

---

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>13 August 2024</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of OD, Policy and Communications</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>PR/28/24/MR/RB</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Rhoda Braddick</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712146</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Corporate Self-Assessment of Best Value Performance</b>		

---

## **1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

1.1  For Decision  For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the recent corporate self-assessment, which focused on the Council's Best Value performance. Full details are provided within the self-assessment report, which is attached as appendix 1.

1.3 As a result of the self-assessment, a Best Value Improvement Plan has been developed. The Committee will be kept appraised of the progress made in delivering the Improvement Plan as part of the standard six-monthly updates that are provided on national and local developments relating to Best Value.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note:

- The development of a 'Corporate Self-Assessment of Best Value Performance' report; and
- That six monthly progress reports on the delivery of the Improvement Plan will be brought to the Committee.

**Morna Rae**  
**Head of OD, Policy and Communications**

### **3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

- 3.1 A review of Inverclyde Council's self-evaluation arrangements was included in the 'Wider Scope and Best Value' element of the Inverclyde Council Annual Audit Report (AAR) 2022/23. A recommendation within the AAR was the implementation of a process to report on overall Best Value achievement and delivery.
- 3.2 To address this, the CMT agreed to conduct a corporate self-assessment focusing on Best Value performance. The assessment comprised of two strands:
1. A 'Best Value Checklist', designed by the Improvement Service, which was distributed as an online survey to all Council and HSCP team leaders, service managers and the Extended Corporate Management Team (ECMT). The survey asked for views on performance across the seven Best Value themes. Overall, the survey results were very positive and showed a high level of consensus among respondents that the Council is achieving Best Value.
  2. An Improvement Workshop, held on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024, attended by service managers and members of the ECMT. The session provided an opportunity for a focused discussion in groups on organisational strengths and potential areas for development. Each group was also asked to reach an overall evaluation of the Council's performance in relation to the seven Best Value thematic areas.
- 3.3 Both the survey results and the feedback from the Improvement Workshop have been reviewed by the CMT and a summary of the findings presented in a 'Corporate Self-Assessment of Best Value Performance' report, which is attached in appendix 1. The report is structured in three parts:
- Section 1 – the background to the self-assessment and details of the approach taken.
  - Section 2 – a summary of the key learning gathered for each Best Value theme, along with the next improvement steps.
  - Section 3 – an Improvement Plan which brings together the cross-cutting improvement areas, along with timescales and lead officers.
- 3.4 The Committee currently receives an update on local and national developments in relation to Best Value every six months within the Corporate Policy and Performance update report. The Committee will be kept apprised of the progress that is made in delivering the new Best Value Improvement Plan as part of these updates.

### **4.0 PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to note that a corporate self-assessment on Best Value performance has been carried out and an Improvement Plan has been developed and approved by the CMT in response to the assessment findings.
- 4.2 The Council has a statutory duty to publish information to citizens and communities on how it is performing, including its assessment of performance against the duty of Best Value. To fulfil the requirements of this public performance reporting duty, it is proposed that the 'Corporate Self-Assessment of Best Value performance' report be published on the Council website to ensure that is accessible to the public.

## 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 associated with 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

The delivery of Best Value is a statutory requirement introduced in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, supported by Best Value: revised statutory guidance 2020.

## 5.4 Human Resources

There are no human resources implications associated with this report.

## 5.5 Strategic

The self-assessment contributes to the delivery of the Council Plan as follows:

**Theme 3, Performance:** High quality and innovative services are provided, giving value for money.

## **6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 The Best Value survey was issued to all team leaders, service managers and the ECMT. All the feedback received from the survey and the workshop is valuable and will help to inform wider working practices going forward.

## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 None.

# Inverclyde Council

## Self-Assessment of Best Value Performance



## Section 1: Background to our Best Value self-assessment

---

Self-assessment is an integral part of Inverclyde Council’s strategic planning and performance management framework. By reviewing organisational strengths and areas for development, it helps to identify where improvement is required to deliver the Council Plan 2023/28 and ensure that the statutory duty of Best Value is being met, which in turn supports the delivery of positive outcomes for our residents.

Self-assessment as an improvement tool is well embedded within the Council, with corporate, service and thematic assessments having previously been carried out. Following the introduction of a new approach to the audit of Best Value in 2023, it was considered timely that Best Value should be the focus of a Council wide self-assessment to enable the Council to report more fully on its performance in this area to the public.

