

Argyll and Bute Council Corporate Improvement Strategy 2015 – 2017

***Making Argyll and Bute a place people choose
to live, learn, work and do business.***

Making it Happen

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Argyll and Bute Council

Corporate Improvement Strategy

FOREWORD – Dick Walsh and Sally Loudon

We are pleased to introduce the Council's Corporate Improvement Strategy for 2015-17. The Council remains committed to making Argyll and Bute a place people choose to live, learn, work and do business. The services we deliver are vital to doing this and our corporate plan makes it clear that we aim to be a high performing council and will continually look at how we can improve and deliver quality services. This strategy sets out how we will achieve these outcomes.

Our success so far has been rooted in the motivated staff that deliver our services. This strategy is based on engaging and involving our staff, customers and partners in the Council's Corporate Improvement journey in order to ensure that we continue to deliver efficient and effective outcome focussed services.

This strategy confirms the Council's commitment to continuous Corporate Improvement and outlines the toolbox of quality, planning and performance activities that will help our services to scrutinise what we do and improve in a smart, flexible and efficient way balancing Corporate Improvement activity with front line service delivery.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Corporate Improvement Strategy supports the delivery of the Council's priorities contained within the Corporate Plan 2015-2017.

1.2 The period of this Corporate Improvement Strategy will be one of significant organisational change as the Council manages the impact of public sector reform. The Council's corporate plan has set clear priorities and identified key organisational enablers that will drive services to deliver better outcomes for Argyll and Bute and inform decision making in planning our future.

1.3 The Corporate Improvement Strategy supports other corporate strategies including Finance and Asset Management, Customer Service, Information management and the HR and OD strategy, in delivering the Council's strategic objectives.

1.4 There are five main categories of improvement activity identified in this Corporate Improvement Strategy. Each activity is designed to ensure that services are focussed on the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities, and are challenged against rigorous standards and frameworks to improve performance.

1.5 Making it Happen

1.6 The Corporate Improvement Strategy is an enabling corporate strategy and sets out the approach to delivering coordinated programmes of performance and improvement activity directed at Council services. Understanding the performance and impact of services and their capacity to improve is critical for the Council and our customers. A range of data and intelligence from performance and improvement activity can be used to inform future planning, prioritisation and decision making and help ensure that there is continued investment in those services that contribute to positive outcomes. The underlying purpose of this strategy is to have a meaningful positive impact on front line services. The key to this is in striking an appropriate balance between improvement activity and front line service delivery.

1.7 Context

1.8 The predominant influence on the Corporate Improvement Strategy is the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. This defines Best Value as the balance between cost and quality and introduces the commitment to continuous improvement and reporting honestly and transparently on performance and achievement.

1.9 This requires a clear planning and performance management framework, strong quality improvement arrangements and a robust internal challenge and scrutiny process for officers and elected members.

1.10 Strategy Development

1.11 Argyll and Bute Council has a good track record of improvement activity. Previous corporate improvement plans have informed the development of this Corporate Improvement which sets out our corporate approach to improvement. The strategy links to the successful delivery of the following key corporate outcomes:

- Our culture, structure and systems make our Council a high performing and improving organisation that people choose to work for
- We provide excellent communications, customer service, consultation and engagement
- We continually look at how we can improve and deliver quality services

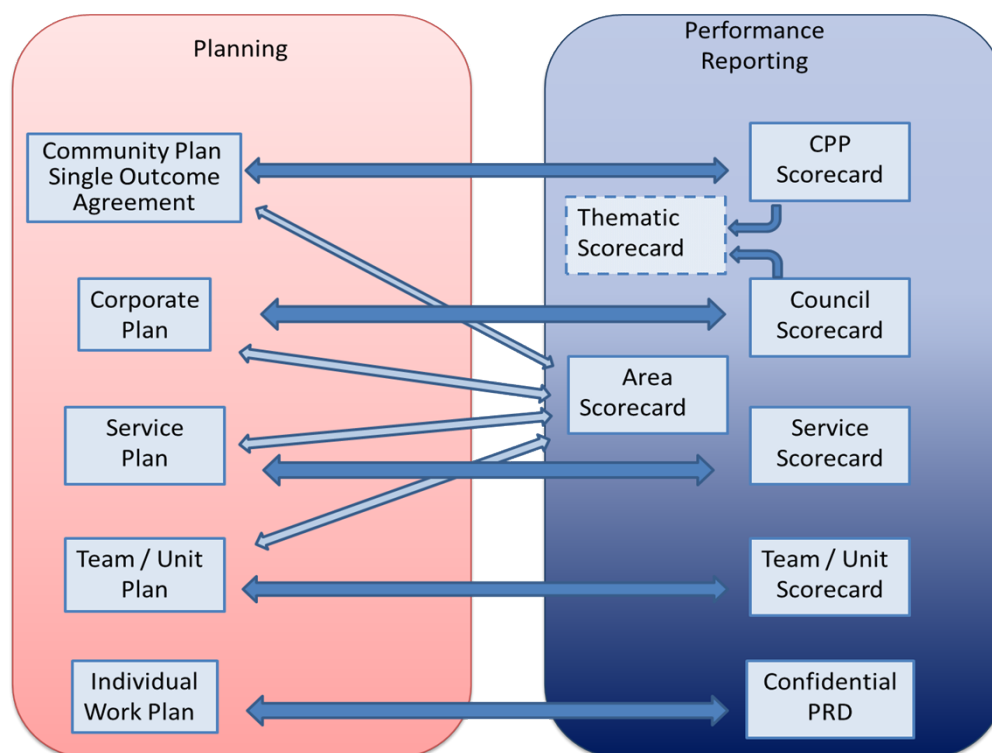
1.2 The Council's approach to improvement is based on 5 main categories of improvement activity, underpinned by the development of a business improvement toolkit.



