
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	19 September 2023
Report By:	Corporate Director - Education, Communities and Organisational Development	Report No:	PR/20/23/MR/KB
Contact Officer:	Morna Rae	Contact No:	01475 712042
Subject:	Corporate Policy and Performance Update: May-September 2023		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting

1.2 This report provides the Committee with an update on Corporate Policy and Performance matters relating to:

- the Inverclyde Council Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) 2023/28;
- Corporate awards;
- New Deal with Local Government - the Verity House Agreement;
- the Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee report on community planning;
- the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) 2021/22 (Refresh), and
- the Programme for Government 2023 - 2024.

1.3 More information is provided in the Appendix.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

1. notes the latest updates in relation to Corporate Policy and Performance;
2. notes that a more detailed report on the Verity House Agreement will be submitted to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2023, and
3. notes that additional information on the Programme for Government will be presented to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2023.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities and Organisational Development

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 A Corporate Policy and Performance update report is considered at every meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee; the last such report was submitted to the meeting of the Committee on 23 May 2023.

3.2 Inverclyde Council GLP 2023/28

As Members are aware, the Council's GLP 2023/28 was submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig (the principal public body in Scotland responsible for promoting Gaelic development) for final assessment and approval. The Plan 2023/28 received Ministerial approval on 3 July 2023 and a bilingual version is available to view using this link:

<https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/council-and-government/strategies-policies-and-plans/inverclyde-gaelic-language-plan/draft-inverclyde-gaelic-language-plan-2022-27>

3.3 As part of the governance of the Plan 2023/28, an Annual Monitoring Report will be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee and to Bòrd na Gàidhlig on progress made with its implementation.

3.4 Corporate awards

Key national awards for local government include those co-ordinated by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). Gaining external recognition can increase the profile of the Council, benchmark best practice and boost morale.

3.5 At the LGC Awards 2023, the Council was shortlisted in the category entitled *Council of the Year*. The Chief Executive chaired a Working Group in preparation for a visit to Inverclyde by judges on 22 May 2023, followed by a presentation on 8 June 2023. While the Council did not win the overall Award, to be shortlisted for such a prestigious national award is positive recognition.

3.6 At the COSLA Excellence Awards 2023, the Council has been named as a finalist in the *Strengthening communities and local democracy* category for our work examining historic links to slavery. Finalists were invited to present to an adjudication panel during the third week in August 2023. The winners will be announced on 28 September 2023 at COSLA's Annual Conference and Exhibition 2023.

3.7 Inverclyde Council has also been shortlisted in the APSE awards in the *Workforce Initiative* and *Council of the Year* categories. The winners will be announced at the APSE Annual Charity Awards on 14 September 2023.

3.8 New deal with local government – The Verity House Agreement

COSLA and the Scottish Government have agreed a new Partnership Agreement – The Verity House Agreement – which sets out a vision for a more collaborative approach to delivering their shared priorities for the people of Scotland. The Agreement is available to view using this link <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/agreement/2023/06/new-deal-local-government-partnership-agreement/documents/new-deal-local-government-verity-house-agreement/new-deal-local-government-verity-house-agreement/govscot%3Adocument/new-deal-local-government-verity-house-agreement.pdf>

3.9 The Scottish Government and local government will work together to:

1. **tackle poverty**, particularly child poverty, in recognition of the joint national mission to tackle child poverty;

2. **transform our economy through a just transition to deliver net zero**, recognising climate change as one of the biggest threats to communities across Scotland; and
3. **deliver sustainable person-centred public services** recognising the fiscal challenges, ageing demography and opportunities to innovate.

3.10 The Agreement also has implications for the Council's budget-setting process, as outlined in the report entitled *Approach to the March 2024 Budget* which was considered by the Committee at its meeting on 15 August 2023.

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3.11 A more detailed report on the Agreement will be submitted to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2023 once further information is available on how the new approach will be implemented.