### Our approach

With the support of the Improvement Service, a ‘Corporate Best Value Checklist’, was developed to provide a framework for the assessment. The ‘Checklist’ is a survey that reflects the Best Value Statutory Guidance, to capture views on the Council’s performance across the seven Best Value themes:

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Vision and Leadership                  | 5. Working with Communities |
| 2. Governance and Accountability          | 6. Sustainable Development  |
| 3. Effective use of resources             | 7. Fairness and Equality    |
| 4. Partnerships and collaborative working |                             |

The ‘Checklist’ was issued to all employees at team leader grade and above within Inverclyde Council and Inverclyde HSPC. Participants were asked to assess whether the right plans and objectives are in place for each Best Value theme. A comment box was included to capture views on organisational strengths and where current practice could potentially be strengthened. The second stage of the assessment was a dedicated Improvement Planning workshop attended by the Council’s Senior Management Team to review and discuss the survey results in more detail and agree the key areas for improvement. A judgement of the Council’s performance in each thematic area was agreed, using the following scale:



Excellent



Good



Satisfactory



Below Satisfactory

This report summarises the key learning from the self-assessment. This has been considered by the CMT and the areas for improvement that are within the scope of the Council agreed. This can be found in section 3 of this report. The delivery of this improvement activity will be overseen by the Corporate Management Team, with six monthly progress reports being prepared and published on the Inverclyde Council website.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### BEST VALUE THEME 1: Vision and Leadership

Vision and Leadership is concerned with effective political and managerial leadership. Leaders should demonstrate behaviours and working relationships that foster a culture of cooperation, and a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation.

In our assessment of **Vision and Leadership** we considered how well Inverclyde Council demonstrates the following:

1. Members and senior managers have a clear vision for their area that is shared with citizens, key partners and other stakeholders.
2. Members set strategic priorities that reflect the needs of communities and individual citizens, and that are aligned with the priorities of partners.
3. Effective leadership drives continuous improvement and supports the achievement of strategic objectives.
4. Members and senior managers are clear about how local strategic plans and priorities are linked to the National Performance Framework outcomes.
5. Members and senior managers drive transformational change, are clear about transformation projects within the council and how they are aligned with organisational priorities and plans.

#### Evaluation results:



**82.5%** of respondents to the Best Value Checklist agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Council meets the Best Value Vision and Leadership criteria.



#### **Improvement workshop assessment: Good**

This was the evaluation reached at the Improvement Planning workshop. This judgement is based on evidence of very strong, sustained performance with strengths outweighing areas for development.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### Vision and Leadership: Key Learning

The key learning from the self-assessment is summarised below:

- The Council Plan 2023/28 sets a clear vision for the area, underpinned by outcomes for the organisation. A strong golden thread is evident between the aspirations within the Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33 and the Council Plan 2023/28, with the outcomes rooted in a strong evidence base, following extensive statistical analysis and consultation.
  - The Council has a robust strategic planning framework in place. Evidence of this includes the Committee Delivery and Improvement Plans; Service Plans; Annual Performance Reports; Budget consultation and engagement; the Financial Strategy (including Capital and Treasury Strategies); the Corporate Asset Management Strategy; the Delivering Differently Change Programme, a Local Housing Strategy; Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and a Net Zero Strategy.
  - Strong collaborative working exists between Elected Members and senior managers to achieve key strategic targets. The Members Budget Working Group is a positive example of leaders working together to achieve the Council's vision and working together to support effective decision-making regarding priorities for Council spend. Across the wider Council and Services, strong relationships are in place, built on a solid foundation and shared values.
  - Robust community engagement processes are in place, examples of which include engagement with service users/residents feeding into locality and strategic plans; annual Budget consultation, with effective feedback processes in place to gather the views of stakeholders to support decision making in the short, medium and long term; the Citizens; Panel, with 2 surveys conducted each year; the recent development and refresh of Inverclyde's Community Councils and the involvement of young people in the development of the Children's Services Plan.
- Continuous improvement is ensured by a commitment to self-assessment at a corporate and service level. It is also supported via support for the workforce through initiatives such as the mentoring Leadership programme and workforce planning arrangements, with support for promotion in critical areas of service delivery. A new approach to having regular, focused discussions on performance and opportunities has been introduced via Positive Conversations.