2.0 Planning and Performance Management

2.1 Planning is a fundamental requirement for any organisation that aims to achieve its outcomes within allocated resources. The council's planning and performance management framework sets out the structure for planning, performance reporting and scrutiny. Management information from performance and improvement processes inform our planning processes.

2.2 Performance management is the activity of tracking performance against targets and identifying opportunities for improvement. The Council's performance management system, Pyramid, presents balanced scorecards relating to each of our key plans and allows performance to be scrutinised at all levels.



2.3 In the next two years there will be a particular focus on enriching the performance data used by services to ensure there is a good range and balance of information that allows improved scrutiny of performance at a strategic level.

| Categories of Performance Indicators | |
|--|--|
| Public Performance Reporting | |
| A wide range of information to fulfil the council's statutory duty. | |
| High Level Impact indicators | |
| Key indicators linked to outcomes and activities that are reported to senior officers and elected members allowing high level scrutiny to determine whether our strategies and plans are delivering on our corporate and community outcomes. | |
| Service Level Performance Indicators | |
| Indicators of local service performance linked to plans, key processes and activities that are reported within the service | |
| Management Indicators | |
| Indicators that provide management information for use in the service to plan or forecast provision | |

3.0 Scrutiny

3.1 Scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring the Council remains effective and accountable and its overall aim is to support improvement in the quality of our services. Scrutiny ensures that decision-making processes are clear and accessible to the public and that the people taking decisions are held accountable for those decisions

3.2 External Scrutiny

3.3 The Council is subject to external scrutiny in the form of audits and inspection activities. The recommendations from any external audits and inspections will inform planning and improvement.

3.4 Internal Scrutiny

3.5 Performance against our targets is scrutinised by senior management and elected members using our balanced scorecards as outlined above. The impact of our plans, strategies and policies on our key strategic outcomes will continue to be scrutinised

and reviewed by our strategic committees and overall by our performance review and scrutiny committee (PRSC). The role of the PRSC is to support our departments in maintaining high service delivery standards, and to steer them towards improved efficiency and effectiveness. Feedback and recommendations from scrutiny reviews informs service improvement planning.

4.0 Self-Assessment

4.1 Self-Assessment uses a set of criteria to evaluate if an organisation (council/service) is achieving what it should be and if not, to identify what needs to be changed or improved. The Council has three key recognised programmes of self-assessment, one that is used for schools within Education (How Good is our School), one in Social Work (Social Work Improvement Model) and one for all other services (Public Service Improvement Framework).

4.2 Self-Assessment provides a consistent framework for assessing performance and practice across the broad spectrum of council services. It uses a rigorous framework of statements, taken from good practice standards and models, and helps to develop self-awareness within services regarding their capability to respond to change and achieve long term outcomes and targets.

4.3 Self-assessment can form the basis for strategic challenge of service performance which can help support proportionate internal scrutiny activity based on a clear understanding of current performance and the capacity to improve. The focus over the next two years will be to develop a programme of self-assessment and a framework for self-assessment activity to be scrutinised which engages senior officers in the improvement planning and performance process and instils rigour in self-assessment activity.

5.0 Consultation and Engagement

5.1 The Council engages with customers, staff, partners and stakeholders around service delivery. Satisfaction levels and feedback from consultation activity help us to identify service improvement opportunities. This includes using feedback from any complaints received to improve services where appropriate.

5.2 Consultation and engagement is essential to ensure that services continually develop and adapt to the changing needs of our customers. The Council uses the Customer Service Charter to ensure our approach to customer service is consistent and externally validated. This is a robust national standard that ensures our services are responsive to the needs of our customers.

