) highlighted issues to be addressed in these areas to improve outcomes for residents of the city. As responding to the recommendations in both reports requires a coordinated partnership approach, they are discussed at [Part 4](#) of this report.

The City Plan 2017-2026 sets out an ambitious vision for the city

17. The [City Plan 2017-2026](#) is Dundee's first Local Outcome Improvement Plan and sets out an ambitious vision for the city. The City Plan is framed around jobs, social inclusion and quality of life. It identifies five strategic priorities and high-level outcomes for the Dundee Partnership to improve the city over the next ten years ([Exhibit 4, page 14](#)). It also includes ambitious targets for each outcome for the next one, three and ten years.

Exhibit 4


Dundee City Plan 2017-2026 strategic priority themes and outcomes

Strategic Priority	Dundee Outcome
 Fair Work and Enterprise	Raise regional productivity
	Close the jobs gap
	Reduce unemployment
 Children and Families	Improve early years outcomes
	Close the attainment gap
	Improve physical, mental and emotional health for children and young people
	Improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people who experience inequalities
 Health, Care and Wellbeing	Increase safety and protection of young people
	Reduce obesity
	Reduce substance misuse
 Community Safety and Justice	Improve mental health and wellbeing
	Reduce levels of crime
	Reduce levels of domestic abuse
	Reduce levels of re-offending
	Reduce risk to life, property and fire
	Improve road safety
 Building Stronger Communities	Reduce levels of antisocial behaviour
	Improve quality of neighbourhoods
	Increase empowerment of local people
	Improve housing quality, choice and affordability
	Improve access to healthy green and open spaces
Improve transport connections to communities	

Source: [Dundee City Plan 2017-2026](#)

The Partnership engaged well with the public, local community groups, public sector, private sector, academic and third sector organisations to develop the City Plan

18. The City Plan was developed in consultation with a wide range of public sector, private sector, academic and third sector organisations. Local communities were also heavily involved in the development of the City Plan priorities.


19. A range of techniques were employed under the banner of ‘Engage Dundee’ to gather the views of residents. This included the **Place Standard tool** , recommended by the Scottish Government, which was used in Dundee for the first time to assess and measure the needs of communities across the city.

20. Approximately 16,000 (2,000 per ward) Engage Dundee postcards were distributed across the city with 2,817 (18 per cent) returned. A further 1,275 questionnaires were also completed by residents as part of the exercise. Alongside this, the council facilitated 41 focus groups across the city and held a series of call back events (involving 325 people) to convey the findings from the Engage Dundee consultation. Additional input from residents was obtained through door-knocking, street consultation, open days, public meetings, community events, festivals and social media, with over 6,000 responses gathered in total.

21. The results of the public consultation were analysed and reported to the Dundee Partnership and fed into the development of the strategic priorities for the City Plan. They were also used to develop priority outcomes, actions and targets for the local community plans for each of the eight wards across Dundee ([paragraphs 167–168](#)).

The Council Plan 2017-2022 aligns with the City Plan and reflects how the council will contribute to addressing the challenges that Dundee faces

22. The City Plan sets out how partners will contribute to the delivery of the vision across the five strategic priority themes and identifies the key strategies and plans contributing to each theme [Exhibit 5 \(page 16\)](#).

23. The [Council Plan 2017-2022](#)  sets out how Dundee City Council will play its part in delivering the vision set out in the City Plan and identifies strategic service leads for each of the strategic priority themes ([Exhibit 6, page 17](#)). These reflect the council’s service directorate structure which was revised in 2015 to bring together services for children, young people and families, including Education and Social Work, within an integrated Children and Families Services service directorate.



Place Standard tool

The Place Standard tool provides a framework to structure conversations about place. It allows consideration of physical elements of a place (for example its buildings, spaces, and transport links) as well as social aspects (for example whether people feel they have a say in decision-making). The tool assists users to identify their priorities for a place.

Source: Place Standard Scotland website

Exhibit 5

Partner strategies and plans contributing to delivery of City Plan strategic priority themes








Source: [Dundee City Plan 2017-2026](#)

24. The Council Plan includes scorecards for its five strategic service directorates, as well as Leisure and Culture Dundee and the Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership. These enable the council to monitor and assess progress against the targeted outcomes for each of the strategic priority themes. Annual progress reports on the Council Plan are published. The latest is discussed in [Part 2](#) of this report.

Exhibit 6

Dundee City Council strategic service leads for City Plan strategic priority themes

Strategic Priority	Dundee Outcome	Strategic Service Lead
 Fair Work and Enterprise	Raise regional productivity	City Development
	Close the jobs gap	
	Reduce unemployment	
 Children and Families	Improve early years outcomes	Children and Families
	Close the attainment gap	
	Improve physical, mental and emotional health for children and young people	
	Improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people who experience inequalities	
	Increase safety and protection of young people	
 Health, Care and Wellbeing	Reduce obesity	Health and Social Partnership
	Reduce substance misuse	
	Improve mental health and wellbeing	
 Community Safety and Justice	Reduce levels of crime	Neighbourhood Services and Children and Families
	Reduce levels of domestic abuse	
	Reduce levels of re-offending	
	Reduce risk to life, property and fire	
	Improve road safety	
 Building Stronger Communities	Reduce levels of antisocial behaviour	Neighbourhood Services
	Improve quality of neighbourhoods	
	Increase empowerment of local people	
	Improve housing quality, choice and affordability	
	Improve access to healthy green and open spaces	
Improve transport connections to communities		

Source: [Council Plan 2017-2022](#)

The achievement of the targeted outcomes within the Council Plan is underpinned by the delivery of the council's 'Changing for the Future' transformation programme

25. Since 2010 the council has been working to transform service delivery models, and achieve efficiency savings, through its change programme 'Changing for the Future'. This sits alongside the Council Plan and includes a range of


workstreams intended to encourage innovation, reshaping and joining up of services in a way that will improve service delivery and reduce costs.

26. The council is currently in phase five of the 'Changing for the Future' programme, called C2022, which runs from 2018 to 2022. This aligns with the key plans and strategies of the council and includes workstreams across four priority areas: Service Design, Partnership and Commissioning, Digital, and People and Resources. Successfully delivering the workstreams in this phase of the programme will be key to achieving the targeted outcomes within the Council Plan.

The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive provide effective leadership, and officers and councillors work well together


27. Since the 2017 Local Government elections Dundee City Council has been controlled by a coalition administration formed by the 14 SNP members and one independent member. Prior to this it was controlled by an SNP majority administration.

28. The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, along with other councillors and senior officers, provide clear, focused strategic leadership for the council. Officers and councillors are clear on their respective roles, which allow for a constructive and professional working relationship.

29. Despite the political differences between the various groups, there is a good degree of cooperation and consensus between members on the vision and priorities for the council and the city. From our attendance at **Council and committee meetings**  we also observed that members have a clear focus on working in the interests of the residents of Dundee.

30. The Chief Executive, Council Management Team and other staff we interviewed are committed and enthusiastic, and demonstrate an appetite for tackling the challenges faced by the city to make a real difference to the lives of Dundonians.

The council's committee structure is unusual as all 29 councillors sit on all strategic service area committees

31. Councillors and officers of the council  are responsible for establishing arrangements to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded, and for monitoring the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

32. The decision-making structure of the council was approved by councillors at the first meeting of the new council in May 2017. It consists of four strategic service area committees: a Policy and Resources Committee, Planning Committee, Scrutiny Committee and a Licensing Committee.

33. The committee structure is unusual as all 29 councillors sit on all committees, other than the Scrutiny and Licensing committees. The strategic service area and Policy and Resources committee meetings are generally held the same night, and are preceded by a meeting of the full council, with the conveners and deputy conveners switching over between each committee meeting.

34. The current Scrutiny Committee was created in 2014 by merging the scrutiny roles of the previous Scrutiny Committee, Improvement and Efficiency Sub-



Public deputations process

Members of the public are able to make verbal representations to committees to allow members of the committee to hear, at first hand, the views of people who may be affected by a decision that is about to be taken.

Source: Dundee City Council Guide to Committees



Impact of Covid-19 outbreak

All committee meetings were suspended in March 2020 owing to the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak. Delegated powers were approved that enabled the Chief Executive to make decisions in consultation with the convener of the appropriate committee and the relevant spokesperson for each of the political groups. Arrangements have now been put in place to hold council and committee meetings virtually using Microsoft Teams.

Committee, and the Audit and Risk Management Sub-Committee. This change was made in response to a recommendation in the previous Best Value report for the Scrutiny Committee to be strengthened.

35. The Scrutiny Committee comprises eight members drawn from all political groups on the council. The Leader of the Opposition is the appointed Convener of the committee and the leaders of the Scottish Conservative and Scottish Liberal Democrat groups serve as Deputy Conveners.

36. We are satisfied that this committee provides effective scrutiny over decision-making and undertakes its business in an open and transparent manner.

The committee structure and meeting arrangements work well for a council of this size

37. Councillors and officers say that the current committee structure and meeting arrangements, have the following advantages:

- all members sitting on all service directorate committees improves scrutiny during meetings as they have a greater awareness of the issues impacting on the council
- councillors believe it also helps them to inform their constituents and enhances their role in the community as they have a fuller understanding of council business
- holding multiple committee meetings on the same night allows councillors to more easily fulfil their responsibilities as a councillor, alongside their other professional and personal commitments, rather than having to attend a number of meetings on different days.

38. It is acknowledged by councillors that some meetings can be lengthy, but the meeting agendas are planned so that adequate time should be available to discuss all business.

39. Based on our observation of meetings, and discussions with members and officers, we see that the committee structure and meeting arrangements work well for a council of this size.

40. All councils, including Dundee City Council should regularly review the effectiveness of its committee structure, to ensure it remains the best model for all of its functions.

The council has a well-developed programme for supporting councillors that should be extended to non-elected committee members

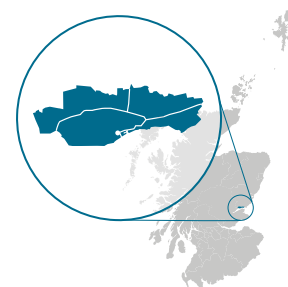
41. The council has a well-developed programme for supporting councillors to perform their role effectively, This includes a comprehensive induction programme for new councillors and detailed briefing sessions on key areas such as fire safety at multi-storey developments following the Grenfell disaster. These sessions are well attended, and elected members interviewed commented positively on the support provided to them by officers.

42. Officers are currently engaging with elected members on proposals for future personal development activity to tailor this to their specific needs and develop personal development plans for each councillor.

43. The membership of the Children and Families Services committee includes non-elected representatives of religious groups, teachers, parents and pupils. During our interviews with these representatives a number commented that they would have liked to have had more induction and training to support them in undertaking their role on the committee. The council should consider speaking to non-elected committee members on how to address their training and development needs.

Part 2

How well is the council performing?



Service performance is improving and at a greater rate than its family group of peers.

The council is aware of where the pace of improvement needs to accelerate if it is to deliver the priorities in the Council Plan.

Children and Families Services is the lowest performing strategic service area but there is evidence that the council's targeted intervention activity is having a positive impact on early years and primary school performance.

The council has been slow to develop a consistent approach to monitoring and reporting performance across the council, but progress has accelerated in recent years. Regular performance reports for councillors, which include current performance data on all services, are still being developed.

Progress has been made against City Plan measures but there are areas where performance was not on target and had deteriorated during the year

44. As detailed at [paragraph 17](#), the City Plan 2017-2026 sets out the priority outcomes of partners and includes key measures to track the progress being made, with one, three and ten year targets to ensure improvements are taking place. Progress against these measures is reported biannually to the Dundee Partnership Management Group and the Executive Boards set up by the Dundee City Partnership to oversee each of the five strategic priority themes.


45. In September 2019, the Dundee City Partnership published its [2018/19 Annual Report on the City Plan for Dundee 2017-2026](#) [\(download\)](#). This provided an overall summary of progress against the 63 long-term key performance targets and annual trend data for the 65 in-year performance indicators ([Exhibit 7, page 22](#)). The report also included scorecards for each of the Partnership's five strategic priority themes providing more detail on the progress made by partners against the priority actions identified to deliver improved outcomes for the people of Dundee.