#### How could we strengthen our current practice?

- Continue to promote the Council Plan 2023/28 at all levels.
- Utilise and develop technology, including website development, to support improved communication across the workforce and, in particular, to reach employees that are non-office based.
- Build on existing relationships within management teams and strengthen our succession planning arrangements.
- Explore opportunities to increase joined-up working across Services to deliver an improved customer service.

#### **Our next steps for improvement**

<b>V&amp;L1:</b>	Continue to develop employee communications, including increased face-to-face meetings, to build the support available to employees.
<b>V&amp;L2:</b>	Further improve the customer experience by continuing to upskill employees; explore new opportunities to integrate knowledge across services and move more services online to support channel shift.
<b>V&amp;L3:</b>	Explore different ways to deliver Council services to those communities that are harder to reach.



## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### BEST VALUE THEME 2: Governance and Accountability

Governance and accountability are concerned with openness and transparency in decision-making, schemes of delegation and effective reporting of performance. This is essential for informed decision-making, effective scrutiny of performance and stewardship of resources.

In our assessment of **Governance and Accountability** we considered how well Inverclyde Council demonstrates the following:

1. The Council can demonstrate clear understanding and the application of the principles of good governance and transparency of decision-making at strategic, partnership and operational levels.
2. The Council can demonstrate the existence of strategic service delivery and financial plans that align the allocation of resources with desired outcomes for the short, medium and long terms.
3. Members and senior managers have established strong governance arrangements with clear lines of accountability for the council.
4. Performance is reported to the public, to ensure that citizens are well informed about the quality of services being delivered and what they can expect in future.
5. There is a responsible attitude to managing risk, and business continuity plans (including civil contingencies and emergency plans) are in place to allow an effective and appropriate response to planned and unplanned events and circumstances.

#### Evaluation results:



**82.5%** of respondents to the Best Value Checklist agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Council meets the Best Value Governance and Accountability criteria.



#### **Improvement workshop assessment: Good**

This was the evaluation reached at the Improvement Planning workshop. This judgement is based on evidence of good performance with strengths outweighing areas for development.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### Governance and Accountability: Key Learning

The key learning from the self-assessment is summarised below:

- The Council has implemented a range of key strategic plans that support effective governance and accountability, examples of which include the Committee Plans, Financial Strategy, Annual Accounts, Annual Audit, Annual Governance Statement and Asset Management Plan. Progress in the delivery of these plans is continually reviewed in relation to short, medium-and long-term outcomes.
- There are regular meetings of the Crisis Resilience Management Team (CRMT) and there are clear and defined roles for the CMT, CRMT and Council Incident Officer in an emergency situation. Additionally, Business Continuity Plans are regularly updated to ensure that the Council responds effectively to any planned/unplanned events. Regular civil contingencies training and workshops are also held, and guidance and resources are available.
- Effective processes are in place to monitor budgets closely at a service level, whilst capital projects are identified and progressed via careful governance, dialogue, consultation and debate.
- Governance and decision-making processes are carried out transparently, demonstrated by the recording of Council Committees. Committee reports and minutes are fully accessible to both employees and the public via the Council website.
- Robust information governance procedures are in place, including appropriate retention schedules and regular updating of Council documents.
- A review of the Policy Framework was carried out recently and a comprehensive register of policies and strategies, along with a review schedule has been developed and incorporated within the refreshed Committee Plans.

- A new Risk Management approach has been implemented, alongside a Risk Strategy. A Risk Governance group meets to ensure a corporate approach to the management of risk. In addition, each Directorate and Service has its own risk register, detailing operational risks. An appropriate escalation process is in place to report risk and mitigation, whilst the Health and Safety Committee ensures appropriate management of risks and support.
- Performance at a corporate and service level is regularly reported to the appropriate Committee, including performance against targets and benchmarking information. The Council has a dedicated performance page for reporting performance to the public, with links to external audit evaluations as well as reports to the Council's own Committees.

#### How could we strengthen our current practice?

- Review the current use of social media to establish whether it could support improved communication and information flow.
- Continue to deliver awareness raising sessions, training and wider communication of key areas critical to effective governance and accountability.

