



LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK (LGBF) 2017/18

Argyll and Bute

TELLING OUR STORY and

LOOKING FORWARD - EXPECTED IMPACT ON INDICATOR

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INTRODUCTION AND KEY TO SYMBOLS

↓ ↑ An improvement in performance – the arrow indicates the direction of travel

↓ ↑ A reduction in performance – the arrow indicates the direction of travel

↓ ↑ The performance itself isn't being measured – simply a fact i.e. 'how much is being spent'

→ No difference in position since last reporting period

★ Large improvement in performance

! Performance has dropped or is of interest

PLANNING, HOUSING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

SERVICE: PLANNING, HOUSING AND REGULATORY SERVICES			
INDICATOR REF: ENV5 - Cost of trading standards and environmental health per 1,000 population !			
Performance Range: £8,511 to £52,989 (Lowest is best)			
ARGYLL AND BUTE		SCOTLAND	
£38,498 ↑		£21,385 ↓	
CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	21.11% ↑	CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	-1.83% ↓
CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	-5.04% ↓	CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	-21.48% ↓
RANK POSITION: 31st ↓ RANK MOVEMENT: 1 ↓			
FAMILY GROUP RANKING 2017/18			
RANK POSITION: 8th RANK MOVEMENT: 1 ↓			
TELLING OUR STORY:			
This indicator is looking at the combined cost of trading standards and environmental health (the next two indicators) but also includes other services delivered by the Council including public conveniences			
The figures indicate an increase in the overall budget, although this is not reflective of the 2% efficiency savings which were made in 2017/18. The increase in budget is as a result of new funding provided by the Scottish Government for the enforcement of Novel Vaping Products or e- cigarettes. In addition, the figures include money advice and citizens advice costs, which account for £152,379 which were excluded from previous returns. The resultant impact is an additional cost of £189,927 in the 2017/18 budget. Comparing the equivalent budgets on 16/17 and 17/18, there is an overall equivalent reduction of £37,548			
The level of population has an impact on this indicator.			

The Scotland average has decreased by £398, but some of the decrease can be attribute to the MYE rise in population (20,100).

LOOKING FORWARD - EXPECTED IMPACT ON INDICATOR:

Delivering these regulatory services across a large geographical area disadvantages Argyll and Bute Council in this performance measure as our ranking will always be in the lower quartile with other rural authorities. A more meaningful measure is to benchmark this with our rural benchmarking partners and to use a 1000 square kilometre measure.

The benchmark costs will reduce in 2018/19 and 2019/20, as a result of savings which have been made across environmental health and trading standards, and increased income levels.

We have benchmarked our fees and charges with other local authorities to ensure that they are comparable and self-financing. This will seek to reduce the net costs of service delivery.

SERVICE: PLANNING, HOUSING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

INDICATOR REF: ENV5a - Cost of trading standards, money advice & citizen advice per 1000 population !

Performance Range: £1,316 to £17,547 (Lowest is best)

ARGYLL AND BUTE		SCOTLAND	
£9,527 ↑		£5,890 ↑	
CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	44.17% ↑	CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	5.20% ↑
CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	49.31% ↑	CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	6.24% ↑
RANK POSITION: 26 th ↓ RANK MOVEMENT: 6 ↓			
FAMILY GROUP RANKING 2017/18			
RANK POSITION: 5 th RANK MOVEMENT: 1 ↓			

TELLING OUR STORY:

This indicator is again looking at the cost of trading standards but with money advice and citizen advice. The indicator previously showed the cost of trading standards only, as from 2017/18 it includes Money Advice and Citizen Advice per 1,000 population. Trend data is therefore not comparable this year. The costs for money advice and citizens advice costs account for £152379 which were excluded from previous returns.

The figures indicate an increase in the overall budget, although this is not reflective of the 2% efficiency savings which were made in 2017/18. The increase in budget is as a result of new funding provided by the Scottish Government for the enforcement of Novel Vaping Products or e- cigarettes.