Exhibit 7

Summary of Dundee Partnership’s progress against City Plan priority outcomes


City Plan Overall Summary

- Fair Work and Enterprise
- Children and Families
- Health, Care and Wellbeing
- Community Safety and Justice
- Building Strong and Empowered Communities






36




10




17

Key Performance Targets: ● On target ▲ Within target threshold ● Below target

Trend of Performance Indicators

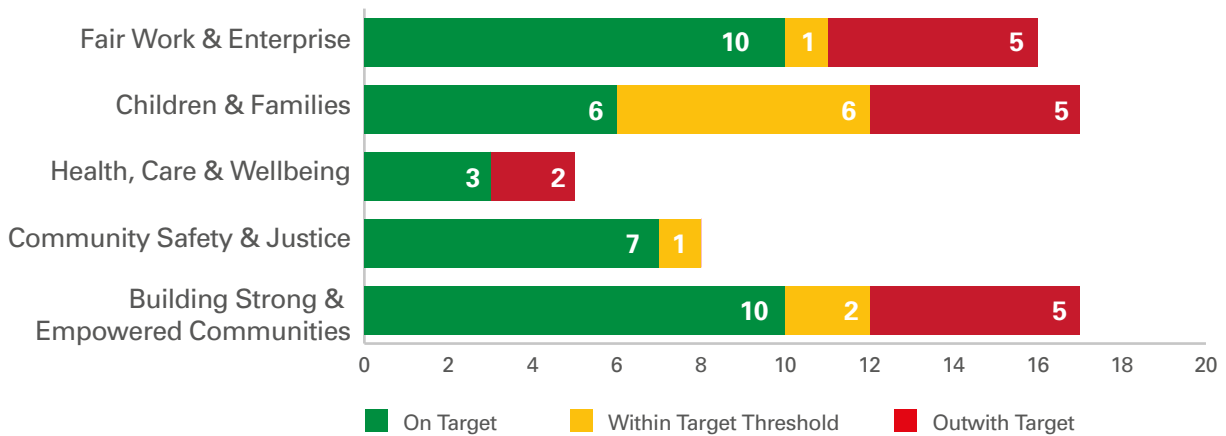


66% Improved and Maintained



22% Deteriorated

Strategic Priorities



Source: [2018/19 Annual Report on the City Plan for Dundee 2017-2026](#)

46. The report shows a mixed picture of progress as while the majority of long-term performance targets are on target, and most performance indicators have either improved or been maintained during the year, there are also a significant number where performance is not on target and has deteriorated from the prior year. The report identifies the partnership's approach to address areas for improvement.

The council has been slow to develop a consistent approach to monitoring and reporting performance across the council, but progress has accelerated in recent years. Regular performance reports for councillors, which include current performance data on all services, are still being developed.

47. The Best Value Audit in 2010 said that the council's performance management needed to improve to effectively report on the council's performance. Since that time, arrangements have been slow to develop, picking up momentum only in recent years. A new performance management framework was approved in August 2018 and was rolled out during 2019/20. In November 2019 a performance report was presented to the Policy and Resources Committee and Scrutiny Committee showing final performance against the Council Plan for 2018/19, and an annual report on performance against the plan for 2019/20 was reported in August 2020. To enable members to address areas of concern as they arise future reporting should include real time performance data for the current year, covering all services.

48. Performance data is recorded on an online performance management system called Pentana. The Pentana system is used to track progress against the priority outcomes set out in the Council and City Plans, as well as the key measures and targets within the individual service scorecards. Populating the data in Pentana took longer than anticipated. This has now been completed for the majority of services, though further work is still required within City Development and Corporate Services. Alongside this the council is also ensuring that service plans and performance scorecards clearly link to the Council Plan and City Plan priorities. This needs to be completed without further delay to ensure there is consistent and reliable performance reporting across all services against the Council and City Plans.









The Council Plan Annual Performance Report showed that performance had deteriorated in 2018/19 compared to the previous year

49. The council published its second progress report on the Council Plan 2017-2022 in August 2019, with a further mid-year update to committee in November. The report set out the council's performance information in the form of service scorecards, using a traffic light grading system. The 2019/20 report was published in August 2020 and will be reflected in next year's annual audit.

50. The mid-year progress report ([Exhibit 8, page 24](#)) showed that performance had deteriorated in 2018/19 compared to the previous year. A total of 62 (69 per cent) of the 90 measures were graded as green (on target) or amber (within the target threshold). This compared to 68 (76 per cent) in 2017/18. The report also showed that 56 (61 per cent) of the measures had improved or maintained performance, down from 64 per cent in the previous year.

Exhibit 8


Performance against the Council Plan deteriorated in 2018/19 compared to the previous year

Services	Green	Amber	Red	Total	Improved or maintained indicators	% improved or maintained	Prior year %
 Children and Families	9	4	6	19	13	68	58
 City Development	9	3	2	14	9	64	86
 Dundee Health and Social Care	5	2	5	12 ¹	4	29	43
 Neighbourhood Services	11	3	9	23	15	65	71
 Leisure and Culture	2	2	0	4	1	25	50
 Corporate Services	7	1	4	12	10	83	75
 Chief Executive's Department	3	1	2	6	4	67	50
 All Services	46	16	28	90 ¹	56	61	64

Note: 1. Two Indicators in the Council Plan not included in the target totals (Drugs and Alcohol Deaths) but are included in the percentage of improved or the same. Five new indicators added in the annual report will be reported for the first time in the 2019/20 annual report.


Source: City and Council Plans Mid-Year Progress Report (November 2019)

The 'Dundee Performs' section of the council's website provides an easily accessible means for citizens to see how the council performs

51. The council uses the [Dundee Performs](#)  section of its website to report performance to the public. This provides a graphical representation of the direction of travel for each indicator, performance over the last three years and comparative performance against the council's family group of urban peers.

52. The performance information reported in these pages is presented in an easily accessible format that provides a balanced and comprehensive picture of service performance, including both areas of good and poor performance.

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

53. 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 enables the council to compare its performance against the Scottish average and other councils. The 2018/19 LGBF data published by the Improvement Service in April 2020 has been used for the analysis in this report.

54. The council uses the local benchmarking framework data to identify improvement actions based on analysis of the direction of travel over time, and comparison to a group of similar councils. The council uses one of the LGBF family groupings as being the best comparators. The group comprises: Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow city councils along with Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire councils.

55. The council produce an annual LGBF Performance Indicators report for consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee and Scrutiny Committee. This report shows whether performance against each indicator has improved or declined from the prior year and also provides long-term trend data based on comparison of year-on-year performance back to 2010/11. The report also compares performance for each indicator with the average for the family group and ranks the council's performance within the group. Based on this analysis, each service identifies what actions are to be taken to address areas of underperformance and build upon the progress already made for areas of stronger performance. The improvement actions identified include working with strong performing councils and recent examples include work to improve recycling rates within the city by employing innovative approaches already adopted elsewhere.

The council aims to be in the top half of its family group of peers for 55 per cent of LGBF indicators, in 2018/19 47 per cent were in the top half
















56. [The Council Plan 2017-2022](#)  sets a target for the council's performance to be in the top half of its family group for 55 per cent of the LGBF indicators. It also sets a long-term aspiration to be in the top half for all indicators. The LGBF Performance Indicators report on the 2018/19 data was reported to the Scrutiny Committee in June 2020. This showed that the council's performance was in the top half of its family group for 42 (47 per cent) of the 89 LGBF indicators ([Exhibit 9, page 26](#)).

Exhibit 9

Three of the council's six strategic service areas achieved the council's target of being in the top half of the family group in 55 per cent or more of the indicators in 2018/19

		Performance in top half of family group		
Strategic Service Area	Total measures	Top half	(%)	
 Children & Families (incl. education and social work indicators)	31	9	29	
 Health and Social Care Partnership	11	5	45	
 Neighbourhood Services (incl. community safety indicators)	16	10	63	
 City Development (incl. fair work and enterprise indicators)	16	10	63	
 Culture and Leisure (incl. health and wellbeing indicators)	6	4	67	
 Corporate Services (incl. finance indicators)	9	4	44	
 All LGBF indicators	89	42	47	

Source: LGBF Performance Indicators 2018/19 report to Scrutiny Committee (June 2020)

The council's performance has improved since 2010/11 at a greater rate than its family group of peers


57. The LGBF Performance Indicators report on the 2018/19 data shows that the council's overall performance in comparison to its family group of peers has improved from the prior year when 44 per cent of indicators were in the top half. The longer-term trend data also highlights that performance has improved for 53 (62 per cent) of 85 indicators since 2010/11, with 40 (47 per cent) showing an improvement of 5 per cent or more over that period. Over the same period the council's relative performance has also improved at a greater rate than its family group from 40 per cent of all indicators being in the top half in 2010/11, and only 29 per cent in 2011/12, to 47 per cent being in the top half in 2018/19.

58. An audit analysis of the LGBF indicators confirms the council's view that performance has improved over the last six years. In our opinion the council's comparison of its performance against its family group of peers provides a fair appraisal of the council's performance compared to similar authorities who are best placed to share good practice.

59. The audit analysis identified particularly strong performance with the Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband and the percentage of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days where Dundee is one of the top performing councils in Scotland. Strong performance was also noted regarding the Gender pay gap and the Proportion of people earning less than the living wage.

There is evidence that the council's targeted intervention activity is having a positive impact on early years and primary school performance

60. Children and Families Services is the lowest performing strategic service area with only 29 per cent of indicators in the top half for the family group. Delivering sustainable improvements against these measures has been a long-standing challenge for the city and is a strategic priority for the Dundee City Partnership.

61. The council has prioritised tackling performance  in this area over recent years with a key focus on improving early years and primary school performance to improve the long-term prospects of children across Dundee. The council approved a new improvement plan in December 2019 which aims to tackle poor performance in school attainment. The council worked with a team of academics from the University of Strathclyde to develop the plan which prioritises early year intervention activity as part of a coordinated preventative approach.

62. The council's analysis of the Children and Families Services indicators shows that improvement activity is having an impact on early years and primary school performance. In 2018/19 seven of the eight indicators ranked in the top half for its family group ([Exhibit 10](#)).



Education service's response to Covid-19 outbreak

Education Scotland has praised the response of local authorities to supporting learners during school closures, and highlighted

Dundee City Council for delivering support for practitioners through a city-wide Microsoft Team which staff can join via Glow, the national online learning environment which is freely available to all learners and teachers in Scotland.

Source: Education Scotland website

Exhibit 10

Performance was in the top half for seven of the eight early years and primary school LGBF indicators in 2018/19

Service Area	Ranking in family group				Improved From prior year	Long term improvement of more than 5%	
	1-4	5-6	7-8	Total		Number	(%)
Early Years	2	1	0	3	3	2	66
Primary School	5	0	0	5	0 ¹	1 ¹	100
Secondary School	1	3	12	16	14	10	62
Looked After Children and Child Protection	1	5	1	7	3	3	43
All Services	9	9	14	32	19¹	16¹	57

Note: 1. Four new Primary School indicators were added to the LGBF in 2018/19 so no prior year data is available for these measures.

Source: LGBF Performance Indicators 2018/19 report to Scrutiny Committee (June 2020)


63. While the focus has been improving early years and primary school performance, it is anticipated that over the longer term this will also have a positive impact on secondary school attainment. In 2018/19 the council was among the worst performing councils in Scotland for the Proportion of 16 to 19-year-olds participating in learning, training or work, the Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at Level 5, the Percentage of pupils gaining 5+ awards at Level 6, and School attendance rates.


Education Scotland’s 2018 inspection of Dundee’s Attainment Challenge progress highlighted good practice but identified that the council will need to move from incremental to transformational change to improve attainment

64. The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched by the First Minister in February 2015. It is underpinned by The National Improvement Framework, Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child.

65. It aims to achieve equity in education through ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. It focuses on improvement activity in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in specific areas of Scotland.

66. The money provided from the Attainment Scotland Fund is a targeted initiative focused on supporting pupils in the local authorities of Scotland with the highest concentrations of deprivation. The nine ‘Challenge Authorities’ are Glasgow, Dundee, Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire, North Ayrshire, Clackmannanshire, North Lanarkshire, East Ayrshire and Renfrewshire. Dundee City Council received an allocation from the fund of £6.2 million for 2020/21.

67. Education Scotland’s 2018 inspection of [*How well is Dundee City Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap?*](#)  reported that strong leadership and higher aspirations are beginning to improve the pace of change. It also highlighted strong use of data and collaboration with Dundee University to help understand the pupils’ needs and improve attainment. However, it identified that the council will need to move from incremental to transformational change to improve attainment.

68. In June 2019 officers provided a [*Scottish Attainment Challenge – Progress Report*](#)  to the Children and Families Services Committee. This included an update on the action taken in response to the Education Scotland report to review the priorities and approaches within the council’s Scottish Attainment Challenge plan to provide a more coherent approach to achieving its stated outcomes. As a result of these changes the plan now groups activity under three main levers for change: Learning Provision, Families and Communities and Leadership. This is intended to make the plan more coherent and focused and provide a more robust reporting structure.

Education Scotland’s 2017 assessment of Community Learning and Development identified a number of areas of good practice which is now being rolled out across the city

69. In March 2017 Education Scotland published its [*Inspection of Community Learning and Development in Dundee City Council*](#) . Community Learning and Development (CLD) focuses on supporting individuals, families

and communities to reach their potential through providing lifelong learning and youth work, tackling health inequalities and encouraging community cohesion and regeneration. The report praised the council's CLD service across the North East and East End wards of Dundee, and highlighted a number of key strengths including:

- Strong leadership at all levels.
- Intelligence-led targeting to reach key priority groups.
- Outstanding community groups making a significant positive impact on the community.
- High-quality learning programmes having life-changing impacts.

