



PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

May 2026

Performance and Improvement Framework

1. Purpose and Foundations

This Performance and Improvement Framework (PIF) establishes a coherent, proportionate and end-to-end system for planning, delivering, monitoring and improving services across the Council. This approach has been designed to reflect the principles of Connect for Success and ensure that the Council continues to comply with its duties around Best Value and Public Performance Reporting in a way that reflects the changing demands on modern local government. It depends on our approach to continuous improvement, which is part of everyone's day-to-day work and aligned closely with the Council's corporate priorities.

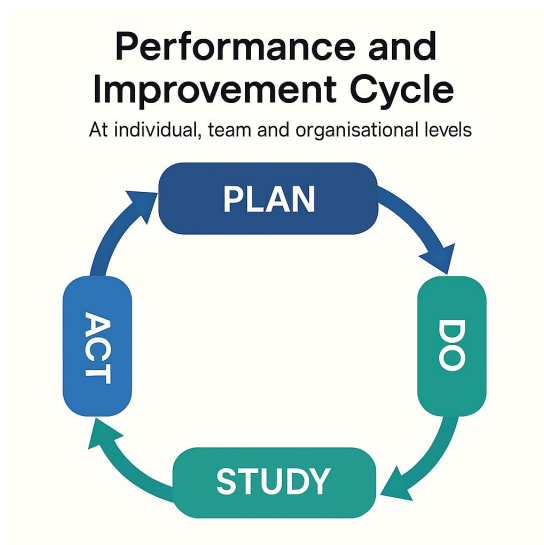
It enables the Council to: (a) secure Best Value through continuous improvement; (b) deliver strategic outcomes via aligned planning at corporate, team and individual levels, through a mix of strategies, workplans, and individual outcomes; (c) use data, customer insight and evidence for decision-making; (d) ensure transparency, accountability and effective governance; and (e) be an organisation where every employee contributes to quality, innovation and improvement through our emerging The Way We Work Together culture so that we thrive as individuals, teams, an organisation, and as communities.

The PIF acknowledges that a successful performance and improvement system requires ownership, innovation and accountability among all contributors. Our approach to performance and improvement is transparent and data and evidence-driven.

The framework document is a fixed overview of the Council's performance and improvement activities. It is supplemented by an appendix of supplementary resources which is a live document, designed to be updated to flex to the future needs of the Council.

2. Framework Cycle

The PIF utilises a four-stage improvement cycle to ensure both compliance and innovation, and supports transformation: -



This cycle ensures agility, responsiveness and accountability across the Council:

- Plan – Evidence-based strategic and team planning with engagement
- Do – Implement plans with effective service standards, project, financial and resource management
- Study – Up-to-date dashboards, scheduled reporting and benchmarking
- Act – Continuous improvement, innovation, transformation and learning

3. Strategic Vision and Outcome framework

The Council works towards a shared, long-term vision supported by clear corporate outcomes and measurable targets.

3.1 Corporate Vision

We have a vision for a successful, vibrant Argyll and Bute with a growing population and a thriving economy. We aim to create a place where communities and businesses thrive and people want to come to live, to work and to do business. This vision will be delivered through high-quality services, effective partnerships and sound financial stewardship.

3.2 Corporate Priorities

Our corporate priorities shape our policy and decision making. To deliver on these priorities and overcome the challenges we face, the Council must continue to transform at pace, building on our long-standing culture of innovation and use of digital technology.

4. The performance and improvement cycle stages

In order that the Council can make a positive difference to the people of Argyll and Bute through the delivery of public services, whether directly, in partnership or through delegated or devolved functions or activities, there is a cycle of continuous activity that is applied to these functions. This is made up of 4 stages: determining what we will do in the future; identifying what we will deliver towards these aspirations; monitoring how well we have delivered the services; evaluating the impact of our services and identifying how we could further improve on this.

4.1 Planning: Plan

The PIF is underpinned by aligned, tiered planning designed to cascade from strategic to operational levels and link directly to personal objectives. The Corporate Plan details the Council's priorities and all of our strategies and planning activities are designed to contribute to delivery of the priorities.

4.1.1 Planning Levels

A. Long-Term Corporate Planning

- Corporate Plan / Strategic Vision (typically 4–5 years)
- Local Outcomes / Partnership Plans and place-based strategies
- Thematic strategies (e.g., climate, digital, housing) with identified impact / success measures

B. Medium-Term Business Planning

- Service-level strategic and operational activities – Annual Business Plan
- Workforce Plans aligned to service and financial strategies
- Medium-Term Financial Strategy linking resources to priorities

C. Short-Term Team Planning

- Team plans and dashboards
- Project plans
- Resource allocation plans linked to seasonal or demand changes

D. Individual Planning

- Quality conversations (Performance and Career Conversations)
- Behavioural and capability development aligned to organisational values
- Clear contribution statements linking personal goals to outcomes

4.1.2 The Golden Thread

A 'golden thread' should connect individual objectives to team plans, business planning and corporate outcomes. This ensures that each person understands how their work contributes to the organisation's strategic goals and enables line-of-sight from frontline activity to corporate impact.