Comparable budgets for 16/17 and 17/18 for trading standards would show a reduction in budget of £189,927

The level of population has an impact on this indicator.

LOOKING FORWARD - EXPECTED IMPACT ON INDICATOR:

Delivering these regulatory services across a large geographical area disadvantages Argyll and Bute Council in this performance measure as our ranking will always be in the lower quartile with other rural authorities. A more meaningful measure is to benchmark this with our rural benchmarking partners and to use a 1000 square kilometre measure.

The costs will reduce in 2018/19 and 2019/20, as a result of savings which have been made across trading standards and the redesign of advice services.

To improve collaborative working and provide efficiencies, we have joined a North of Scotland Trading Standards Collaborative with other local authorities (Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Highland, Moray, Orkney, Western Isles), this will provide efficiencies although they may not significantly reduce this measure, which is population based and impacted by depopulation.

SERVICE: PLANNING, HOUSING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

INDICATOR REF: ENV5b - Cost of environmental health per 1,000 population !

Performance Range: £6,848 to £35,441 (Lowest is best)

ARGYLL AND BUTE		SCOTLAND	
£28,971 ↑		£15,496 ↓	
CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	15.06% ↑	CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	-4.26% ↓
CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	3.47% ↑	CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	-11.88% ↓
RANK POSITION: 31 st → RANK MOVEMENT: 0 →			
FAMILY GROUP RANKING 2017/18			
RANK POSITION: 7 th RANK MOVEMENT: 1 ↑			

TELLING OUR STORY:

The cost has risen by £321,000 on the year. This is the second largest increase across Scotland. Some of this increase in cost can be attributed to the drop in the population MYE figure. The authority with a larger cost increase has seen a population increase.

The Scotland average has seen a decrease of £689 / 1,000 population. Again some of the decrease in cost can be attributed to the rise in population.

This indicator includes the costs of delivering environmental health but also other services including public conveniences.

In reviewing the budget, the actual budgeted costs for environmental health have reduced by 3% although it is recognised that this indicator includes other costs above solely environmental health

Benchmarking figures for environmental health published by APSE, indicate that the net cost of delivering environmental health per 100 population is £12.87 which is a reduction from the 2016/17 figure of. It is also noted that income levels with total income levels being 27.6% of total expenditure

LOOKING FORWARD - EXPECTED IMPACT ON INDICATOR:

Delivering these regulatory services across a large geographical area disadvantages Argyll and Bute Council in this performance measure as our ranking will always be in the lower quartile with other rural authorities. A more meaningful measure is to benchmark this with our rural benchmarking partners and to use a 1000 square kilometre measure.

We have benchmarked our fees and charges with other local authorities to ensure that they are comparable and self-financing. This will seek to reduce the net costs of service delivery for 18/19 and 19/20 although the impact may be negligible in terms of the rating in this measure.

Legislative changes can adversely impact on Councils and there will be an increase in workload as a result of the new private water supply regulations and official controls for food safety. This may increase gross costs as new resources will be necessary to meet statutory duties. These should be offset, in part, with additional income levels.

SERVICE: PLANNING, HOUSING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

INDICATOR REF: ECON 2 - Cost per planning application

Performance Range: £2,536 to £10,801 (Lowest is best)

ARGYLL AND BUTE		SCOTLAND	
£3,133 ↑		£4,819 ↑	
CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	9.84% ↑	CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	3.61% ↑
CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	-52.90% ↓	CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	-11.90 ↓
RANK POSITION: 4 th ↓ RANK MOVEMENT: 3 ↓			
FAMILY GROUP RANKING 2017/18			
RANK POSITION: 3 rd RANK MOVEMENT: 2 ↓			

TELLING OUR STORY:

The number of planning applications has dropped by 20 to 1,034 or -1.9%.