70. The report also recommended that the council should review performance reporting arrangements to ensure they can fully capture and reflect the impact of the service within the community.


71. Since 2016/17 CLD staff numbers and budgets have both been reduced and the service has been restructured to reflect the introduction of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and reflect the practical support required by active community groups.

72. In this context, staff recognised the importance of rolling out good practice across the whole city and steps have been taken to adopt and embed successful approaches across Dundee:

- A Community Empowerment Engagement Strategy is being developed to promote a consistent approach across the city. It includes targets for the CLD team to monitor activity with traditionally hard-to-reach groups including, BAME, SIMD and Disability groups. It is timetabled for completion by October / November 2020.
- As recommended by Education Scotland, there has been a stronger use of data to demonstrate impact of the services provided. COGNISOFT is a system which holds information on individual learners and groups within the community. This allows for learner's journeys to be recorded and understood. It is particularly focused on people who traditionally may not have engaged with school. The Youth team also uses this to build up the qualifications and skills of people who may not have academic qualifications.
- Information on footfall of facilities is included within COGNISOFT which allows usage of community centres and other community facilities to be monitored and managed.
- A 'How Good is our CLD Framework?' review was carried out across the Community Regeneration, Adult Learning, Youth Work and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services. This review considered a wide breadth of standards and priorities to fully align the service with wider good practice.


73. Management recognise that further improvements are still to be made in terms of measuring and reporting on wider outcomes; and broadening the diversity of community representatives within the local community planning structures.

The Care Inspectorate reported that committed and motivated staff from across partner agencies in Dundee were working to improve the wellbeing of children and young people across the city

74. In March 2016 the Care Inspectorate published its joint inspection report [*Services for children and young people in Dundee City*](#) . This concluded that committed and motivated staff from across the partner agencies in Dundee were working to improve the wellbeing of children and young people across the city. The report also identified several particular strengths that were making a positive difference for children and young people in Dundee. It also commented that it was confident that leaders would be able to build on their strengths to deliver further improvements.

Rent levels for social housing were lower than the Scottish average during 2018/19 but performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter standards and outcomes during the year was mixed, compared with other medium-sized councils

75. The Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) 2018/19 Landlord Report for Dundee City Council showed that average weekly rent levels across the council's housing stock of 12,425 homes was 6% lower than the Scottish average. It also provided a summary of the council's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter standards and outcomes. For comparison purposes, the council benchmarks its performance against the group of medium-sized local authorities which comprises: Aberdeenshire Council, East Ayrshire Council, Falkirk Council, Highland Council, North Ayrshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, and West Lothian Council [Exhibit 11 \(page 31\)](#).

76. As shown in [Exhibit 11](#) the council's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter standards and outcomes during 2018/19 was mixed, compared with other medium-sized councils. The council recognises that performance needs to improve in relation to a number of **housing measures and improvement actions are being progressed to address these areas** . The council also acknowledges tackling levels of poverty and inequality in Dundee will be key to delivering sustainable improvements in addressing the long-term housing issues facing the city.



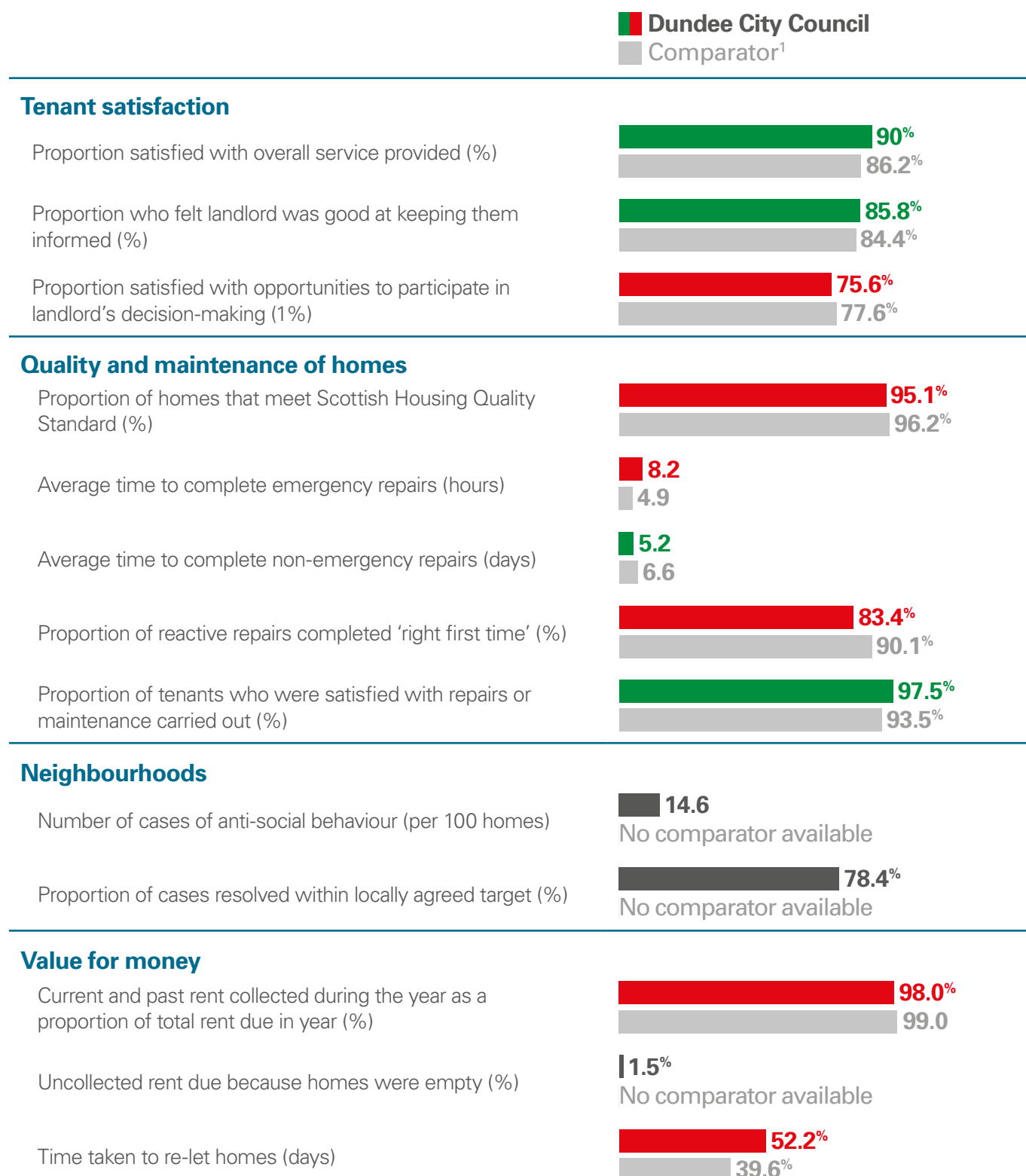
Dundee City Council health and housing

The joint Auditor General for Scotland and Accounts Commission report on Affordable housing  included a case study highlighting the success of Dundee's joined up approach. This involves the council, health and social care partnership, and registered social landlords, all working together to identify and address the housing requirements of people with particular needs.

Source: Audit Scotland website

Exhibit 11

Dundee City Council's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter standards and outcomes during 2018/19 was mixed, compared with other medium-sized councils



Note: Comparator based on average performance of the group of medium-sized local authorities (comprising: Aberdeenshire Council, East Ayrshire Council, Falkirk Council, Highland Council, North Ayrshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, and West Lothian Council) against the Scottish Housing Charter standards during 2018/19.

Source: Scottish Housing Regulator's 2018/19 Landlord Report for Dundee City Council

The Scottish Housing Regulator is engaging with Dundee on homelessness services

77. In preparing its current engagement plan for the council, the SHR reviewed and compared the data for all councils from the Scottish Government's 2017/18 national homelessness statistics. This identified a number of pressures on homelessness services across Dundee. These included a ten per cent increase on the previous year in homelessness applications, and a relatively high number of homeless people waiting for more than one year for an outcome.

78. Since the 2017/18 statistics were published, Dundee has progressed a number of homelessness initiatives aimed at improving access to services, reducing rough sleeping and lost contacts, and quickening the processes for allocating lets to people who are homeless. Early indications are that these initiatives are having an impact. The SHR will review this progress as part of its engagement with the council.

Dundonians are more satisfied with their council services than the Scottish average but satisfaction with local schools is the lowest in Scotland

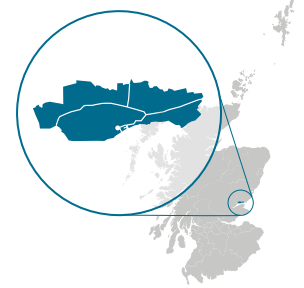
79. The council's annual citizen survey generates a good level of responses (1,300 in 2019) and shows generally high levels of satisfaction with council services across the city.

80. The LGBF includes performance against indicators of service users' satisfaction with council services. These are based on results from national surveys, such as the Scottish Household Survey. The results of the LGBF data is consistent with the annual citizen survey. Eight out of the ten indicators (including those relating to Leisure and Culture Dundee services) show Dundee's residents' satisfaction is higher than the Scottish average.

81. Despite the generally high levels of satisfaction, the council ranked the lowest in Scotland for satisfaction with local schools. Management are aware that improving academic attainment performance is the key to also improving overall satisfaction with local schools. However, they also highlighted that local surveys carried out to support school reviews during 2018/19 showed that 80 per cent of parents and carers were satisfied with their own child's school.

Part 3

Is the council using its resources effectively?



Financial management is effective with a budget focused on the council's priorities and a long-term financial strategy covering the next ten years.

Delivery of the 'Changing for the Future' transformational change programme (C2022) will be critical to filling funding gaps. Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, a budget gap of £32 million is projected by the end of 2022/23, with a longer-term funding gap of £78 million by 2029/30.

The council was slow to develop a workforce strategy and is still to put in place workforce plans for each service, to demonstrate that the council has the capacity and skills to deliver the council's priorities.

The council has a well-established budget-setting process that supports councillors to develop and scrutinise savings plans and understand the impact of proposed service changes

82. The council's budget is aligned to its strategic service structure and reflects the council's overarching objectives. During the annual budget-setting process senior finance officers provide briefings and training for elected members. The Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services, and finance staff also work with members from all political groups to answer their queries and assist them in developing budget and savings proposals that reflect the council's priorities.

83. Officers complete an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for any savings proposals that involve service delivery changes. This ensures that the full impact of such changes are considered as part of the budget-setting process. The IIAs include consideration of socio-economic impacts, as well as the protected equalities characteristics, and identify potential mitigating actions where required.

The annual budget-setting process is informed by a public consultation exercise

84. The 2020/21 budget consultation process involved an online survey and local focus groups. The online survey was made available on the council's website

during October and November 2019 and a total of 1,302 responses were received, an increase of around 130 on the previous year's consultation.

85. Respondents were asked a range of questions, based around the five City Plan themes and ten council service areas. These included what percentage change in Council Tax was preferable, with two-thirds stating they would be comfortable to see an increase in Council Tax. The survey also asked for views on how the council could review its services and property in order to save money. The highest levels of agreement were for selling property that is no longer used and reducing or stopping some non-essential services to protect other services.

86. The consultation exercise provided a clear picture of the public's views on Council Tax levels and proposed savings. The quality of the information gathered directly reflected the clear and specific nature of the questions asked.

The approved 2020/21 budget demonstrates the council's commitment to tackling the health and wellbeing challenges facing the city

87. In March 2020 the council approved a revenue budget for 2020/21 of £370.9 million. The budget was based on a 4.8 per cent increase in Council Tax and included net savings of £7.8 million. The council did not anticipate the use of reserves to fund revenue expenditure in 2020/21.

88. The increase in Council Tax levels partly funded an additional £7.6 million to be allocated to the Children and Families Services budget and a £2.8 million increase in the annual contribution from the council to the Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership. £0.5 million was allocated to support the delivery of the action plans in response to the Dundee Drugs Commission and the Independent Mental Health Inquiry reports. Additional funds have also been made available to support the recommendations contained within the Fairness Commission Action Plans and to extend the Scottish Living Wage to more workers across the city.

The council has protected Children and Families Services budgets where possible when identifying savings plans in recent years

89. Over the four years from 2017/18-2020/21 the council has approved service directorate revenue savings of over £16 million (£32 million including corporate and miscellaneous savings). The majority of these savings (65 per cent) have been delivered by City Development Services and Neighbourhood Services, with only 18 per cent delivered by Children and Families Services despite these services accounting for around 45 per cent of the council's annual revenue budget. This reflects the higher level of statutory activity within Children and Families services (including Education and Social Work), and the council's commitment to protecting these budgets where possible owing to the specific challenges faced by the city in these areas.

90. This approach has also been reflected in staffing levels. The council's overall staff numbers have remained fairly static over the last five years, decreasing from 6,732 (6,058 FTE) in 2016 to 6,721 (6,061 FTE) in 2020. However, over the same period, the head count in Children and Families Services increased almost ten per cent from 2,957 in 2016 to 3,247 in 2020.