#### Our next steps for improvement

<b>G&amp;A1:</b>	Continue to raise employee, public and partner awareness of the positive work of the Council via increased promotion and communication.
<b>G&amp;A2:</b>	Deliver refresher training to senior staff on key Governance areas, alongside organisational policy.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### BEST VALUE THEME 3: Effective Use of Resources

Effective use of resources is concerned with having clear plans and strategies in place, with sound governance and strong leadership. All resources are deployed to achieve its strategic priorities, meet the needs of its communities and deliver continuous improvement.

**In our assessment of Effective Use of Resources we considered how well Inverclyde Council demonstrates the following:**

1. The Council makes best use of its financial and other resources in all of its activities.
2. The Council has robust procedures and controls in place to ensure that resources are used appropriately and effectively.
3. The Council works with its partners to maximise the use of their respective resources to achieve shared priorities and outcomes.
4. A workforce strategy is in place that sets out expectations on how the Council's staff will deliver its vision, priorities and values.
5. There is a corporate approach to asset management that is reflected in asset management strategies and plans, which are subject to regular review.
6. The Council ensures that its data is collected, managed and analysed so that people have access to the information they require to make decisions and deliver efficient, improving services.
7. The Council has a robust performance management framework supporting effective decision making, service improvement and risk assessment with clear linkages to strategic plans.

#### Evaluation results:



**75%** of respondents to the Best Value Checklist agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Council meets the Best Value Effective Use of Resources criteria.



#### **Improvement workshop assessment: Good**

This was the evaluation reached at the Improvement Planning workshop. This judgement is based on evidence of good performance with strengths outweighing areas for development.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### Effective Use of Resources: Key Learning

The key learning from the self-assessment is summarised below:

- The Council has highly effective financial management procedures and controls in place. The Financial Strategy, which provides direction, is well embedded and updated twice a year.
- A balanced budget has been delivered in successive years, whilst budget monitoring processes ensure spend is controlled and the Committee Delivery and Improvement plans ensure objectives are achieved.
- The Council has a refreshed People and Organisational Development (POD) Strategy in place, which sets out a corporate approach to supporting and developing the Council's workforce and expectations on how the Council's staff will deliver its vision, priorities and outcomes. Progress in delivering the POD is monitored and reported to the Policy and Resources Committee, highlighting how employees are delivering on key outcomes.
- The Council was awarded 'Best workforce initiative winner' at the APSE awards 2023, providing national, external recognition that the Council uses resources effectively to support improvements in service provision.
- There is a corporate approach to asset management with a new Asset Management Strategy and Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan in place. The rationalisation of assets is also a workstream saving and subject to reports to Committee.
- The Council has robust procurement practices in plan which are subject to close monitoring with an Annual Procurement Report presented to Committee for scrutiny.
- Data is used effectively to support decision making and identifying strategic priorities for the Council and the Inverclyde Alliance.
- Partnership working is a strength in Inverclyde. The Council works with its partners to delivery shared priorities and improved local and national outcomes e.g. the Socio-Economic Taskforce, Levelling Up and City Region projects.

#### How could we strengthen our current practice?

- Enhance our people management processes, for example, via increased access to data from HR21, attendance management and additional training.
- Refresh the Asset Management Plan to clarify the resources required to sustain the portfolio (people, money, time).
- Carry out a strategic systems review and further develop our use of data, recognising that this requires investment in time and systems.
- Build on current financial processes by carrying out forecasting / prioritisation, reflecting available resources.
- Achieve clarity from Elected Members regarding service delivery expectations.
- Achievement of longer-term financial certainty to support more effective service planning.

#### **Our next steps for improvement**

<b>UoR1:</b>	Further develop our use of data and systems to increase the effectiveness of current resources.
<b>UoR2:</b>	Seek to align our assets and resources in tandem with a shared understanding of service delivery expectations.
<b>UoR3:</b>	Refresh the Council's Asset Management Plan, setting out a commitment of the resources required to sustain the portfolio (people, money, time).

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### BEST VALUE THEME 4: Partnerships and Collaborative Working

Partnerships and Collaborative Working is concerned with the Council demonstrating how it, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, provides effective leadership to meet local needs and deliver desired outcomes, whilst demonstrating a commitment to, and understanding of, the benefits of effective collaborative working and how this supports the achievement of strategic objectives.