3.12 **Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee report on community planning**

The Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee published a report on 22 June 2023 relating to their inquiry into community planning.

3.13 The main objectives of the inquiry were to look at the impact The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 has had on community planning and to explore how Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) respond to significant events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis. The report is available to view using this link:
<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-local-government-housing-and-planning/business-items/community-planning-inquiry>

3.14 The report made a number of recommendations which include:

- The Scottish Government should consider during its review of Part 2 of The Act how CPPs can best encourage the involvement of the private sector in community planning, for example, through Business Gateway which is delivered by local authorities. It should also explore how CPPs can best contribute to increasing economic regionalisation and encourage collaboration between CPPs within regions.
- The Scottish Government's review of The Act should explore whether its ambitions for community planning are realistic without being backed up by direct investment. CPPs may have an important role to play in new priorities such as Community Wealth Building and the Scottish Government should ensure that they are sufficiently resourced before creating any additional statutory requirements.
- Community engagement requires a professional skillset that cannot be met solely by busy CPP officers in local authorities who may lack experience. The Scottish Government should explore how it can support community planning by resourcing a network of local Community Engagement Officers within local authorities, and by encouraging local authorities to ensure they have sufficient Community Planning Officers.
- In its development of a Community Wealth Building Bill, the Scottish Government should give early consideration to the role of CPPs in delivering the policy ambitions, whether any legislative changes to their role would be required to facilitate that, and should ensure sufficient guidance is provided to CPPs about their role in community wealth building.

- The work that the Scottish Government and COSLA are jointly undertaking to review Local Governance in Scotland should incorporate the role that CPPs have, and any conclusions reached should provide clarity for all partners on the importance of community planning.

3.15 LGBF 2021/22 (Refresh)

The LGBF performance data 2021/22 was published by the Improvement Service on 17 March 2023 and a dedicated Elected Member Briefing on Inverclyde Council's performance took place on 19 April 2023. At the Briefing, Members were informed that data for a small number of LGBF indicators was due to be published later in the year.

3.16 Performance data for the following measures is now available, bringing the total number of LGBF indicators for 2021/22 to 99 (excluding housing):

- The gross cost of *children looked after* in residential based services, per child per week;
- The gross cost of *children looked after* in a community setting, per child per week;
- The percentage of children being looked after in the community;
- The proportion of pupils entering positive destinations;
- The percentage of children meeting developmental milestones;
- The percentage of child protection re-registrations within 18 months; and
- The percentage of looked after children with more than one placement in the last year (August-July).

3.17 It should be highlighted that the Improvement Service has recently moved to publishing data via an LGBF performance dashboard, using *Microsoft Power BI*, which can be viewed here: <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/explore-the-data>. This means that the overall quartile analysis of Inverclyde Council's relative ranking, benchmarked against all Scottish Councils, is no longer readily available.

3.18 Details of Inverclyde Council's performance is provided in the Appendix, along with comparator Scotland and LGBF Family Group data 2021/22. When interpreting the data, it is important to remember that performance in any reporting year will naturally vary across Councils depending on a variety of factors including deprivation levels, population density and local investment and policy decisions in support of local priorities. To provide the Committee with some context around local performance, a commentary has also been provided by the relevant Service in this report for each Children's Services measure.

3.19 Performance overview

Inverclyde Council ranks in quartile 1 (i.e. a national ranking between 1 and 8 out of 32 local authorities) for the following measures:

- Gross cost of *children looked after* in community-based services, per child per week

Inverclyde's gross cost of children looked after in a community setting, per child per week, was the third lowest in Scotland at £217. Inverclyde's costs fell between 2020/21 and 2021/22, despite costs rising nationally from £392 to £402.

Service commentary: This performance indicator is drawn from financial information provided to Scottish Government and is cross-referenced with a separate data return. This reflects the local commitment to keeping children close to their local community, for example, within kinship arrangements or local fostering placements.