4.2 Service Delivery: Do

Delivery is designed around outcomes, quality and customer experience, with efficient, evidence-based allocation of resources and future-proof service design.

4.2.1 Delivery Principles

- Outcome-focused service specifications, service standards and Service Level Agreements
- Process simplification and automation to reduce duplication and manual processing
- Digital-by-design with assisted digital or alternative options for inclusion
- Partnership working and co-production where it adds value
- Benefits realisation tracked throughout the delivery lifecycle

4.2.2 Resource Management

Financial and workforce planning are integrated with service performance targets. Managers are accountable for budgets, capacity planning and prioritisation decisions, ensuring that resources are deployed where they achieve the greatest impact while planning for service delivery that meets the future needs of the communities / customers / clients.

4.2.3 Project & Programme Management

- Project management methodology and approvals for major programmes and capital projects, overseen by a Programme Management Office.
- Clear business cases, options appraisal, risk assessment and benefits tracking
- Structured oversight with regular highlight reports
- Management and monitoring of a Project Pipeline to identify projects and programmes of work that contribute to delivery of our Council priorities

4.3 Monitoring & Review: Study

Performance, finance, risk, customer insight and benchmarking are monitored through an integrated approach with real-time visibility and scheduled reporting cycles.

4.3.1 Performance Management

- Corporate, service and team indicators or service standards with named owners and data quality notes.
- Real-time dashboards and trend analysis for early intervention.
- Quarterly, six-monthly and annual reporting with narrative commentary.
- Mandatory commentary on off-track indicators and recovery actions.
- Documented data quality procedures and periodic audits.

4.3.2 Risk Management

Strategic and operational risks are aligned to outcomes and indicators. Risks are reviewed regularly, with controls, assurances and escalation routes defined in governance terms of reference.

4.3.3 Financial Monitoring

Financial reports present actuals, commitments and forecasts and can be used alongside performance indicators to support balanced decision-making and timely corrective action.

4.3.4 Benchmarking

Benchmarking raises self-awareness and opens conversations about good practice and improvement opportunities. The Council will participate in: -

- Statutory / local government benchmarking datasets and family groups where applicable
- Sector and cross-sector benchmarking (including professional bodies where relevant)
- Private-sector comparison where appropriate to test value and customer experience
- Longitudinal benchmarking to track performance over time

4.3.5 Evaluation

Evaluation of our activities helps us to understand the impact that we have on the outcomes that we have set out to achieve.

- Internal self-evaluation and peer reviews
- Consultation, engagement, employee and customer feedback
- Internal audit and external inspections
- Self-evaluation against national standards and guidance
- Benchmarking
- Post-implementation reviews and lessons-learned repositories
- Suggestions and feedback from Committees or Council

4.4 Making a Difference: Act

Implementing change through continuous improvement is everyone's responsibility, from individuals to Elected Members. This is implemented through a rigorous governance and accountability structure. The Council acknowledges the Scottish Approach to Service Design to design and deliver change at various levels and is guided by these principles, where appropriate. A layered governance model assures strategic direction, delivery control, risk management and transparent scrutiny.

4.4.1 Governance Structure

- Full Council – Approves strategy, budget and statutory reports
- Policy and Resources Committee – approves all resourcing and makes policy recommendations to Council
- Strategic Committees – determine strategic policy objectives and priorities for relevant policy areas
- Audit and Scrutiny Committee – independent scrutiny of performance, risk and governance
- Executive Leadership Team – Sets strategic direction for all services; manages high level strategic risk
- Senior Leadership Team – Integrates performance, risk, finance and improvement; owns recovery actions
- Project Boards – Oversight of service based initiatives and benefits realisation
- Programme Management Office – Will oversee all major projects and initiatives
- Service Leadership Teams – Monitor service delivery, risks and improvements

4.4.2 Roles & Responsibilities

Elected Members / Board Members

- Set outcomes, policies and budgets
- Scrutinise performance and risk; commission deep-dives where required
- Champion transformational priorities and ensure statutory compliance

Managers

- Lead team planning and delivery; manage budgets and risks
- Coach teams, ensure data quality and drive and deliver improvement activities

Teams

- Deliver operational plans and improvements
- Monitor indicators and escalate issues early

Individuals

- Deliver day-to-day responsibilities to agreed standards or plans
- Engage in Quality Conversations and champion organisational values and behaviours by modelling and promoting The Way We Work Together approach

5. Culture, Workforce & Improvement

The PIF embeds a performance system supported by leadership, learning, recognition and structured improvement mechanisms.