In our assessment of **Partnerships and Collaborative Working** we considered how well Inverclyde Council demonstrates the following:

1. Members and senior managers have established and developed a culture that encourages collaborative working and service provision that will contribute to better and customer-focused outcomes.
2. The Council can demonstrate effective governance arrangements for Community Planning Partnerships and other partnerships.
3. The CPP and other partnerships have collaborative arrangements in place including structures with clear lines of responsibility and accountability.
4. The Council and partners have agreement around targets and milestones they are aiming to achieve through partnership working.
5. The Council can provide evidence that partnership/ cross-service working delivers more benefits than would be achieved by working in silos.

#### Evaluation results:



**80%** of respondents to the Best Value Checklist agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Council meets the Best Value Partnerships and Collaborative Working criteria.



#### **Improvement workshop assessment: Good**

This was the evaluation reached at the Improvement Planning workshop. This judgement is based on evidence of good performance with strengths outweighing areas for development.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### Partnerships & Collaborative Working: Key Learning

The key learning from the self-assessment is summarised below:

- The Council Plan 2023/28 supports the delivery of the Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023/33, with both Plans sharing a vision and a clear golden thread across Partnership and Council outcomes.
- Partnership working has been highlighted as a strength in Inverclyde with external inspections recognising the effective working arrangements that are in place across many parts of the Council, examples of which include the Inverclyde Poverty Action Group working with partners to support the most vulnerable and delivers cross-service approaches; the Financial Inclusion Partnership working collaboratively with partners pooling resources for joint projects; the delivery of improved outcomes through working in partnership with RI, Inverclyde Leisure, Hub West Scotland, Glasgow City Region and the Inverclyde Cultural Partnership, which has facilitated the creation of the Heritage and Arts Strategy and associated action plans.
- Services seek innovative ways to work in partnership to add value, for example Inverclyde Libraries and the Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing is a national commitment to working together across libraries, health and social care, and the third sector to transform Scotland's approach to health and wellbeing and the work between Education, HSCP, Police and the third sector on the launch of the Missing Persons Protocol.
- Governance structures, with clear lines of accountability and reporting, have been embedded to support the focused work of the Alliance in tackling local inequalities.

- In addition to external partnerships, there are strong relationships across teams within services, where resources and expertise is shared. An example of this is the relationship between Education Services and the HSCP in developing the Inverclyde Children's Services Plan.

#### How could we strengthen our current practice?

- Build on our collaborative working relationships by seeking to increase data sharing across partners, where it is permitted.
- Promote a more consistent and early approach to community engagement across the organisation and HSCP to improve community understanding and support.
- Highlight the benefits that partnership working across the Council and HSCP and its importance to service delivery.

#### **Our next steps for improvement**

<b>P&amp;CW1:</b>	Raise greater awareness of community engagement opportunities that are in place across the Council and HSCP.
<b>P&amp;CW2:</b>	Increase the number of engagement and collaborative opportunities available to the extended CMT.
<b>P&amp;CW3:</b>	Promote the sharing of research and analysis across teams, to minimise duplication and reduce consultation fatigue.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### BEST VALUE THEME 5: Working with Communities

Working with Communities is concerned with Councils, both individually and with their community planning partners, ensuring that people and communities are able to be fully involved in the decisions that affect their everyday lives.

In our assessment of **Working with Communities** we considered how well Inverclyde Council demonstrates the following:

1. The Council undertakes meaningful engagement and effective collaboration with communities to identify and understand local needs.
2. The Council undertakes early engagement and effective collaboration with communities when making decisions that affect the planning and delivery of services.
3. The Council is committed to reducing inequalities and empowering communities to effect change and deliver better local outcomes.
4. Council engagement with communities has influenced strategic planning processes, the setting of priorities and the development of locality plans.
5. Active steps are taken to encourage the participation of hard-to-reach communities.
6. The Council measures community data and feedback to drive improvements in service delivery that link to organisational priorities and can evidence this.

#### Evaluation results:



**82.5%** of respondents to the Best Value Checklist agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Council meets the Best Value Working with Communities criteria.