- Percentage of *looked after children* with more than one placement in the last year

The percentage of looked after children in Inverclyde with more than one placement in the last year (August-July) fell from 15.3% in 2020/21 to 9.8% in 2021/22 and was the fifth lowest (i.e. best) in Scotland. There was also a decrease nationally for this measure over the same period, although to a lesser extent, from 16.8% to 15.9%.

Service commentary: Local performance echoes national trends which reflect the impact of Covid-19 upon limiting placement moves for children during 2021/22. This may also reflect that children remained in placements for longer during the reporting period. It is expected that the continuing impact of the pandemic upon the capacity of foster carers and demand for residential placements will be more fully reflected in future reporting periods.

3.20 No measures rank in quartile 2 (i.e. a national ranking between 9 and 16 out of 32 local authorities).

3.21 Inverclyde Council ranks in quartile 3 (i.e. a national ranking between 17 and 24 out of 32 local authorities) for the following measures:

- The gross cost of children looked after in residential based services, per child per week

Inverclyde's gross cost of *children looked after* in a residential setting is the 11th highest in Scotland and is higher than the national average for the first time since 2011/12. According to the data, gross costs in Inverclyde increased from £3,299 in 2020/21 to £4,938 in 2021/22, an increase of almost 50%. As a result, Inverclyde's ranking moved from 7 to 22.

Service commentary: This increase in cost reflects the corresponding change in demand for external placements during the Covid-19 pandemic. Services continued to focus on protecting the most vulnerable children and young people during this period of restriction, within the context of increased demand across Scotland. This also reflects the need for placements for children with more complex needs and greater vulnerability. Increased earlier intervention approaches are expected to contribute to reduced demand for residential placements in the future.

- Percentage of children being looked after in the community

The proportion of children in Inverclyde being looked after in the community rose from 83.8% in 2020/21 to 86.5% in 2021/22, in contrast to a small decrease nationally, moving from 90.3% to 89.8%. This resulted in the national ranking improving by 3 places, moving from 24 to 21. The Improvement Service reports that the balance of care varies systematically with deprivation, with Councils with higher levels of deprivation reporting a higher balance of care in community settings.

Service commentary: This indicates that the number of children looked after in the community returned to pre-pandemic levels despite the impact of Covid-19. Most children who require to be *looked after* are looked after at home, with fostering placements and kinship arrangements also being community-based *looked after* settings.

- Percentage of child protection re-registrations within 18 months

The percentage of child protection re-registrations within 18 months in Inverclyde has fallen from the second quartile (previous rank 14) in 2020/21 to the third quartile in 2021/22 (new rank 23). Performance in 2021/22 was 10.5%, compared to 3.4% the previous year. It should be highlighted however that 2021/22 performance is the same as in 2019/20. The Scottish figure also increased, rising from 7% to 8%.

Service commentary: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to be seen in activity to protect children and young people. The number of children re-registered on the child protection register within 18 months returned to pre-pandemic levels, following a notable reduction in 2020/21. This may reflect the national impact of restrictions during the pandemic, with more children included on the child protection register for longer periods of time and fewer children being de-registered.

3.22 Inverclyde Council ranks in quartile 4 (i.e. a national ranking between 25 and 32 out of 32 local authorities) for the following measures:

- Proportion of pupils entering positive destinations

There was a fall in ranking for the percentage of Inverclyde pupils entering positive destinations, moving from 20th position in 2020/21 to 29th in 2021/22, due to performance decreasing from 95.4% to 94% between the two years. Both the Family Group and the Scottish average show an improvement in the proportion of positive destinations.

Service commentary: This is a measure of initial leaver destinations, which is taken as a snapshot when pupils leave school. As part of the Senior Phase Action Plan the employability team are looking at post school provision to ensure that suitable provision is in place when a young person leaves school. The participation measure, which is taken throughout the year (rather than just a snapshot), gives a more positive picture however this figure, highlights that there is still work to be undertaken on transition planning.