Financial management is effective, and the council has a history of delivering services within the annual revenue budget

91. The detailed scrutiny of financial performance is delegated to the Policy and Resources Committee which receives regular revenue and capital budget monitoring reports. These reports provide an overall picture of the budget position at service level, forecast the outturn position for the year, and include clear explanations for significant variances against budget. These reports allow councillors to scrutinise the council's financial performance throughout the year and understand the budget pressures presented.

92. In February 2019, the council approved a revenue budget of £353.7 million for 2019/20. The budget was based on a three per cent increase in Council Tax and included net savings of £17.0 million. The council did not anticipate the use of reserves to fund revenue expenditure in 2019/20.

93. The council has a history of delivering services within budget and reported an underspend on services for 2019/20 of £3.0 million. City Development Services has reported overspends against budget in recent years with an overspend of £2.9 million reported for 2019/20. This overspend was attributable to health and safety costs across the council's property portfolio, energy costs for street lighting and not fully achieving the Growth Accelerator model targets. The other area of significant budget pressure in 2019/20 was due to increased demand for health and social care services across Dundee. This resulted in the council having to contribute an additional £1.0 million to the health and care partnership during the year.

94. The budget overspends during 2019/20 were funded by underspends in other services and savings on corporate budgets, including a reduction in annual debt repayments linked to the reprofiling of the repayment periods for loans fund advances. This was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee in September 2019 and generated savings of £3.0 million for the General Fund in 2019/20.

The council's uncommitted general fund balance is in line with its reserve strategy but is low in comparison to other Scottish local authorities

95. The council's reserve strategy was included within the council's long-term financial outlook and financial strategy for 2020-2030 ([paragraph 99](#)). This states that the minimum uncommitted element of the General Fund balance will be maintained at the lower of £7 million or two per cent of budgeted revenue expenditure but, ideally, a higher level will be held for operational purposes. This level was increased from the previous minimum of £5 million based on an assessment of the amount required to respond to unexpected events '...in light of the considerable risks and uncertainties facing the council's revenue budget going forward'.

96. At 31 March 2020, the uncommitted general fund balance was £8.0 million (2.3 per cent of budgeted revenue expenditure) ([Exhibit 12, page 36](#)).

97. The council's external auditor has reported that, although the uncommitted general fund balance is in line with the reserves strategy, the balance is low in comparison with other Scottish local authorities. Furthermore, the Accounts

Commission's December 2019 [Local government in Scotland: Financial overview 2018/19](#) report highlighted that the council's total general fund balance (committed and uncommitted) at 31 March 2019, as a proportion of net revenue expenditure, was the lowest of all Scottish councils.


Exhibit 12

The council's total general fund balance (committed and uncommitted) at 31 March 2019, as a proportion of net revenue expenditure, was the lowest of all Scottish councils

Reserve	31 March 2019 £ million	31 March 2020 £ million
General fund uncommitted	7.5	8.0
General fund committed	6.3	8.5
Repair and renewal fund	6.6	9.3
Capital grants and receipts unapplied account	3.1	11.8
Capital fund	0.6	0.6
Insurance fund	2.6	3.3
Total usable reserves	26.7	41.5


Source: Dundee City Council 2019/20 Annual Accounts (Unaudited)

The council has made good progress in financial planning with the introduction of a long-term financial strategy

98. The Accounts Commission's April 2018 [Local government in Scotland: performance and challenges 2017](#)  review highlighted the importance of medium to long-term financial planning given the continuing pressures that councils will face into the future.

99. On 19 August 2019, the Policy and Resources Committee approved a report on the long-term financial outlook and financial strategy 2020-2030. The report noted the projected revenue requirements for the period to 2030 and the savings and efficiencies required over that period to bridge the identified funding gaps.

Future financial plans are challenging with a cumulative funding gap of £32 million projected by the end of 2022/23 and a longer-term funding gap of £78 million by 2029/30

100. **The council's long-term financial outlook and financial strategy**  sets out the high-level implications of different levels of income, spending and activity. The strategy includes a sensitivity analysis which shows the potential financial impact of variations against the council's current key budget assumptions (income and expenditure) which underpin the council's ten-year revenue budget projections. This highlights that the council faces a cumulative funding gap of £32 million by the end of 2022/23 and a longer-term funding gap of £78 million by 2029/30. The council recognises that its financial plans and longer-term outlook will need to be revised to reflect the cost implications of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Impact of Covid-19 on council finances

The council currently estimates that the Covid-19 outbreak will cost them in the region of £20 million in additional costs and lost income during 2020/21. It is too early to assess with any accuracy what the longer-term impact on the council's finances will be, or what additional support may be provided to local authorities to offset these costs.

Delivery of the C2022 transformation programme will be critical to bridging the medium and long-term funding gaps and improving the council's services

101. The long-term financial outlook and financial strategy 2020-2030 links directly to the council's 'Changing for the Future' transformational programme (C2022) with the council's corporate approach to identifying savings and efficiencies coordinated through C2022.

102. The council acknowledges that it must continue to consider all possible options to reduce the cost and improve the quality and effectiveness of services provided through C2022 ([paragraph 26](#)) and given the extent of the current, and predicted, financial challenges facing the council, the pace of transformation needs to increase.

103. The C2022 programme has a wide range of projects included and the council prioritised the following projects for 2019/20: Community Hubs, Supporting Learning and Care, Commercialisation, Third Party Payments, Property Management and Rationalisation, and supporting services to explore financial benchmarking data. The programme also includes other innovative projects including the Citizen Card Dundee (integrating all the services for residents and having one card to access benefits), and Smart Cities programme ([Case study 1, page 40](#)).

The council has developed a Digital Strategy to guide its investment in ICT to redesign and improve services and to deliver its vision for Dundee as a digital city

104. The council developed its first Digital Strategy in 2016 and published an update to this in November 2018. The council's current strategy aligns with the Corporate IT Strategy (published February 2019) and sets out how it aims to become a digital council by 2020. The strategy sets out six digital themes which combine existing and future digital projects into a wider vision for Dundee as a digital city ([Exhibit 13, page 38](#)).

105. The council created the Digital Oversight Board to oversee the planning and delivery of the digital strategy and the projects included within each of the six themes. This is designed to ensure that activity is coherent and completed to time and to the required quality.

Exhibit 13

Themes from Digital Strategy forming the wider vision for Dundee as a digital city

Digital Theme	Focus
 Digital council	The council is committed to changing the way it innovates and redesigns services to provide them in the most effective way, maximising its use of new technologies.
 Mobile first	To best deliver digital services to Dundee, both its citizens and its workforce need to be able to access services while on the move. To do this, Dundee needs to think mobile first*.
 Thinking in digital	With a strong digital industry, digital skills for all citizens from school right through to retirement are essential for the future.
 Connected	Dundee is one of the UK's growing digital hubs. It has a strong gaming history and the council will work closely with this sector to encourage digital business, innovation and education.
 Smart	Dundee is part of the Scottish Cities Alliance. It works with other Scottish cities to deliver Smart City projects, integrating data and digital technologies to improve citizen wellbeing and economic development.
 Digitally collaborate	Dundee is part of many collaborative working groups focused on digital service delivery in the most efficient way to maximise citizen benefit.

Note. A mobile-first approach involves designing a desktop site starting with the mobile version, which is then adapted to larger screens (contrary to the traditional approach of starting with a desktop site and then adapting it to smaller screens).

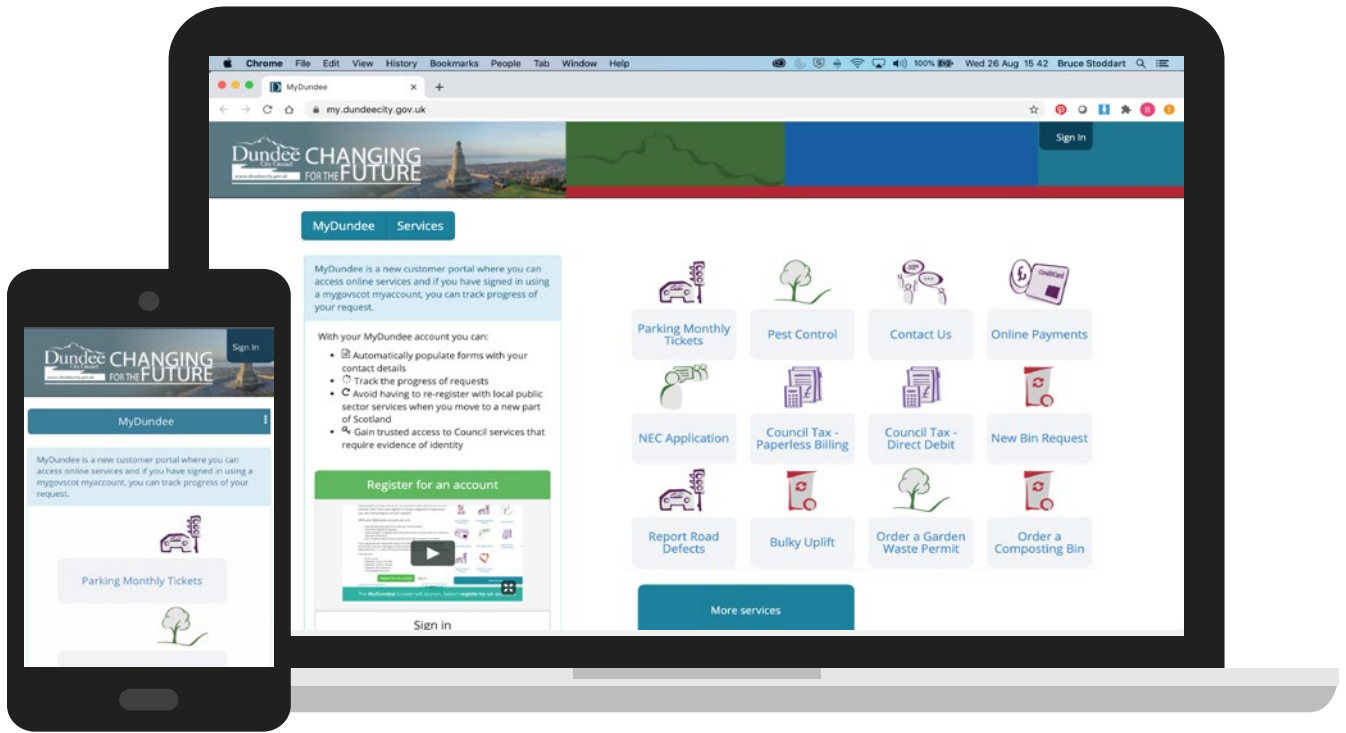
Source: Digital Strategy Update (November 2018)

106. The council has made good progress in a number of areas since 2016. These include digitising key operational processes (for example human resource and payroll functions for new starts), expanding its use of social media, launching the MyDundee portal ([Exhibit 14, page 39](#)), and improving the connectivity and digital infrastructure of Dundee. It also includes a range of community-based activities to promote digital skills and support digital participation and learning across the city.

107. The council has also collaborated with the Improvement Service to deliver a key part of the national digital infrastructure. The council renewed the Service Level Agreement to continue to be the home of the National Entitlement Card. This is the national smartcard supporting delivery of more than forty different services across Scottish local and national government.

Exhibit 14

MyDundee portal allows residents to easily access over 50 services online via a computer or mobile device



Source: my.dundee.gov.uk/

108. The next stage in delivering the digital strategy is to make more services available via MyDundee, further improving the digital infrastructure of the city, including the delivery the public Wi-Fi 5G test bed, expanding the use of digital technology across schools through the Connected Education project, and continuing to progress with the Smart City projects that the council is involved in ([Case study 1, page 40](#)).

Case study 1




The council is playing a key role in the Smart City programme which aims to use data and digital technology to make cities more attractive, liveable and resilient

The council is part of a programme of collaborative innovation across Scotland's cities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Perth, and Stirling. The 'Scotland's 8th City - the Smart City' ERDF Strategic Intervention programme aims to make cities more attractive, liveable and resilient by using data and digital technology. By working together, the aim is to expand Smart City capabilities and deliver city priorities through improved community engagement, integration of service delivery and innovation.

Collaboration is key to this with all seven cities working to develop projects which are open, interoperable, scalable, and replicable. The cities are also committed to knowledge exchange, sharing of experiences and learning, mutual support, and sharing assets.

The full Smart City programme includes 29 projects with different cities involved in each project. Dundee City Council are currently involved in four phase one projects:

- Smart Services Mobility – The Mobility Innovation Living Laboratory (MILL) in Dundee is intended to transform the city into a real-world test bed for new transport technologies and services. It aims to demonstrate how innovations in transport technologies, business models and data can improve wellbeing and quality of life, such as connecting people with essential services and enhancing economic opportunities. Successful innovations could then be rolled out across the other cities.
- Smart Public Safety – Dundee, Edinburgh and Perth & Kinross councils are working with Police Scotland to use digital technology to prevent and detect crime and social disorder.
- Smart Waste – Dundee are working with Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling to deliver improved waste management services, including deployment of smart bin technology and innovative smart technology deployed in the waste management process. This is intended to enhance waste and recycling collections through improved monitoring and sharing of data and information.
- Open Data Platform – All seven cities have developed open data platforms to make data available for use by the other councils when developing new products and services. Further developments to the [Dundee Open Data Platform](#)  are planned to make non-personal data more available to the community, academics and businesses for analysis and the development of new digital services.