#### **Improvement workshop assessment: Good**

This was the evaluation reached at the Improvement Planning workshop. This judgement is based on evidence of good performance with strengths outweighing areas for development.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### Working with Communities: Key Learning

The key learning from the self-assessment is summarised below:

- Tackling poverty and reducing inequalities is a long standing priority for the Council and the Inverclyde Alliance. Reducing inequalities is a thread that runs through the work of both the Council and Partnership Plans. The significant number of anti-poverty initiatives that the Council has invested in to support individuals and families demonstrates the Council's commitment in this area.
  - Community engagement and consultation was at the heart of the development of both the Council Plan and the Partnership Plan and again in the development of the Locality Plans. A report on the consultation and the outcome was published on the Council website.
  - A Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA), which identified areas of local need, was developed and inform the development of priorities for the Partnership Plan and the Council Plan. The SNA is published on the Council website. In addition to this, there is evidence of a large volume of quantitative and qualitative research across the Council and HSCP.
  - Early engagement and collaboration with communities has been built into the decision-making process where the planning and delivery of services is affected, e.g. budget consultation. Listening Events have also taken place which focus on a single issue of importance to the community.
  - The Council has had a Citizens' Panel in place for a significant period number of years, which provides a more robust survey sample than many national surveys.
- Significant improvements have been made in engaging the community at various levels of democracy e.g. different forms of engagement and communication have been used to suit the needs of the individuals. The improved process for Community Councils and the creation of the Association of Community Councils is a positive step towards more closely working with communities.
  - It can be demonstrated that school priorities have been informed by the community / pupil voice.

#### How could we strengthen our current practice?

- Review the potential to develop a more strategic approach to gathering and sharing engagement results across services.
- Seek to increase the level of influence on partners at a national level to support positive outcomes.
- Further support for 'digital communities'.
- Explore the potential to use CONSUL more widely across services.

#### **Our next steps for improvement**

<b>COMM1:</b>	Enhance the level of support for 'digitally enabled' communities to improve access to services and reduce inequalities.
<b>COMM2:</b>	Continue to develop our approach to gathering community opinion and the sharing of results across services and partners, including developing a platform for engagement.



## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### BEST VALUE THEME 6: Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is concerned with securing a balance of social, economic and environmental wellbeing in the impact of activities and decisions. Sustainable development is a fundamental part of Best Value and should be reflected in a local authority's vision and strategic priorities, highlighted in all plans at corporate and service level, and a guiding principle for all of its activities.

In our assessment of **Sustainable Development** we considered how well Inverclyde Council demonstrates the following:

1. Sustainable development is reflected in the Council's vision and strategic priorities.
2. Sustainable development considerations are embedded in the Council's governance arrangements.
3. Council resources are planned and used in a way that contributes to sustainable development.
4. Sustainable development is effectively promoted through partnership working.
5. The Council's procurement strategy ensures that resources are used efficiently and effectively with due consideration given to environmental sustainability and local economic development.
6. Performance in relation to sustainable development is evaluated, publicly reported and scrutinised.

#### Evaluation results:



**60%** of respondents to the Best Value Checklist agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Council meets the Best Value Sustainable Development criteria.



#### **Improvement workshop assessment: Satisfactory**

This was the evaluation reached at the Improvement Planning workshop. This judgement is based on evidence of strengths but recognising that more could be done to highlight the work that is being carried out.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### Sustainable Development: Key Learning

The key learning from the self-assessment is summarised below:

- The Council Plan 2023/28 is clear in its commitment to delivering sustainable development, establishing it as a strategic priority, whilst at a partnership level, the Inverclyde Alliance hosted two sustainability sessions this year.
- A Net Zero Strategy 2021/45 and associated Action Plan has been implemented, setting out outcomes and targets to be delivered in the short, medium and longer term.
- Communities have helped to shape new projects and initiatives, examples of this include the development of a Food Growing Strategy and the establishment of two Zero Waste Food Pantries.
- A new initiative, ‘Invergrow’, has been launched to provide Community Groups with financial support to develop small and large growing spaces.
- There is regular scrutiny of sustainability performance by the Environment & Regeneration Committee.
- Peatland Restoration Projects have been implemented to bring a damaged natural resource back to performing an essential role in carbon capture. In addition, over 10,000 trees were planted in 2023/24 through Nature Restoration Funding.
- Studies have been commissioned to identify opportunities for alternative heating via heat networks and the retrofit approach to existing buildings, including options to address increased building fabric performance and thermal efficiency. Studies have also addressed options for heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures through LED upgrades and appropriate renewable technology.
- The Council’s Procurement Strategy 2022/25 demonstrates due consideration of sustainability and local economic development.
- Investment in digital services has been prioritised.
- There is a strong focus on sustainable development in the school curriculum. 38 schools / early years facilities are registered with the Eco-Schools programme, with 9 in receipt of a Green Flag Award.
- Capital projects promote sustainability, e.g. identifying the need for a sustainable approach to construction, implementation of LED lighting throughout the School Estate buildings, sports pitches and office space. Sustainability was also at the forefront of the School Estate Management Plan.

