

## **2015/16 Local Government Benchmarking Framework Results**

### **Report by Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet and Performance Review and Scrutiny on the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) and to present an overview of the Council's performance against the indicators for 2015/16.

#### **2. Background**

Over the last six years all 32 Scottish councils have been working with the Improvement Service to develop a common approach to benchmarking, which is grounded in reporting standard information on the council services provided to local communities across Scotland.

The purpose of the framework is to support councils to deliver better outcomes for communities by benchmarking and learning from councils who are achieving the best performance in relation to local service delivery.

There has been an increase in the number of LGBF indicators for 2015/16 with the main additions being to the indicator sets for Education, Economic Development and Planning. This work has resulted in a national dataset comprising of 69 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, and therefore only 67 are relevant to Midlothian. The indicators are grouped under seven service groupings:

- Social Work Services
- Children's Services
- Corporate 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 indicators have been developed using cost information for councils from existing sources such as the Local Financial Returns (LFRs). LFRs form a part of central government's monitoring of Scotland's local government spend in service areas. A range of satisfaction measures have also been used from the annual Scottish Household Survey (SHS).

The Improvement Service has provided detailed comparative analysis for each LGBF indicator at council level. Midlothian's performance against key indicators is provided in Appendix 1. The indicators are grouped and analysed within the seven LGBF categories.

Within the Council, performance against the indicators is monitored as part of the performance management arrangements which include quarterly reporting to the Cabinet and Performance. Local results are considered in the context of the national picture, including comparison of 2015/16 data with the Scottish average and graphs showing Midlothian trend data against the Scottish and Family Group averages.

The data-set can be regarded as a useful 'can-opener' in flagging up issues worthy of further investigation (rather than viewing the data as a 'league table'). 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

The LGBF has been subject to review resulting in a number of changes to the indicator set. These were:

- Education Attainment data has been revised with a new approach to measurement
- Two new measures from the Health and Social Care Experience Survey
- The addition of Average Tariff Score measures for overall educational attainment (including breakdown by SIMD quintiles)
- Addition of Gender Pay Gap indicator
- Culture and Leisure cost indicators are now presented as Net Cost rather than Gross Cost.
- Economic Development section has been expanded to incorporate Planning and include 4 new indicators. These cover; Percentage of procurement spent on local small/medium enterprises; Number of business gateway start-ups per 10,000 population; Cost per planning application; and Average time per commercial planning application

Whilst full details of the 15/16 Benchmarking results are shown in appendix 1, the table below provides a high level summary of our performance across the four quartiles where more than half of our indicators are in the top two.

| Scottish ranking  | Percentage % of indicators falling within each quartile |
|---|---|
|   | 2015/16   |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quartile (ranked 1-16)  | 35/67 52%   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Quartile (ranked 17-32) | 32/67 48%   |

As part of this ongoing work councils and the Improvement Service have developed a process to drill into the information collated through the LGBF to understand, in more detail, why the variations in council performance is occurring. This process has been organised around 'family groups' of councils so that comparison can be explored with similar councils in terms of type of population (e.g. relative deprivation and affluence) and the type of area

in which they serve (e.g. urban, suburban or rural). This allows good practice to be identified and shared between councils.

Information for all councils is compiled on a national website called [Mylocalcouncil](http://www.mylocalcouncil.org). The website compares performance information from all 32 Scottish councils.

The Improvement Service published the data in February 2017, details can be found at <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/>

#### 4. Going Forward

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.

Cabinet and Performance Review and Scrutiny should note that the framework continues to be reviewed and this year a range of new measures for satisfaction, education and economic development have been introduced.

- **Satisfaction measures** – Previous findings have noted that the customer satisfaction data drawn from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) has some limitations when used at individual council level as the sample size of the survey becomes a sub set of the overall national sample and as a result less statistically robust. Therefore, in order to boost sample sizes, this year 3 year rolled averages have been used to improve the level of precision at local levels. The data used represents satisfaction for the public at large rather than from service users. However it should be noted that satisfaction levels for service users at a local level are consistently higher than those reported by the general population.
- **Health & Social Care Integration satisfaction measures** – This year, two measures from the Health and Social Care Experience Survey have been introduced to the benchmarking suite to reflect service user satisfaction with social care services. These measures align with the Core suite of HSC Integration Measures, and provide a more locally robust sample than is available from the Scottish Household Survey in relation to social care. The survey takes place every 2 years, and at this time only 2 years' worth of data is currently available so trend analysis is limited.
- **Education measures** –Following the commitment in the National Improvement Framework to introduce a consistent method for assessing children's development throughout primary and secondary school years. The senior phase performance measures have been expanded to more accurately reflect the senior phase (S4-S6) landscape and in particular reflect wider educational achievement.
- **Economic Development** – a number of new measures have been included this year to strengthen the framework coverage of Economic Development and Planning. These measures are Cost per planning application; average time per commercial planning application; percentage of procurement spend on small/medium enterprises and Business Gateway Start up rate.

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 as such invoice payments and educational attainment where improvement is necessary.

## **5. Report Implications**

### **5.1 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 15/16 contribute to all three Priorities identified in the SMP, Economic recovery and Business Growth, Positive Destinations for Young People and Early Years.

### **4.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes**

The LGBF benchmarking dataset along with service plan outcomes are incorporated in the Balanced Scorecard.

### **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.

### **4.9 Supporting Sustainable Development**

The Councils PPMF demonstrates a sustainable approach to service delivery by ensuring that stakeholders 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 Recommendation**

Cabinet and Performance Review and Scrutiny are asked to:

- note the 2015/16 LGBF comparison results
- note the ongoing activity relating to the Family Groups

**Report Contact:**

**Date:** March 2017

**Name:** Elaine Johnston

**Tel No:** 0131 270 8926

**E-mail** [elaine.johnston@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.johnston@midlothian.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:** Appendix 1 – Local Government Benchmarking Framework 15/16 results