Source: www.scottishcities.org.uk/workstreams/smart-cities

The council was slow to develop a workforce strategy, and is still to put in place workforce plans for each service, to demonstrate that the council has the capacity and skills to deliver the council's priorities

109. The council's Our People and Workforce Strategy 2019-2022, incorporating the Our People Charter, outlines the council's values, rights and responsibilities. It sets out the strategic direction and ambitions for the workforce, linked to the City and Council Plans with clear themes: Equality, Diversity and fairness; Enhancing leadership; Managing our people; and Developing our people. It promotes a workplace learning culture and begins to address the challenges that workforce demographics and digital innovations present to traditional ways of working.

110. Although the council has a corporate workforce strategy it has not yet developed workforce plans for each service. Management acknowledge that these need to be progressed as a matter of priority to ensure workforce planning is embedded within all services to support the delivery of the council's priorities. Further improvements should also be made to the Our People and Workforce Strategy to develop a future needs analysis for the short, medium and long term. This will ensure the council's staffing profile matches predicted service demands.

Risk management arrangements have improved and service risk registers are now in place.

111. Internal audit reported in 2018/19 that significant progress had been made in enhancing the risk management arrangements, overseen by the Corporate Risk Management Working Group. A revised risk management policy and strategy is in place, standardising the approach to scoring risk and a newly defined risk appetite methodology to support strategic decision-making. A Corporate Risk Management Co-ordinator (CRMC) was appointed in July 2018, responsible for driving forward and coordinating implementation of the Risk Management Improvement Plan. Service level risk registers are now in place.

The council and its partners are working on a shared estates plan to maximise the use of public property across the city and identify potential sites for co-location of staff

112. The council has been working to rationalise its estate over recent years to ensure it is fully utilising its property base. Alongside this, the Dundee Partnership has committed to developing a shared estates plan to maximise the use of public property across the city.

113. The council welcomed the Scottish Government's decision to locate the new Social Security Scotland Headquarters in the city, currently based within the council's offices at Dundee House. This co-location has been beneficial for residents as it has enabled them to access the services and advice offered by both organisations during a single visit. However, it has impacted on the council's plans for property rationalisation as two buildings previously planned for closure are now being used for council staff who were no longer able to be relocated to Dundee House.

114. The council's 2020-23 Property Asset Management Plan was approved by the City Development Committee on 27 January 2020 and reflects the impact of the Social Security Scotland Headquarters being based in Dundee House. The council plan will feed in to the development of the Dundee Partnership's Estates Plan and it is anticipated that this will lead to further co-location of different organisations.

115. Following the approval of the 2020-23 Property Asset Management Plan the council is now focusing on developing a Strategic Asset Management Plan. This will align with the financial and strategic service delivery plans to maximise the use of the entire asset base of the council.

In recent years the council, and its partners, have delivered complex capital projects including the V&A Museum of Design Dundee, the new Dundee Railway Station and the Regional Performance Centre for Sport

116. In recent years the council, and its partners, have worked together on a range of projects intended to regenerate the city centre. These have contributed directly to the Dundee City Partnership's priorities under the Fair Work and Enterprise, and Health and Wellbeing themes.


117. While there have been challenges with timescales and budgets, the council and its partners have delivered complex projects. These include: the V&A Museum of Design Dundee, the new Dundee Railway Station (opened July 2018) and the Regional Performance Centre for Sport (officially opened February 2020). The council has also delivered improvements in the school estate, and the roads, footway and street lighting infrastructure of the city over the same period.

118. The V&A Museum opened in September 2018 and attracted more visitors than had been anticipated in its opening year. Design Dundee Limited (DDL) is responsible for the operation of the museum. Partners in the company are the Victoria and Albert Museum, Dundee City Council, the University of Dundee, Abertay University and Scottish Enterprise. The museum building is owned by the council (valued at £83 million), and leased to DDL for a nominal rent. The council's 20 per cent investment in DDL, contributed £0.1 million to its assets in 2019/20 (£0.3 million in 2018/19).

The Capital Plan 2020-2025 sets out a £375 million investment programme

119. The council operates a rolling five-year capital programme. The capital programme aligns with the council's Capital Investment Strategy which sets out the anticipated capital funding available for each of the next ten years along with the expected sources of this funding and any related borrowing costs.

120. The council's Capital Plan 2020-2025 was approved in February 2020. The plan details a £375 million programme of work split between £260 million of general fund projects and £115 million of housing revenue account projects. These include an additional £60 million investment in improving the school estate and £25 million for further projects at Dundee Waterfront. There is also planned investment in additional nursery accommodation to meet the expansion in early years provision, community facilities, improvements to parks and green spaces, and affordable housing.

121. The capital programme also includes planned expenditure as part of the council's response to the climate change emergency. This builds on the council's previous investment in this area, for example **Dundee is a leading area in Scotland for electric vehicles and infrastructure** . The new investment includes £41.5 million for energy efficient housing projects, £9.4 million for sustainability projects and £7.4 million for the low carbon transport initiative.



Dundee is a leading city for electric vehicles and infrastructure

The council, and its partners, have invested in electric vehicles and infrastructure to improve transport and air quality for residents and visitors to Dundee. Over 40 per cent of the council's cars and vans are electric and four electric vehicle charging hubs have been created across the city. The progress made in this area was recognised by the World Electric Vehicle Association who awarded Dundee City Council with an 'E-visionary award' for its pioneering initiatives to encourage the use of electric vehicles.

Source: Dundee City Council website

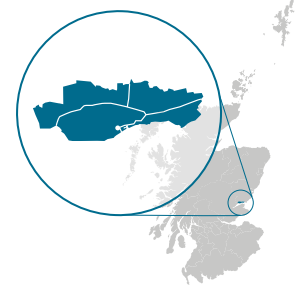
Improvements are required in the appraisal of capital projects to ensure the projects which will make the greatest contribution to the City Plan are prioritised

122. When developing the capital programme, potential capital projects are assessed based on the extent to which they will contribute to the priorities within the Dundee City Plan. While there are good examples of robust business cases, including the Menzieshill Community Hub, management are aware that improvements need to be made in the capital project appraisal process to ensure that robust business cases are developed for all projects. A standardised business case template should be developed and completed for all projects including detailed options appraisal, whole life costing, and consideration of funding implications.

123. Similarly, the council should ensure that regular and consistent Gateway reviews (independent mid-term reviews) and post-project evaluations are undertaken for all significant capital projects. These processes should provide opportunities to identify areas of good practice, share lessons learned and monitor the delivery of the intended benefits.

Part 4

Is the council working well with its partners?



The Dundee Partnership has been successful in regenerating and reinvigorating the city centre through projects such as the £1 billion Dundee Waterfront development. Progress is also being made in regenerating the wider city through projects such as the new Regional Performance Centre for Sport and the Michelin-Scotland Innovation Parc joint venture.

The partnership has progressed a number of initiatives to reduce the impact of poverty but acknowledges there is still much to do. The partnership should develop an outcome framework to better measure the impact of these local initiatives.

In 2019 the Dundee Drugs Commission made recommendations for a new approach to services which aims to reduce drug use and deaths. Good initial progress has been made in implementation of actions, but sustainable improvements in the city's drug problems presents a significant and long-term challenge.

The council is working with partners to address the significant failings reported by the Independent Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Tayside.

The council and its partners have embraced the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and built upon existing arrangements to encourage further community-based activity.

The Dundee Partnership promotes good working relationships between a wide range of public-sector, business and academic partners, and the third sector

124. Dundee City Council and NHS Tayside jointly lead the Dundee Partnership. The partnership promotes good working relationships between the council and health board and other community planning partners. These include Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, business and academic partners,


and the third sector. They each understand their contribution to the City Plan 2017-2026 vision. Partners are committed to working together and partnership working in the City has improved over the last two years owing to more active engagement from NHS Tayside.

125. All partners demonstrate  a genuine commitment and enthusiasm to working together to help improve outcomes for citizens of Dundee. Partners are very positive about the Dundee Partnership and highlighted its key role in developing relationships. This supports the delivery of joint improvement priorities, redesigning, and better integrated services, with a more preventative and locality-based focus.

126. Historically NHS Tayside has been less engaged in partnership activity, but partners noted that this had changed over the last two years and the health board is now an active partner making a vital contribution to the health and wellbeing strategic priority.

The partnership recognises the value and contribution the third sector and private businesses can make in achieving the ambitions of the City Plan and addressing wider community needs

127. The Dundee Third Sector Interface (TSI) is a partnership between Dundee Social Enterprise Network, Dundee Voluntary Action and Volunteer Dundee. The Third Sector in Dundee employs over 2,600 people and spends almost £130 million each year. The TSI's role is to support, represent and communicate with the third sector operating across Dundee City.

128. The TSI has played an active role in the Dundee Partnership.  It has co-chaired strategic planning groups in Health and Social Care, worked with other partners on multi-agency initiatives (such as Technology Enabled Care and Preventing Under-Nutrition), and collaborated on joint funding applications. Owing to funding cuts the TSI is currently focused on its role in representing the third sector at Dundee Partnership groups and Local Community Planning Partnership meetings ([paragraphs 156–159](#)).

129. Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce represent 800 members, employing over 67,000 people, and is an active partner on the Dundee Partnership.

130. Strong partnerships have been forged with the private sector in the city over recent years. These include joint working and funding partnerships that aim to improve the city and close the inequality gap through creative and sustainable solutions that address wider community needs. Examples include developing the city's tourist attractions, creating employment and training opportunities, delivering responses to food poverty, and supporting people recovering from substance misuse or offending behaviour.

The partnership has been successful in regenerating and reinvigorating the city centre through projects such as the £1 billion Dundee Waterfront development

131. In recent years **Dundee city centre has been transformed**  through a range of ambitious projects involving partners from both the public and private sector. Central to this has been the £1 billion [Dundee Waterfront](#) 



Partnership response to Covid-19 outbreak

Partners worked closely together through the Local Resilience Partnership to ensure a co-ordinated response to the Covid-19 outbreak, and consistent and clear communication with the public. This enabled partners to work together and draw on the experience of colleagues from other organisations including public health experts from NHS Tayside.



Role of third sector in response to Covid-19 outbreak

All partners acknowledged that the charitable and voluntary sector have played a key role in the Partnership's response to the Covid-19 outbreak. This, along with the strong community structures in place across Dundee, have assisted in reaching many of those worst affected by the economic impact of the outbreak.

development, which includes the V&A Museum of Design and the new Dundee railway station, and was the winner of the City Regeneration Project of the Year award at the [2018 Scottish Property Awards](#) .

132. The impact of this regeneration activity has been much wider than the direct benefits delivered by each project. They have reinvigorated the city and changed the perception of Dundee. This in turn has made it easier to attract further investment from the business community and made Dundee a desirable location for events such as the Antiques Roadshow and Radio One's Big Weekend (although this event had to be cancelled owing to Covid-19), which further contribute to the regeneration of the city and the economy of the region.

133. Further projects are planned as part of the Waterfront development and the partnership is also working on a number of other projects to boost the local economy, including the Michelin-Scotland Innovation Parc ([Case study 2](#)).

Case study 2

The council are working with Michelin and Scottish Enterprise on a joint venture designed to create a world class innovation centre in Dundee



In November 2018 Michelin announced its intention to close its plant at Baldovie in Dundee, with the loss of all 845 jobs. At that point Michelin had no plans for further activity at the site beyond that date.

Since the original announcement Dundee City Council and Scottish Enterprise have worked closely with Michelin to create an ambitious joint venture called the Michelin-Scotland Innovation Parc. This will be based on the same site and aims to create a world class innovation centre in Dundee to drive growth and diversity in the Scottish economy while addressing the global climate emergency.

Covering a 32-hectare site in Dundee it is intended to drive global research while influencing and supporting breakthroughs in sustainable mobility and low carbon energy. It will provide industrial spaces and facilities to a wide variety of organisations, research institutions and industry leaders and attempt to address the global challenges facing the community, country and planet.

The Parc should create sustainable jobs across a variety of skillsets providing local and national opportunities both now and in the future. It will also incorporate a Skills Academy and Engineering School which will facilitate a range of training opportunities in partnership with Dundee and Angus College, Abertay University and the University of Dundee.

Source: [Michelin-Scotland Innovation Parc website](#)




Dundee was named best place to live in Scotland in 2019


The impact of the capital investment by the council, and its partners, on the perception of the city contributed to Dundee being named the best place to live in Scotland in the *Sunday Times* 2019 Best Places to Live Guide. The expert judging panel highlighted that the city had undergone a dramatic transformation and cited the regeneration of the Waterfront, and the collective pride of Dundonians in their city, as key factors in the decision.