#### How could we strengthen our current practice?

- Review opportunities to expand digital services.
- Raise awareness that sustainable development is everyone’s responsibility and build capacity to support this agenda.
- Ongoing implementation of the Net Zero Action Plan.

Our next steps for improvement	
<b>SD1:</b>	Support the delivery of sustainable development education and awareness raising within the Council and our communities.
<b>SD2:</b>	Work towards national guidance on Net Zero Public Building Standards and with partners, define the challenges and opportunities associated with Net Zero and the retrofit of the operational estate.
<b>SD3:</b>	Ongoing implementation of an Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) Strategy for our Council fleet.
<b>SD4:</b>	Build community capacity to ensure the skills and knowledge are in place to support sustainable development initiatives.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### BEST VALUE THEME 7: Fairness and Equality

Fairness and Equality is concerned with tackling poverty, reducing inequality and promoting fairness, respect and dignity for all citizens. This should be key priorities for local authorities and all of their partners, including local communities.

In our assessment of **Fairness and Equality** we considered how well Inverclyde Council demonstrates the following:

1. The Council can demonstrate that equality and equity considerations lie at the heart of strategic planning and service delivery.
2. The Council is committed to tackling discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and promoting good relations both within its own organisation and the wider community.
3. The Council can demonstrate that equality, diversity and human rights are embedded in its vision and strategic direction and throughout all of its work.
4. The Council can evidence that it considers equality impact assessments at an early stage as part of policy development.
5. The Council and its partners have an agreed action plan aimed at tackling inequality, poverty and addressing fairness issues identified in local communities.

#### Evaluation results:



**82.5%** of respondents to the Best Value Checklist agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Council meets the Best Value Fairness and Equality criteria.



#### **Improvement workshop assessment: Good**

This was the evaluation reached at the Improvement Planning workshop. This judgement is based on evidence of good performance with strengths outweighing areas for development.

## Section 2: Self-Assessment Summary Findings

### Fairness and Equality: Key Learning

The key learning from the self-assessment is summarised below:

- The promotion and achievement of equality and diversity is embedded in the Council vision and strategic direction. This is evident in key documents such as the Council and Partnership Plans, which aim to reduce poverty and inequalities prevalent in local communities. This is a golden thread through the strategic planning framework.
- A Corporate Equality group meets regularly chaired by a Corporate Director. This group takes a strategic overview of all equality issues across the organisation to ensure equality issues are being addressed.
- The Council can evidence the implementation of a range of HR policies & processes which support employee rights with regard to equality and fairness, as well as fair and just recruitment procedures. Examples of this include the Inverclyde Dignity and Respect at Work Policy and the Access to Work Scheme.
- National recognition has been achieved for the Councils practice in this area, including Equally Safe at Work accreditation and Disability Confident Leader status.
- All Council and HSCP Services are required to complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for every new policy/ strategy or change in policy/ strategy. Consideration is given to the impact that the policy will have on everyone in the community, both positive and negative. EIAs are integral to the budget process as well. All EIAs are published on the Council website.
- A Staff Disability Forum, comprising of employees from Inverclyde Council and HSCP, has been in place for a number of years. The Forum meets regularly and is well attended.
- Poverty impact statements are also considered as part of any new developments.
- Dedicated equalities training has been delivered to employees to support them in preparation of EIAs. Online training via Brightwave is also promoted to employees.
- The Corporate Health and Safety team carry out assessment to ensure work adjustments are made to support employees in the workplace.

#### How could we strengthen our current practice?

- Enhance the range and level of information for employees to increase awareness of the range of support that is available.
- Review the feasibility of establishing group(s) of employees with protected characteristics to support the development of policies.
- Continue to embed equalities across the organisation.

#### **Our next steps for improvement**

- F&E1:** Scope the appetite for new forums / groups for employees with protected characteristics to ensure that their voice is heard.

## Section 3: Inverclyde Council Best Value Improvement Plan

### SECTION 3: BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

### Section 3: Inverclyde Council Best Value Improvement Plan

As some areas of improvement cut across the Best Value themes, improvement activity has been grouped where it is appropriate.

