Midlothian

2017/18 Local Government Benchmarking Results

Report by Grace Vickers, Chief Executive

1   Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet and Performance Review & Scrutiny Committee with an update on the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) for 2017/18. This report offers a refresh of the data presented to Cabinet on the 26th of February, it now includes the Children's Services Data published by the Scottish Government in April 2019.

2   Background

All councils have been working with the Improvement Service and SOLACE to develop a common approach to benchmarking. Information is collected on a set of indicators that lets us know how we are performing in comparison to others, this is known as the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF). The LGBF allows us to share best practice and learn from councils who are performing well in certain areas.

There has been an increase in the number of LGBF indicators for 2017/18 with the main additions being to the indicator sets for Economic Development. This work has resulted in a national dataset comprising of 80 indicators. The key principle of the indicators was that they were comparable across all 32 councils. It should be noted that two of the indicators relate to museums and galleries therefore only 78 are relevant to Midlothian and 4 Children's Services indicators are reported biennially and these will be available for the 2018/19 cycle.

The indicators are grouped under the following categories:
- Social Work Services
- Children's Services
- Corporate Assets and Services
- Culture and Leisure
- Economic Development
- Environmental Services
- Housing Services

The framework reports on how much councils spend on particular services, service performance and how satisfied people are with the major services provided by councils. The cost indicators have been developed using the best available cost information for councils from existing sources such as the Local Financial Return (LFRs). A range of satisfaction measures have also been included from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS).

Local results are considered in the context of the national picture, including comparison of 2017/18 data with the Scottish average and graphs showing Midlothian trend data against the Scottish and Family Group averages.

Rather than being viewed as a league table, the data-set can be regarded as a useful 'can-opener' in flagging up issues worthy of further investigation For example, high costs for one indicator may reflect investment to affect a policy change rather than inefficient spend and a trade-off between cost and performance can be expected.

When considering the data, it is also important to be aware of intended/expected levels of performance, rather than focusing on the collective number of indicators in the top quartile. For example the Council's spend on our schools means we are meeting our objective to achieve higher educational attainment year on year.

It is important to remember that councils across Scotland do not have common service structures. Each council has a structure and service arrangement that it believes is the most appropriate and cost effective way to support its local community.

3.   Current Position

Within the Council, performance against the indicators will be monitored as part of the performance management arrangements which includes quarterly reporting to Cabinet and Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committees.

Cabinet and Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee should note that the framework continues to be reviewed and this year the suite of Economic Development measures have been expanded to include: Cost of Economic Development & Tourism per 1,000 Population; Proportion of people earning less than the living wage; Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband; Town vacancy rates; Immediately available employment land as a % of total land allocated for employment purposes in the local development plan.

In summary, whilst there are questions about the relevance, comparability and reliability of some of the indicators, there is nevertheless clear value in a number of the indicators, particularly those that are direct measures of performance. These show some areas of strength and some areas for improvement in Midlothian, and point to areas such as the time it takes us to complete non-emergency repairs and the percentage of unemployed people assisted into work from Council funded employability programmes where improvement is necessary.

Whilst details of the 17/18 Benchmarking results are shown in appendix 1, the table below provides a high level summary of our performance across the four quartiles. The first quartile contains the best performing councils for particular indicators and the fourth quartile contains the poorest performing councils

It should be noted that there are 4 indicators whereby the data is collected biennially and will be reported in the 2018/19 cycle. At this time 54% of our indicators are in the top two quartiles.

Scottish ranking	Percentage % of indicators falling within each quartile	
	2017/18	2016/17
1st and 2nd Quartile (ranked 1-16)	40/74 54%	38/76 50%
3rd and 4th Quartile (ranked 17-32)	34/74 46%	38/76 50%

Information comparing performance information from all councils 32 Scottish councils is available on a national website called Mylocalcouncil. The website compares performance information from all 32 Scottish councils. The Improvement Service also published the data for all councils in February 2019 and refreshed the data in April to include the Children's Services data, details can be found at **http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/**

4   Report Implications

4.1   Resource

There are no resource implications

4.2   Risk

This report seeks to mitigate the risk that the Council does not meet its obligations in terms of the requirement to publicly report on performance information.

4.3   Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☒ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

4.4   Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan
The LGBF measures for 17/18 contribute to all three Priorities identified in the SMP, Reducing the gap in learning outcomes; Reducing the gap in health outcomes and Reducing the gap in economic circumstances.

4.5   Impact on Performance and Outcomes
The LGBF benchmarking dataset along with service plan outcomes are incorporated in the Balanced Scorecard and form a key component of the ongoing performance reporting requirements.

4.6   Adopting a Preventative Approach
The council's Planning Performance Management Framework is underpinned by the previously identified Future Model key principles, one of which focuses on prevention.

4.7   Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders
This report does not directly relate to involving communities and stakeholders though access to the information is widely available via the council's website and the national website noted **in section 3.**

4.8   Ensuring Equalities
The LGBF indicators monitor some aspects of equalities with a few of the indicators relating to the equality characteristics of gender and disability.
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4.9   Supporting Sustainable Development
The Councils Planning and Performance Management Framework demonstrates a sustainable approach to service delivery by ensuring that stakeholders and Elected Members are informed and able to comment on Council planning and performance. LGBF indicators are included in the framework.

4.10   IT Issues
There are no IT issues directly relating to this report. The LGBF results will be made available on the council Website.

5   Recommendations
Cabinet and Performance Review and Scrutiny are asked to:
- Note the refreshed 2017/18 LGBF comparison results detailed in Appendix 1.

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Background Papers: Appendix 1 – Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2017/18 Report