Source: [Evening Telegraph](#)



The Dundee partnership has progressed a number of initiatives to reduce the impact of poverty but acknowledge there is still much to do

134. Tackling poverty has long been a priority for the Dundee Partnership and since 2012, when the Dundee Fairness Commission was established, there has been an even greater focus on addressing issues of inequality across the city. The Commission brought together members with experience in this area including partners in the public, voluntary, community, private and academic sectors. Its remit was to identify the causes and consequences of poverty in Dundee and to assess the effectiveness of the partnership's approach to tackling poverty and inequality in the city, with reference to what has worked elsewhere.

135. The commission's [*A Fair Way to Go \(May 2016\)*](#)  report brought together its work, and the Scottish Government's poverty and social justice agenda, and set out a series of 56 recommendations to help tackle the broad range of themes that affect poverty levels and experiences including employment, household income, attainment, housing, health and stigma.

136. The Dundee Partnership approved a plan containing 121 actions to progress the recommendations contained in the report. Almost all of these actions have now been completed and there have been notable successes in terms of local preventative initiatives. These include establishing a **Big Noise programme at Douglas in the east end of the city**,  and wider-reaching interventions such as:

- becoming the first **Living Wage City in the UK** 
- raising the value of school uniform grants from £81 to £100
- reductions in the level of fuel poverty across the city from 35 per cent in 2017/18 to 31 per cent in 2018/19
- delivering welfare rights support in GP surgeries
- expanding social prescribing across more services and practices, and
- providing an extensive programme of school holiday activity and meals for children and families.

137. The Second Dundee Fairness Commission was established in 2017 and brought together 12 'Community Commissioners' with lived experience of poverty, and 12 'Civic Commissioners' who worked in the public, political and business sectors. In November 2018 it published [*Dundee Fighting for Fairness*](#)  which contained recommendations to tackle poverty across the key themes of Stigma, Money, and Mental Health. The recommendations contained in the report were reflected in the partnership's [*For Fairness in Dundee – An Action Plan to Reduce Social Inequalities and Child Poverty in Dundee*](#) , published in June 2019.



Sistema Scotland Big Noise programme

The Big Noise programme focuses on the existing assets and the potential of young people. It aims to counter persistent social problems in the targeted communities by drawing a line under the past and nurturing a new generation of children who grow up in an environment saturated with intensive and immersive music making. The first programme was established Raploch, Stirling in 2008 and further centres opened at Govanhill in Glasgow (2013), Torry in Aberdeen (2015) and Douglas in Dundee (2017).

Source: Sistema Scotland website



Dundee is a Living Wage City

Dundee City Council won a Living Wage Champion award in June 2018, and in March 2019 Dundee became the first UK city to be recognised by the Living Wage Foundation for living wage ambition. These awards were in recognition of the progress made by the city in adopting a new, place-based approach to driving uptake of the real living wage by local businesses.

Source: Living Wage Foundation website

The Partnership should develop an outcome framework to better measure the true impact of local initiatives targeting poverty and inequality in Dundee

138. Despite the large numbers of people targeted by the initiatives discussed above, it is hard to fully assess their impact on poverty and inequality across the city as there is limited data available to measure outcomes over time against predicted outcomes.

139. The partnership should work with the third sector, and other partners, to develop an outcome framework that would allow it to compare actual outcomes achieved against projected outcomes without such interventions (ie, what level of poverty and inequality would Dundee be facing had these initiatives not been in place). This would enable it to measure the true impact of local initiatives and would also assist in identifying the extent to which poverty and inequality levels are being compounded by national developments and challenges (for example, welfare reform and greater prevalence of fixed-term and zero-hour contracts) that need to be addressed at a local level.

Partners know that delivering sustainable improvements in the city's drug problems presents a significant challenge

140. The Dundee Partnership has faced a major challenge in tackling the city's drug problems and delivering sustainable solutions that will prevent and reduce drug use across the city. In 2018 Dundee recorded 66 drug-related deaths (57 in 2017 and 38 in 2016) and between 2014 and 2018 Dundee had the highest rate of drug-related deaths per 1,000 population in the whole of Scotland.

141. The partnership had prioritised this area over a number of years but acknowledges this has not had the desired impact on reducing level of drug use, and drug deaths, in the city. In May 2018 the Dundee Partnership therefore set up the Dundee Drugs Commission. This was an independent group of experts tasked with considering what more could be done to turn around the rate of drug-related deaths in Dundee. The 20 commissioners were asked to investigate the causes and consequences of drug deaths in the city and to come up with recommendations on practical and achievable actions to reduce drug use and fatalities.

142. The commission concluded its independent review in August 2019 and published its findings in its [*Responding to Drug Use With Kindness, Compassion and Hope Report*](#) . The report included 16 recommendations split between those that could be delivered immediately (within 12 months), during a transitional period (within three years) and longer-term (within five years). They covered a wide range of areas including improving leadership, challenging stigma towards people who use drugs and their families, and a new 'system' model of care to deliver services.

143. Following the publication of the report the partnership appointed one of the commission members as the Chair of the Dundee Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) to work with partners to implement the report's recommendations. Progress against the recommendations is reported to the Dundee Partnership through the ADP.


144. Good progress has been made in implementing the short-term recommendations and partners commented positively on the impact these are

starting to have at ground level. However, partners know that implementing the longer-term recommendations and delivering sustainable improvements in the city's drug problems presents a significant challenge. Links need to be made with the improvements being made to mental health services in Tayside, discussed below.


The Dundee Integration Joint Board has yet to demonstrate how it will deliver sustainable health and social care services in the future

145. The Dundee Integration Joint Board (IJB) was established in October 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 Dundee on behalf of Dundee City Council and NHS Tayside.


146. The IJB approved its 2019-22 Strategic Commissioning Plan in March 2019, focused on moving care from hospital to community-based care. The auditor of the IJB reported in 2018/19 that the plan shows that the IJB may not be sustainable beyond the short term, with projected funding shortfalls of £3.208 million in 2020/21 and £3.274 million in 2021/22. The IJB has yet to develop medium to long-term financial plans to demonstrate how it will fund the gap in the future.

147. In November 2018, the Auditor General and Accounts Commission issued the [Health and social care integration: update on progress](#)  report. This report highlighted 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 council need to continue to work with the IJB on establishing sustainable health and social care services for Dundee.

The leaders of partner bodies have committed to working better together to address the significant failings highlighted in the Independent Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Tayside report

148. On 5 February 2020 the Independent Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Tayside published its final report, titled [Trust and Respect](#) . The Independent Inquiry was commissioned by NHS Tayside in 2018 to examine the accessibility, safety, quality and standards of care provided by all mental health services in Tayside.

149. The report highlighted major failings in the delivery of mental health services across Tayside and also cited a breakdown of trust and a lack of respect as key factors that have undermined public confidence in services. It identified the following five cross-cutting themes that need to be addressed to improve mental health services in Tayside: Strategic service design; Clarity of governance and leadership responsibility; Engaging with people; Learning culture; and Communication.


150. NHS Tayside, Dundee City Council, Angus Council, Perth and Kinross Council and Police Scotland issued a [Collective statement of intent](#)  following the publication of the report. This accepted the findings and recommendations in the report and signalled their commitment to work better together to: 'Make all

the necessary improvements so that people from all communities across Tayside receive the best possible mental health and wellbeing care and treatment and those with mental ill health are supported to recover without fear of discrimination or stigma.'

151. The council's Chief Executive is a member of the Tayside Executive Partners, (Mental Health) Strategic Leadership Group (SLG), which has been established as the Governance board, to consider plans for mental health services redesign. In May 2020 NHS Tayside's Board approved a draft action plan covering the recommendations in the inquiry report. Key actions in the draft action plan include:

- Drafting revised integration schemes between NHS Tayside and the three Integration Joint Boards by August 2020, for approval by the Scottish Government.
- Development of the plans for a programme of work for delivery of future models of care by Sept 2020.
- Partners are to approve the Tayside Mental Health and Wellbeing draft strategy by October 2020, with a view to it being published early in 2021.

The Tay Cities Deal includes a number of ambitious projects intended to boost the local economy and create additional employment opportunities across the region

152. In January 2020 the Auditor General for Scotland and Accounts Commission published a joint report titled [Scotland's City Region and Growth Deals](#) . This looked at the eight Scottish City Region deals, both those signed and proposed, including the Tay Cities Deal.

153. The Tay Cities Deal was developed after the Scottish Government's Enterprise and Skills Review was published in 2017. This allowed the deal to build on good practice from other City Region deals. The £700 million deal is to be funded by both the Scottish and UK Governments with the partner councils, universities and private sources contributing additional funding. The deal has not yet been signed by the UK and Scottish governments. It was developed from 2017 to the 'heads of terms' being signed in November 2018. It was anticipated that the deal would be signed by December 2019. However, this was delayed by the UK general election, and pending budget announcements at that time. Partners had believed that the signing of the deal was imminent in early 2020; however, the ongoing Covid-19 crisis has caused a further delay.

Tayside Contracts Joint Committee has delivered service improvements and efficiencies to the constituent councils over the last 25 years but its current operations have been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak

154. Since its formation in 1996, Tayside Contracts Joint Committee has delivered a range of construction and facilities services for its constituent councils: Dundee City Council, Angus Council, and Perth and Kinross Council, and a range of other public sector bodies (for example Aberdeen City Council and NHS Tayside). This has delivered service improvements and efficiencies and over the last three years it has returned surpluses totalling £4.6 million to the constituent councils.

155. During 2019/20 it developed its new central production unit to provide school dinners to children across Tayside. Its business plan highlighted the potential to expand operations at the unit to also provide a meals service to other local authority areas and make full use of the capacity available. However, these plans and its other current operations have been significantly impacted by the impact of Covid-19. The constituent councils are currently working with Tayside Contracts to provide financial support during this period of reduced activity.

Local Community Planning Partnerships work well and deliver improvements directly to communities

156. As well as implementing actions across the city, the Dundee Partnership oversees local actions which are focused on specific areas of the city. Local Community Planning Partnerships (LCPPs) have been established to operate within the eight wards to support partnership working at a local level ([Exhibit 15](#)).

Exhibit 15

The Dundee Partnership has established eight Local Community Planning Partnerships to support partnership working at a local level




Source: [Dundee City Plan 2017-2026](#)

157. The LCPPs include representatives from community groups and public and voluntary organisations. LCPP meetings are held quarterly and are chaired by Senior Officers from across the council with support from the council's Community Learning and Development (CLD) team. The meetings involve partners reporting on current issues and performance information, and discussion of local concerns and opportunities for joint working. They also provide an effective networking forum for all members and allow for scrutiny of the progress and updating of Local Community Plans ([paragraphs 167–168](#)).

158. LCPP meetings are well attended by partners, councillors and neighbourhood / community council representative groups. From this year, third

sector representatives are being financially supported to attend to ensure their presence at these meetings. Although all LCPP meetings are open to the public, and advertised locally, attendance levels vary significantly depending on the level of local interest in the issues to be discussed at each meeting.

159. Education Scotland's [Inspection of Community Learning and Development in Dundee City Council](#)  report ([paragraph 69](#)) highlighted that LCPP's play a key role in driving improvements across the city by ensuring all partners have an equal voice, and by providing a clear reporting and communication link from a local level to the Dundee Partnership. They also noted that LCPP decision-making is effective and prompts the tailoring of key strategic priorities to local circumstances. Our recent observations support this view.

The council has good structures and processes in place to support community-based activity but it is important that the rationale for policy decisions is clearly communicated to community groups and the wider public

160. The council's structures and processes are designed to encourage and support community-based activity and to allow communities to directly influence financial and resource decisions. These include:

- The public consultation as part of the annual budget setting process, ([paragraph 84–86](#)), the tenants consultation exercise conducted as part of annual rent setting process, and the involvement of 15 local young people in the development of the new Youth Work Participatory Budget.
- The operation of six Community Regeneration Forums across the city who have a delegated budget to allocate to local projects. The level of funds available to each forum is determined based on the level of economic deprivation of the area and ranged from £20,000 to £190,000.
- The presence of pupil, parents, teacher and religious representatives as well as councillors on the Children and Families Committee.
- A wide range of other community representative structures, including; Community Councils, the Dundee Youth Council and Community Centre Local Management Groups ([Case study 3, page 53](#)).

161. Despite this the partnerships, Citizens Survey (2019) reported a slight downturn in the level of influence that respondents felt they, and members of their communities, have in influencing decisions with only 34 per cent of respondents agreeing that they can influence decisions affecting their local area (40 per cent in 2018). This was also more pronounced in community-regeneration areas despite the additional resources targeted at those areas. There has been much learning gained from the 'Engage Dundee' process and the council's ongoing work with the third sector and tenant associations. This provides a good basis for the council to further enhance the relationships and empowerment of a broad range of communities across Dundee.