Total Gross Expenditure has increased by £236,000, this in turn has impacted on the cost per application, which has risen by £280 from £2,853 to £3,133.

The Scotland average has seen a rise in cost of £167 and a drop in applications of 753.

LOOKING FORWARD - EXPECTED IMPACT ON INDICATOR:

Argyll and Bute Council continue to be very cost effective in its delivery of its Development Management function. This position has been achieved through delivery of a programme of efficiency savings and reducing staff numbers over a 10 year period which have seen the DM budget reduce by 68% from £805k in 07/08 to £272k for 2017/18.

The increase in Council expenditure during 17/18 has arisen from a significant shortfall from the forecast planning fee income for that period which amounted to an additional £236k from 2016/17. The downturn in planning fee income was related to a reduced number of high-value major and locally significant applications during 2017/18 which would normally be expected to generate a significant proportion of planning fee income; despite the shortfall in income it is noted that the overall volume of applications remained constant and was only 20 submissions less than the previous period - this is significantly better than the National position which indicates an average reduced in application volume of 753 submissions.

It is noted that during 2018/19 planning fee income has returned to forecast levels.

Whilst application levels have remained high it is however noted that Argyll and Bute's planning caseload consists of a high proportion of no-fee and low fee value submissions in comparison to more urban areas. The Scottish Government's Planning Bill which is currently progressing through parliamentary process seeks to deliver reform to the planning system and is expected to be accompanied by revisions to fee structures that more closely reflect the costs to local authorities of delivering the development management process.

SERVICE: PLANNING, HOUSING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

INDICATOR REF: ECON 3 - Average time per business and industry planning application (weeks) !

Performance Range: 5.71 to 16.61 (Lowest is best)

ARGYLL AND BUTE		SCOTLAND	
12.09 ↓		9.34 ↑	
CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	30.86% ↓	CHANGE 2016/17 TO 2017/18	-2.61% ↑
CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	12.36% ↓	CHANGE BASE YEAR TO 2017/18	-33.33% ↑
RANK POSITION: 27 th ↓ RANK MOVEMENT: 9 ↓			
FAMILY GROUP RANKING 2017/18			
RANK POSITION: 6 th RANK MOVEMENT: 1 ↓			

TELLING OUR STORY:

There has been a large increase in the time taken to deliver a business or industry planning application, up from 9.24 weeks to 12.09 weeks. Factors such as staffing levels can have an impact on this indicator.

The Scotland average has improved from 9.59 weeks to 9.34 weeks.

There is no breakdown of cost for commercial applications.

LOOKING FORWARD - EXPECTED IMPACT ON INDICATOR:

As a result of a significant shortfall in planning fee income during 2017/18 the Development Management Service sought to minimise the financial effects upon the Council by not backfilling posts that became vacant during this period. This action, along with an overall reduction in the DM staff pool to deliver planned budget savings, resulted in the Service operating for a substantial part of 2017/18 with a 20% reduction in professional staff than the previous reporting period and a consequent adverse impact upon time periods for determination of planning applications. Looking forward, whilst vacant positions have been backfilled the planned budget savings for 2017/18 and 2018/19 have seen a reduction in DM staff by 5fte from 2016/17 which has reduced the overall resilience of the Service to cope with periods of higher than normal demand or extended periods of absence without there being adverse impacts on performance.

It is highlighted however that simply measuring speed of decision making alone is not considered to be a good indicator of the overall quality of planning service provided. Whilst speed of decision making is acknowledged to be a significant factor in provision of a quality service it is contended that achieving

the right outcome of delivering the right development in the right place is an even more important element which requires to be taken into account. These qualitative outcomes are more difficult to capture in performance reporting but can be evidenced to some degree by high levels of customer satisfaction and approval rates. It is noted that the Heads of Planning Scotland has sought to advocate for a shift from numeric to qualitative performance markers and has embedded this approach within the Planning Performance Framework.