5.1 Culture of Improvement

- The Way We Work Together will be embedded in Quality Conversations
- Innovation encouraged at all levels; psychological safety for ideas
- Recognition schemes celebrating excellent performance and collaboration

5.2 Improvement Mechanisms

- Cross-cutting reviews to standardise and automate common processes
- Transformation programmes with change management and skills development in accordance with our Transformation Strategy

6. Customer Insight & Engagement

Customers and communities are at the heart of design and improvement. Insight is gathered continuously and acted on transparently. The Council acknowledges the Scottish Approach to Service Design which includes customer perspectives and impacts in the service design process and created an Engaging Communities Framework to better involve our customers as appropriate in the service design processes.

6.1 Principles

- A range of inclusive feedback options
- Appropriate purposes of engagement (consult, inform, collaborate, involve)
- Transparent 'You Said / We Did' reporting and publishing of service standards

6.2 Methods

- Real-time feedback tools and instant surveys
- Structured satisfaction surveys and thematic deep-dives
- Complaints analysis with corrective steps
- Mystery shopping and quality monitoring
- Community engagement and formal consultations

7. Public Performance Reporting

Public Performance Reporting (PPR) is carried out to ensure that we remain transparent, accountable, and focused on delivering high-quality services. It helps communities, Elected Members, regulators, and employees understand how well we are performing and where improvement is needed. PPR is achieved through: -

- Quarterly area committee dashboard reporting
- Council Annual Report
- Annual Business Plans
- Publication of benchmarking results and financial statements

8. Technology & Data Systems

Technology strengthens our ability to understand, track, and improve performance. It enables smarter decisions, faster action, and more effective delivery of services. Effective use of technology leads to better data quality and accuracy, faster reporting, enhanced insight through use of analytics, improved efficiency, and stronger collaboration, thereby supporting continuous improvement. This is demonstrated through utilisation of

- Performance process utilising automation to streamline reporting processes
- Real-time dashboards for officers and members
- Documented data quality procedures and audits for all metrics

9. Evaluation

The effectiveness of the PIF will be evaluated through a series of impact measures. This will include: -

Impact Measure	How Measured	Success Measure	When	By Whom
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Best Value impact	Audit Scotland reports	Self-evaluation carried out to inform all national thematic audits. Improvement actions for all national audits tracked and delivered.	Annually	Head of Customer Support Services
Proportion of performance indicators on or above target	Corporate, service and team dashboards	Increase by 5% year-on-year	Quarterly	Service Managers
Increase in stage 1 complaints responded to within statutory timescales	Complaints system reporting	90% response rate within timescales	Annually	Governance and Risk Manager / Heads of Service
Increase in stage 2 complaints responded to within statutory timescales	Complaints system reporting	80% response rates within timescales	Annually	Governance and Risk Manager / Heads of Service
Quality Conversation completion rates	Annual survey	Demonstrated improvement across all Services. Targets for individual Services and overall Council to be developed following outturn of 2026 survey.	Annually March 2027	Line Managers / OD Project Office OD Project Office / Heads of Service
On-time submission of performance reporting	Reporting schedules	100% on-time submission	Quarterly / 6-monthly / annually	Third Tier Managers / OD Project Office
Audit recommendations	Audit action tracker	100%	Quarterly	Heads of Service / Chief

agreed by management				Internal Auditor
Uptake of performance dashboards	Usage analytics	80% of services using monthly	Monthly	OD Project Office
Reduction in manual reporting effort	Baseline reference surveys	20% reduction in 12 months	Annually	OD Project Office / Data Programme Manager

10. Appendices

This framework document is supplemented by a number of additional documents and processes.

Appendix 1 – associated resources

Appendix 2 – glossary of terms used in the framework and performance and improvement process

Appendix 1 – associated resources (this is a live list and will be updated as appropriate)

The Role of Elected Members in delivering the Council's Performance and Improvement Framework
 Performance Management Approach
 Guide to Council Annual Report
 Guide to Corporate and Business Plans
 Guide to LGBF
 Public Performance Reporting
 Self-assessment template and guidance (this is being reviewed through our participation in the National Self-Evaluation Pilot)
 Guide to strategy development (under development)
 The Way We Work Together value statements

Appendix 2 – glossary of terms

Glossary is a live list and will be updated on an ongoing basis