- Percentage of children meeting developmental milestones

The percentage of Inverclyde children meeting developmental milestones at their 27–30-month review in 2021/22 remains one of the lowest in Scotland, ranking at 31. Inverclyde's performance figure in 2021/22 was 74.5%. The national average is 82% and the Family Group average is just below 80%. West Dunbartonshire Council ranked 32, with a performance figure of 74%. The Scottish average has fallen for second consecutive year.

In its national overview, the Improvement Service note that persistent inequalities in the proportion of children found to have a developmental concern increased faster for the most deprived children during the first year of Covid. It is suggested that the overall national increase in concerns that have emerged in 2021/22 data may be a result of changes in how reviews were delivered, as well as changes in circumstances in the daily lives of children during the pandemic.

Service commentary: Inverclyde is historically low on this measure. Different health boards use slightly different measures for this outcome and the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde group results do not always correlate with performance over time. Despite this low score we typically see pupils performing above average when they enter primary school.

3.23 The latest LGBF performance has been scrutinised by the Corporate Management Team and areas for improvement will be fed into the wider Health and Social Care Partnership and Inverclyde Council strategic and service planning processes where appropriate.

3.24 Programme for Government 2023 to 2024

The Scottish Government published its Programme for Government 2023 to 2024 on 5 September 2023. This sets out the actions they intend to take in the coming year and beyond and the legislative programme for the next parliamentary year. Additional information can be found here <https://www.gov.scot/programme-for-government/>. Further detail will be submitted to the November meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

4.0 PROPOSALS

4.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

1. notes the latest updates in relation to Corporate Policy and Performance;
2. notes that a more detailed report on the Verity House Agreement will be submitted to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2023, and
3. notes that additional information on the Programme for Government will be presented to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2023.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal/Risk	X	
Human Resources		X
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	X	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		X
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		X

5.2 Finance

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

5.3 Legal/Risk

Section 6(2) of The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 enables Bòrd na Gàidhlig to instruct a public authority to submit a report on the extent to which it has implemented the measures set out in its GLP.

5.4 Human Resources

There are direct no human resources implications arising from this report.

5.5 Strategic

The matters referred to in this report are of relevance to the following Council Plan 2023/28 Theme:

Theme 3: Performance

- High quality and innovative services are provided, giving value for money.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 None.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2018/19-2021/22

Ref		Performance				Comparator Data	Rank			
		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
CHN 8a	Gross cost of <i>children looked after</i> in residential-based services per child per week	£2,908	£2,800	£3,299	£4,938	Scotland £4,698 Family Group £4,973	6	4	7	22
CHN 8b	Gross cost of children looked after in a community setting per child per week	£244	£217	£232	£217	Scotland £402 Family Group £327	5	3	3	3
CHN 9	Balance of care for looked after children - % of children being looked after in the community	86.3%	86.6%	83.8%	86.5%	Scotland 89.8% Family Group 90%	22	22	24	21
CHN 11	% of pupils entering positive destinations	95.8%	93%	95.4%	94%	Scotland 95.7% Family Group 95.6%	8	15	20	29
CHN 17	% of children meeting developmental milestones (27-30 month review)	75.8%	75.6%	76.7%	74.5%	Scotland 82.1% Family Group 77.9%	32	32	32	31
CHN 22	% of child protection re-registrations within 18 months	9.4%	10.5%	3.4%	10.5%	Scotland 8% Family Group 8.4%	25	24	14	23rd
CHN 23	% of looked after children with more than one placement in the last year (August-July)	15.6%	14.4%	15.3%	9.8%	Scotland 15.9% Family Group 13.3%	7	7	8	5th

Rank 1-16 (Quartiles 1 & 2)
 Rank 17-24 (Quartile 3)
 Rank 25 – 32 (Quartile 4)