5.3 The Customer Service Charter has identified five key drivers of satisfaction which are:

- ✓ Delivery
- ✓ Timeliness
- ✓ Information
- ✓ Professionalism
- ✓ Attitude

5.4 Over the next two years there will be focus on developing guidance and tools to support services when consulting and engaging with customers to ensure our services are designed and delivered to reflect customer needs. We will also investigate methods and approaches that support the involvement of citizens in the development and review of our services.

6.0 Benchmarking

6.1 The Council's performance management system, Pyramid, provides information used in service and improvement planning. The Local Government Benchmarking Framework allows for benchmarking with other Local Authorities on a range of key performance indicators. Individual services also participate in benchmarking through bodies such as CIPfA, APSE, SOCITM etc. This allows shared learning around good practice to feed into our improvement planning. The Council will continue to promote corporate and service engagement in benchmarking activities that will challenge the performance of services.

7.0 Business Improvement Toolkit

7.1 The activities outlined above set out the Council's approach to identifying and prioritising areas for improvement. The Improvement team will continue to develop a toolkit of approaches which can be used to support services in planning and implementing improvements including:

- Process Improvement- BPR,
- Team development- Aston Team Diagnostic
- Implementing successful change- Change Management Toolkit

8.0 Measuring Performance

8.1 The following performance indicators will be measured to determine the impact of the Corporate Improvement. Some of these indicators are new measures, or are currently awaiting final confirmed figures for 2014/15. Targets will therefore be confirmed following identification of a benchmark figure.

| Outcome | Performance Indicator | 2014/15 Performance | 2017 Target | Responsible Officer |
|---|--|---|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Our culture, structure and systems make our Council a high performing and improving organisation that people choose to work for | Average Ranking of Argyll and Bute Council in LGBF | TBC (2013-14 performance was 19) | 17 | Improvement Manager/ Heads of Service |
| | % compliance with Audit Scotland's assessment of Public Performance Information | 67% (proposed figure awaiting confirmation) | 69% | Improvement Manager |
| We continually strive to improve and deliver quality services | % of Services completing self-assessments within agreed programme timescales (TBA) | New Indicator | 100% | Improvement Manager/ Head of Service |
| | Actual Score and Trend of Services Completing Self-Assessment | New Indicator | TBC | Improvement Manager/ Heads of Service |
| We provide excellent communications, | % Overall Customer | 85% | 88% | Improvement Manager/ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---------------------|
| customer service, consultation and engagement | Satisfaction score- Council scorecard | | | Heads of Service |
|---|---|--|--|---------------------|

| Corporate Improvement Strategy Action Plan | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|----------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Reference | Topic | Outcome | Actions | Timeline | Responsible Person | Status |
| IA1.0 | Planning and Performance Management | Embed robust performance management approaches throughout all Council Services | Develop learning and guidance materials to support services with planning and performance management. This will include detail around what makes a good indicator | March 16 | Improvement Manager | |
| IA1.1 | | Refine and rationalise the performance indicators used by services, departments and the Council | Support teams and services to identify the key performance indicators for the impact they make on the outcomes in their service plans and amend these through service planning | March 16 | Improvement Manager | |
| IA2.0 | Scrutiny | A common understanding of the role and function of scrutiny with the Council for officers and Elected Members | Deliver scrutiny development session for PRS committee and relevant council officers | Sept 15 | Improvement Manager | Session booked for 7 August. |
| IA2.1 | | | Develop a scrutiny handbook that outlines the Council's approach to scrutiny including the requirement for high level indicators to be identified to monitor the impact of all corporate strategies and plans | March 16 | Improvement Manager | |
| IA3.0 | Self-Assessment | Self-assessment activity supports strategic scrutiny of services by senior managers | Develop a framework and programme of self-assessment and scrutiny activity to support improvement planning | March 16 | Improvement Manager | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|---|---|------------|--|---|
| | | | (PSIF) | | | |
| IA4.0 | Consultation and Engagement | Customers are involved in shaping improvements in service design and delivery | Develop and implement a toolkit and guidance for consultation and engagement with customers | March 16 | Communications Manager | |
| IA4.1 | | | Review best practice in terms of engagement activities with a focus on those that involve citizens in the inspection and review of Council services. Develop proposals for implementation within Argyll and Bute. | March 2016 | Improvement Manager and Communications Manager | |
| IA5.0 | Benchmarking | Enhance performance management through increased use of benchmarking. Provide our customers, managers and elected members with meaningful comparative information | Develop benchmarking activity including the utilisation and analysis of LGBF | March 16 | Improvement Manager | Benchmarking work is currently ongoing with the Improvement Service |
| IA6.0 | Business Improvement | Services have access to a toolkit which supports the identification and implementation of improvements | Develop Improvement Toolkit | March 16 | Improvement Manager | |