162. The reasons provided by community representative groups for this reduction in influence included breakdowns in communication between the communities, council officers and council leadership and a lack of transparency and reasoning behind some of the council policy decisions which impacted most

directly on their lives. However, representatives remained very positive about the relationships with, and support provided by, officers on the ground and the councillors who involve themselves in local activities.

Case study 3

Dundee City Council work in partnership with Community Centre Local Management Groups to support local community activity in locations across the city



The council currently supports the provision of seven community centres within Dundee. These have been strategically placed across the city at the heart of local communities and are located in Ardler, Charleston, Douglas, Finmill, Hilltown, Kirktown and Menzieshill.

The centres are run in partnership with local people in the form of Local Management Groups. The relationship between the Local Management Groups (LMGs) and Dundee City Council is governed by a Partnership Agreement that sets out what each party will do.


The partnership arrangement is mutually beneficial to both the community and the council.

The benefit to the community is that the LMGs ensure the centres provide a variety of activities in each centre that reflect the needs of the local community as well as the wider city. This includes a wide range of social, leisure and recreational activities as well as delivering a programme of youth work, adult learning and community development opportunities. The centres also provide accommodation for local groups and organisations to use and are often the only such community asset available within that locality.

The benefit to the council is that it provides a location within the community for it to base staff and coordinate CLD activity for that locality. It has also helped create groups of committed local volunteers who run activities out of the centres such as art and fitness classes, parent and toddlers groups, as well as annual summer festivals; that support the council's own community-based activities.

Source: Dundee City Council

The council, and its partners, have embraced the requirements of the Community Empowerment Act and built upon existing arrangements to encourage further community-based activity

163. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015  gives people more influence over how their council and its partners plan services. The Act also aims to tackle poverty and decrease inequalities across communities through targeting resources to those most in need.

164. Prior to the introduction of the Act, the partnership had already identified the value of community engagement and put in place structures and processes



The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

The Act is based on the principles of subsidiarity (that social and political decisions are taken at as local a level as possible), community empowerment and improving outcomes. Underpinning all these provisions is the intent to focus attention on reducing disadvantage and inequality.

Source: Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

to encourage and support community-based activity. Much of this activity was led by the council's Community and Learning Development team who now also have responsibility for supporting the eight LCPPs and monitoring and reporting progress against each of the Local Community Plans ([paragraphs 167 and 168](#)).

165. The Act also makes it easier for communities to take ownership of, or responsibility for, land and buildings through community asset transfers. The council has a well-established history of supporting community groups to manage and own facilities. The council's original Community Transfer scheme is open to a wider breadth of community groups than required by the Act and has resulted in five transfers of ownership and four long-term lease arrangements since 2015.

166. The Boomerang Community Centre, a former adult resource centre, was the first council asset to be transferred into community ownership. It is now a thriving community base for local groups, a community café and local food larder. Following the Covid-19 outbreak the centre has provided food, household supplies, goodie bags, school lunches and IT equipment for families and elderly living in the local area. There are also a number of other organisations which are currently being supported to go through the council's Community Asset process.

The Place Standard tool has been used well and consistently to develop local community plans for all eight LCPP Dundee

167. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 required Community Planning Partnerships to identify areas with the poorest outcomes and to publish 'locality plans' to improve outcomes for those communities. To ensure that there is a clear focus on improving local outcomes across the city, the Dundee Partnership has supported the development of locality plans (ie, Local Community Plans) for all eight LCPPs.

168. The priorities within each Local Community Plan were identified using the same consultation process, 'Engage Dundee', which informed the City Plan ([paragraphs 19–21](#)), and the Place Standard tool was consistently adopted across all eight LCPPs. This approach, together with community workshops, provided an in-depth understanding of each local area in terms of aspirations and challenges. It also allowed comparison to other areas in terms of similarities and differences in the experiences and concerns of the people living in those communities. This overview is beneficial for planning and allocating resources effectively and was used in the development of each Local Community Plan. The baseline information collected will also be used to track the changes of experience and attitudes within those communities over time.

During 2018/19 the council created a participatory budget and empowered citizens to make decisions about the spending of £1.2 million on local infrastructure projects

169. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 encourages greater use of participatory budgeting to empower residents to be involved in making decisions on local priorities and the allocation of public resources to meet identified needs.

170. In spring 2017 the council approved £1.2 million, equating to £0.150 million for each of the eight LCPPs, to be allocated from the council's 2018/19 capital budget for local infrastructure projects.

171. The 'Engage Dundee' consultation process, run to create new Local Community Plans, informed the development of the list of potential projects for each ward. The participatory budget project geared up in the autumn with steering groups in each area, enabling awareness raising, process and publicity design. Activity included elected member briefings, and a community conference.

172. In spring 2018 online voting in the 'Dundee Decides' participatory budgeting was launched with participants able to vote at home or through outreach options including digital tablets taken to schools or to local events to collect votes, complemented by programmed voting events in each ward. 'Dundee Decides' was also promoted to the community through a website, an animated film, a 'Participatory Budget comic', by press and radio advertising, alongside face-to-face outreach activity and word of mouth.

173. The process was a success and was highly praised for its ambition and leadership resulting in it winning a COSLA gold award in 2018. Among the measures of success were that:

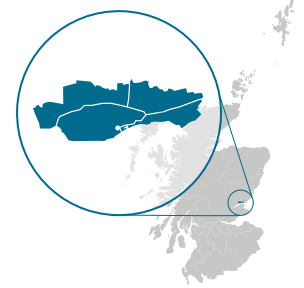
- 11,472 votes were received, equating to over 10 per cent of the city's eligible 11+ voting population
- the majority of respondents had never participated in a community planning process before
- 80 per cent of over 4,000 residents who completed feedback forms thought it was a good way to allocate funding
- over 80 per cent felt they understood more about the options available, including their cost, and would take part again
- the 30 projects funded were spread across the city.

174. Despite the success of the participatory budgeting process, an independent review identified further learning points for future consideration, including more targeted funding to regeneration areas and increasing the number of youth project options to reflect the high number of youth respondents.

175. The lessons learnt from 'Dundee Decides' are being used to inform the mainstreaming of participatory budgeting and the Capital Plan 2020-2025 allocated a further £0.1 million to support community infrastructure projects over the next five years.

Part 5

Is the council demonstrating continuous improvement?



The council has demonstrated a steady pace of improvement since the last Best Value audit. The council recognises the pace of improvement needs to increase in some areas to address the city's significant demographic, economic and social challenges.

In February 2020 the council reported the results of a self-assessment against Best Value characteristics to members. The assessment demonstrates a mature organisation that is able to honestly assess its own strengths and weaknesses and identify where improvement is required.

In 2010 the Accounts Commission said: 'the Council still needs to embed a culture of continuous improvement throughout its business and increase the pace of change.' Good progress has been made, and the council now demonstrates a clear focus on continuous improvement across its activities.

The council has ambitious and innovative ideas and there is a large volume of improvement activity taking place but progress in addressing some key elements of Best Value has been slow. The council needs to be realistic about what can be achieved in the short term and prioritise those actions that can be delivered and will have the greatest impact.



The pace and depth of change has been slow in the development of service workforce plans and a comprehensive performance management framework.

The council has made steady progress since the last Best Value audit and demonstrates improved performance in many services. Progress still needs to be made and measured in tackling poverty and inequality, and the related challenges such as substance misuse, and physical and mental health problems.

176. The council was subject to an audit of Best Value and Community Planning in 2010. The Accounts Commission commented that ‘Dundee City Council still needs to embed a culture of continuous improvement throughout its business and increase the pace of change.’ The Commission also identified areas that the council should focus on to help it improve. [Exhibit 16 \(page 62\)](#) compares previous Best Value judgements with our findings from this review.

177. As reported in [Part 2](#), the council’s service performance has improved over time. However, the council recognise that the pace of improvement needs to accelerate to address the city’s significant demographic, economic and social challenges. The Dundee Partnership are committed to working together and know that a coordinated multi-agency approach is required to make a meaningful difference in tackling poverty and inequality, and the related challenges such as substance misuse, and physical and mental health problems.

The council demonstrates a clear focus on continuous improvement across services. Its approach to self-assessment provides evidence on strengths and weaknesses, which is used to identify improvement actions.

178. The council uses the **Public Service Improvement Framework**  (PSIF) to drive continuous improvement in service priorities. A corporate assessment was carried out in 2017 in preparation for the production of the new Council Plan 2017-2022. Improvements identified during the process became actions within the Council Plan. PSIF assessments have also completed on [Neighbourhood Services](#)  and the Children & Families Service, both of which were reported to the Scrutiny Committee. Improvement Action Plans were produced as a result of these and progress towards implementation of these improvement actions is monitored on the Pentana system.

179. The Children & Families Improvement Plan for 2019-2022 has been informed by the outcomes of the PSIF self-evaluation exercise involving managers and employees across the service as well as key partners and stakeholders. The Plan describes progress made since the integration of Education, Children’s Social Work and Community Justice and outlines how the service will build on this through a consistent focus on key priorities and related actions. It focuses on holistic approaches which reduce inequalities and narrow the attainment gap.

180. There are plans to undertake an assessment of Dundee Health & Social Care Partnership during 2020. The timing of this assessment will present the partnership with significant opportunity given the recent appointment of a new Chief Officer.

181. In June 2019 the council presented the first of its self-assessments of the council’s performance against BV characteristics to the Policy and Resources Committee. This set out a high-level assessment for each area and identified priority actions. The latest and more detailed assessment was presented to members in February 2020 to coincide with the start of the BVAR audit. This identified areas for improvement which are broadly consistent with our



Public Sector Improvement Framework

This is a self-assessment approach to support improvement in organisations, with a comprehensive review of their own activities and results. It promotes a robust approach to continuous improvement and is mapped to a number of established organisational improvement tools.

Source: Dundee Partnership website

assessment of the council. The council plans to develop actions to address these areas as part of its action plan addressing the recommendations in this report.

182. The outcome of the council's self-assessment demonstrates that it is a mature organisation which is able to honestly appraise its strengths and weaknesses and identify where improvement is required. However, a number of the areas highlighted have been long-standing weaknesses and progress to address these has been slow ([paragraphs 183–184](#)).

The pace of change has been slow in some key elements of Best Value, including the development of service workforce plans and a performance management framework

183. The council has a corporate workforce strategy in place but has still to develop workforce plans for each service. The council has also been slow to develop a consistent approach to monitoring and reporting performance across the council.


184. Management acknowledge that these areas need to be progressed as a matter of priority to ensure workforce planning, and performance monitoring and reporting arrangements are embedded within all services, to support the delivery of the council's priorities.

The council is aware of the areas where improvement is required but needs to be realistic about what can be achieved and prioritise those improvement actions that will have the greatest impact

185. Our review of the improvement activity across the council identified that the council has ambitious and innovative ideas and there is a large volume of improvement activity taking place across the council, and its partners. While this ambitious approach is to be commended it does present a risk that the council may lack the capacity and skills to deliver on all of its aspirations. It is important that the council is realistic about what can be achieved in the short term, particularly in light of the impact of Covid-19, and prioritise those actions that can be delivered and will have the greatest impact.

The council has well-established processes in place to implement improvements based on service-user feedback and complaints

186. The council gathers feedback on services through a range of means including surveys, focus groups, representative groups and consultations. In addition, the council's service-user feedback process has been running for ten years and allows the public to provide direct feedback on services via the council website.


187. The feedback gathered via these means, and the council's actions in response, is reported to the Policy and Resources committee and published on the '[We listened, we acted](#)'  pages of the council's website. Improvements introduced via this process include:

- New queue management system introduced at Dundee House and East and West District offices.
- Women-only swimming and gym sessions now available at Lochee.

- Modifications to Home Care systems to alert organisers if carer has not visited service user at expected time.
- Introduction of district nurse visits to care homes
- Introduction of key workers for pupils in nursery schools.

188. The council also handles complaints through the recognised model Complaints Handling Procedure for Local Authorities. In line with good practice, the council has a stated aim to identify any lessons learned from complaints. Its Scrutiny committee receive a periodic report on how the council has responded to complaints. The latest report covering a three-year period summarises a range of mostly small-scale improvements that have been put in place such as improving communications with customers and better works scheduling and monitoring.

Delivery of the Changing for the Future transformation programme is key to the achievement of the Council Plan

189. C2022 is the fifth stage of the council's 'Changing for the Future' transformation programme. The programme is built around the **Scottish Approach to Service Design**  and proposes more partnership and commissioning of services, use of digital technology and making best use of resources and people, for example the 365 schools project is examining how schools can be better utilised as community assets. The achievement of the targeted outcomes within the Council Plan is underpinned by the delivery of the council's C2022 transformation programme.

190. The council have reported savings of around £117 million since 2010 through the previous stages of the programme. These were achieved through tight financial management, service-led improvements and voluntary redundancy/voluntary early retirement schemes in the initial stages of the programme. More recently, the focus has been improving the delivery of services by working with partners from across the city, for example the City Wide Energy Project is reviewing the cities energy needs and limitations and exploring the most cost effective options to meet Dundee's energy needs across the next 10-20 years.

The council looks to learn from other Scottish local authorities facing similar social and economic challenges but there may be further potential to learn from other cities in the UK, or internationally

191. Officers are committed to working with other Scottish local authorities, and other organisations, wherever possible to learn from their experiences. Recent examples of this include:

- Learning from Glasgow City Council's success in improving attainment by establishing a multi-disciplinary pedagogy team within Dundee to assist in tackling the city's attainment challenges.
- Active participation in the Scottish Drugs Conference 2020 held at the Scottish Events Campus on 26 February 2020.



The Scottish Approach to Service Design

The vision for the Scottish Approach to Service Design is that the people of Scotland are supported and empowered to actively participate in the definition, design and delivery of their public services (from policy making to live service improvement).

Source: Scottish Government website

- The council's involvement in the Scottish Cities Alliance which is progressing an ambitious programme of collaborative innovation across Scotland's seven cities, including the Smart City programme ([Case study 1, page 40](#)).

192. Given the extent of the challenges facing the city, the council may benefit from wider comparison with other cities in the UK, or internationally, in tackling similar social and economic issues.

The council promotes staff engagement across all service directorates and use frontline staff in redesigning services and streamlining existing processes

193. The Council Management Team aims to create a culture where staff at all levels of the organisation can identify and deliver service improvements. Heads of Service take ownership for delivering improvements within their service and are encouraged to disseminate this approach down to their staff to ensure all employees of the council can contribute to service improvements.

194. The council aims to involve its staff in setting priorities at a service level through its self-evaluation process. The council's learning and development activities also encourage staff to contribute to service improvements and its MyLearning hub includes a 'My contribution' option for staff to volunteer improvement ideas. The council also has staff awards (OSCA's) including a category for innovation and improvement.

195. The council also uses a range of other approaches to encourage employees to contribute to improvement.

196. C2022 includes a range of workstreams which were developed through workshops held with employees from across the organisation. There are opportunities for staff from all services to be part of project teams tasked with delivering each workstream and developing new flexible and modern ways of working.

The council has not conducted an employee-satisfaction survey since 2016, and shorter, focused surveys are now planned to assess the impact of service changes on staff

197. The most recent staff survey was carried out by the council in 2016 and generated an overall response rate of 36 per cent. The results presented a mixed picture of staff satisfaction:

Top three results from 2016 employee satisfaction survey:

- 93 per cent of employees understood their responsibilities to promote a fair and safe workplace
- 92 per cent knew what standards of performance were expected of them
- 86 per cent knew where to find information on council policies and procedures.

Bottom three results from 2016 employee satisfaction survey:

- 67 per cent of employees didn't feel valued by the council
- 65 per cent didn't believe the council management team would act on the results of the survey
- 60 per cent didn't feel there were opportunities for them to develop their career in the council.

198. Management prepared action plans to address the issues raised by their service directorate in the staff survey. These were reported to the relevant service committees in September 2017. However, no further updates were provided to committees on progress with implementation of the plans. As a result, it was not possible for members to easily track progress against the plans and obtain assurance that these had been actioned satisfactorily.

199. The People and Workforce Strategy, approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 30 September 2019, outlined a new approach to staff engagement. This included a change to how employee-satisfaction surveys are conducted, from being carried out every three years to being shorter, themed and quarterly monthly surveys and weekly pulse surveys.

200. Since May 2020, there have been five weekly surveys and two monthly surveys, generating response rates of between three and fourteen per cent. These focused on employee wellbeing and support, in light of Covid-19. The results of the surveys were collated and communicated to the Council Management Team and infographics of the results were shared with staff via the OneDundee portal. Management are considering how the approach will evolve, in a post-Covid world, including how the results of the surveys will be reported to members through the committee structure.

Trade union representatives believe earlier engagement on proposed service changes would be constructive. They commented positively on how the council has responded to staff concerns following the Covid-19 outbreak.

201. Trade union representatives stated that there is a good level of engagement and communication between management and unions. However, they said that consultation on proposed changes affecting their members would be more useful if it were earlier in the development of proposals, giving them the opportunity for them to raise concerns or propose alternative solutions.

202. Representatives were generally satisfied with how management deal with individual staff concerns and complaints and are confident that all instances of whistleblowing and disciplinary issues are treated seriously and dealt with in a fair manner.

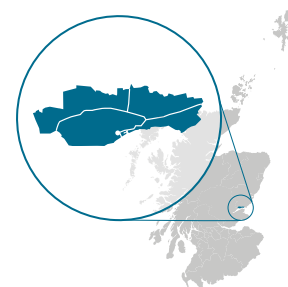
203. All representatives were positive about how the council has responded to the Covid-19 outbreak. Regular meetings have been held between management and representatives of all unions to discuss concerns raised by members, including health and safety issues facing frontline staff. This process has worked well and proved effective in quickly resolving issues as they arise. Representatives commented that officers demonstrated a genuine commitment to understanding the issues facing staff and what needed to be done to fix them.

Exhibit 16

A comparison of selected Best Value judgements from 2010 and 2020 shows that the council has made steady progress, but further improvement is required in some areas

Controller of Audit judgement 	Controller of Audit judgement 	View
The council and its partners have a clear and ambitious vision which is rooted in the needs of the local community. They are making progress against these clear objectives.	The 2018/19 Annual Report on the City Plan for Dundee 2017-2026 showed progress against most measures and highlighted areas where performance was not on target.	Part 1 Part 2
There are effective working relationships between community planning partners within the council area, which is having a positive impact on the quality of services.	The Dundee Partnership promotes good working relationships between a wide range of partners. The partnership has been successful in regenerating and reinvigorating the city centre.	Part 4
There is evidence of general improvement in overall service performance, including tackling poor educational attainment, improving Council Tax collection, reducing crime and promoting broader economic development. There has also been an increase in citizen satisfaction levels.	The council's performance has improved since 2010/11 at a greater rate than its family group. There is evidence that the council's early year intervention activity is having some impact. Dundonians are more satisfied with their council services than the Scottish average.	Part 2
There needs to be a more effective embedding of continuous improvement across the council and continued development of performance management arrangements.	The council now demonstrates a clear focus on continuous improvement across its activities. It uses self assessment effectively. However, timely reporting of performance information on all council services to councillors is still being developed.	Part 2 Part 5
The council needs to increase the pace of change in implementing improvements, creating sufficient organisational capacity and working closely with partners.	There is a large volume of improvement activity taking place. This needs to be prioritised, officers need to be realistic about what can be achieved.	Part 5
The council's incremental approach to making efficiency savings will not be sufficient. Councillors and officers need to take difficult decisions to ensure services and outcomes are delivered.	Financial plans remain challenging. Delivery of the council's Changing for the Future transformational change programme (C2022) will be critical to filling funding gaps.	Part 5
The council needs to develop more robust use of options appraisal and benchmarking. It also needs to look outwards for alternative approaches.	The council uses the LGBF data to identify improvement areas and learn from other Scottish local authorities facing similar challenges.	Part 2 Part 5
Elected members, need to increase their leadership of community planning at a strategic level.	Local Community Planning Partnerships work well and deliver improvements directly to communities.	Part 4
The arrangement for all councillors to sit on every committee makes the independence of view essential to the scrutiny process difficult.	The committee structure is supported by all political groups and based on our observation of meetings it works well for a council of this size.	Part 1

Recommendations



Consideration should be given to extending the support provided, to non-elected committee members. [\(paragraphs 41 and 43\)](#)

Regular performance reports need to be presented to members which includes performance data for the current year, covering all services. [\(paragraphs 47 and 48\)](#)

Workforce plans need to be developed for all services to demonstrate that staff have the capacity and skills to deliver the council's priorities. [\(paragraphs 109 and 110\)](#)

A strategic asset management plan, is to be developed, aligned to the financial and strategic service delivery plans. [\(paragraphs 112 and 115\)](#)

A standardised business case template should be developed and completed for all capital projects including detailed options appraisal, whole life costing, and consideration of funding implications. [\(paragraphs 122 and 123\)](#)

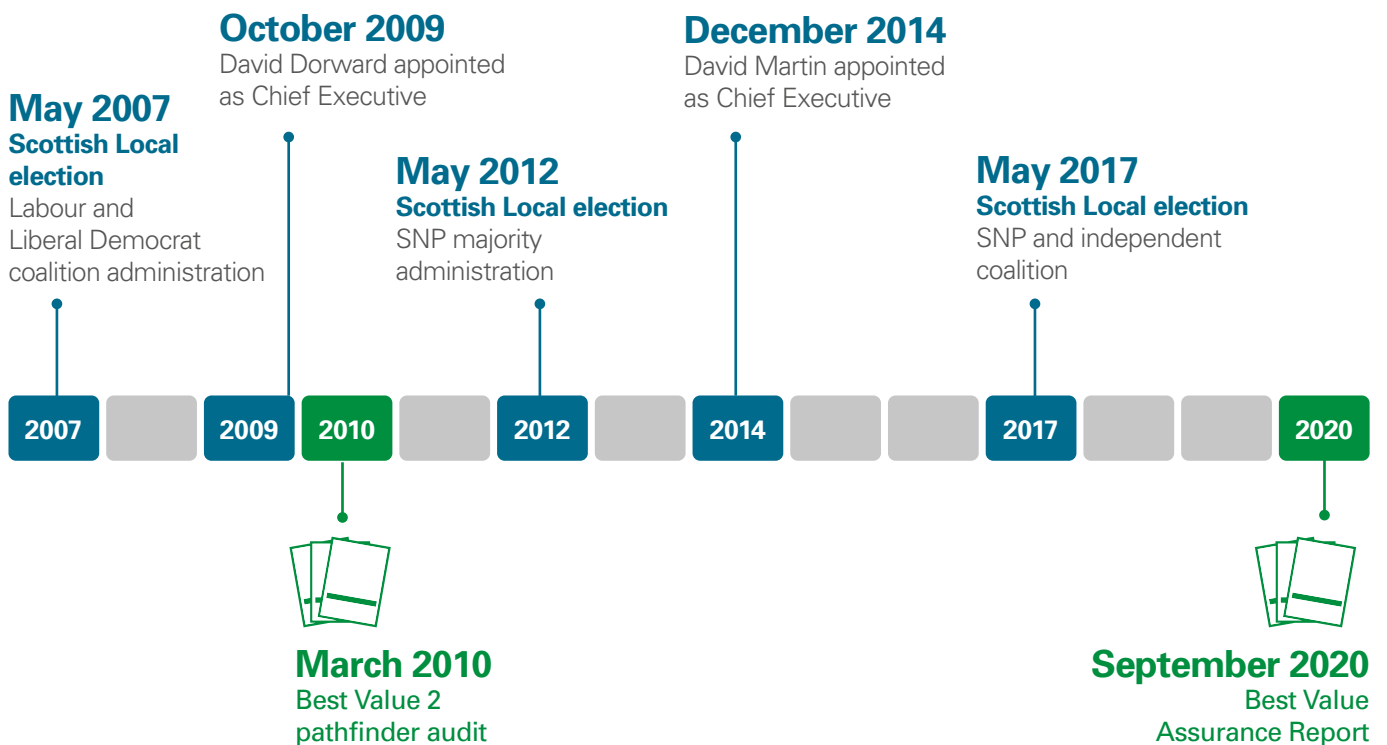
The Dundee Partnership needs to set out how it will measure the impact of its action plan to reduce inequality and poverty. [\(paragraphs 138 and 139\)](#)

Communication to citizens on the rationale for policy decisions should be reviewed. [\(paragraphs 160 and 162\)](#)

Prioritisation of improvement plans should be considered to focus on actions that will deliver the greatest impact for service users. [\(paragraph 185\)](#)

Appendix

Best Value audit timeline



October 2005 – The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning

The Accounts Commission found that the council had shown a commitment to regenerating the city. It recognised strengths in partnership working, and that good progress had been made with Community Planning. However, the Commission had concerns that there were issues which the council had to address, including: scrutiny arrangements, transparency of decision-making, corporate processes to support performance management, and the need to systematically link the council’s policies and priorities to the resources available.

March 2010 – Best Value 2 pathfinder audit

The Accounts Commission found that the council and its partners had a clear and ambitious vision which was rooted in the needs of the local community, and they were making progress against these objectives. It noted that effective

working relationships between community planning partners were having a positive impact on the quality of services. The Commission welcomed evidence of general improvement in service performance since 2005 but also highlighted concerns about some important service areas, particularly housing and child protection services.

September 2020 – 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 Dundee City 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 Dundee City Council

Audit Scotland's published material is available for download on the website in a number of formats. For information on our accessibility principles, please visit:

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accessibility 

For the latest news, reports and updates, follow us on:



Audit Scotland, 4th Floor, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN

T: 0131 625 1500 E: info@audit-scotland.gov.uk 

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 

ISBN 978 1 913287 35 1