No.	Improvement area	How will this be delivered?	What difference will it make?	Due Date	Lead owner	Link to BV action
1.	<b>Strengthen Employee Communication &amp; Engagement</b>	<p>Explore the most effective means of communication with employees, particularly employees with a protected characteristic(s).</p> <p>Establish a schedule of meetings with managers (3<sup>rd</sup> tier) to discuss key issues; promote the work of the Council and highlight opportunities for collaborative working.</p> <p>Explore the introduction of a Chief Executive Employee Briefing.</p>	<p>There is an increase in the awareness of wider projects / initiatives being delivered by the Council. Working relationships are strengthened.</p> <p>There is an improvement in the number of employees that report that they feel engaged.</p>	<p>Sept 2024</p> <p>Dec 2024</p> <p>Sept 2025</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Corporate Director, Education, Communities and Organisational Development</p>	<p>V&amp;L1 G&amp;A1 P&amp;CW2 F&amp;E1</p>
2.	<b>Improve the Customer Experience</b>	<p>Develop and implement a Digital and Customer Service Strategy.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to integrate current systems via the work of the Digital Modernisation Group.</p> <p>Continue to upskill our employees, with particular regard to digital skills.</p>	<p>Further efficiencies in service delivery are achieved.</p> <p>Services are delivered in a way that meets customer preference.</p> <p>Increased customer satisfaction.</p>	<p>Oct 2024</p> <p>March 2025</p>	<p>Chief Executive / Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital and Customer Service.</p> <p>Corporate Director Education, Communities and</p>	<p>V&amp;L2 V&amp;L3 P&amp;CW1 P&amp;CW3 COMM1 COMM2</p>

### Section 3: Inverclyde Council Best Value Improvement Plan

No.	Improvement area	How will this be delivered?	What difference will it make?	Due Date	Lead owner	Link to BV action
		<p>Assess the potential to use the CONSUL digital platform as a single community engagement platform across all Services.</p> <p>Develop our use of social media / communications for customers, informed by customer preferences.</p>	<p>Reduced duplication of resources will increase level of efficiencies. Reduced risk of consultation fatigue.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>Organisational Development</p>	
3.	<p><b>Enhance the use of systems, data and research</b></p>	<p>Establish a network of data analysts to support improvements in use of systems, data and research.</p> <p>Dissemination of research and best practice across the Council and HSCP.</p> <p>Increase usage of Ideagen Risk (formerly Pentana) to support performance management.</p>	<p>Increased sharing of data will lead to improved efficiency.</p> <p>Shared learning supports service improvements. Research capacity is increased.</p>	<p>Dec 2024</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>DPMB/CQIG/ Data Officer network</p>	<p>UoR1 V&amp;L2</p>
4.	<p><b>Strengthen our Governance processes</b></p>	<p>Deliver refresher training to senior officers on key Governance areas such as Finance, Legal and Procurement.</p>	<p>Robust governance arrangements continue to be in place which support decision making and planning, Employee understanding of these matters is reinforced.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital &amp; Customer Services / Chief Financial Officer/ Procurement Manager</p>	<p>G&amp;A2</p>

### Section 3: Inverclyde Council Best Value Improvement Plan

No.	Improvement area	How will this be delivered?	What difference will it make?	Due Date	Lead owner	Link to BV action
5.	<b>Development of costed Asset Plans</b>	<p>Assess asset condition and establish realistic costs to meet investment needs.</p> <p>Identification of potential funding models.</p> <p>Develop Options for Elected Members, followed by the prioritisation of resources / projects.</p> <p>Quantify risks / volatility of costs and funding sources.</p>	<p>Approved asset strategies and associated funding is in place, providing greater certainty.</p> <p>A commitment to investment is in place.</p>	Dec 2026	Director, Environment & Regeneration	UoR3
6.	<b>Alignment of assets and resources with service delivery expectations</b>	<p>Proposals to be developed alongside refreshed Asset Management Plans.</p> <p>Elected Members are aware of how budget reductions align with service delivery and performance.</p>	<p>Clear service level expectations are reflected within Committee Planning and Budget processes.</p> <p>Improved customer engagement and understanding.</p>	FY 2026/27	CMT	UoR2
7.	<b>Increased promotion of the sustainability agenda</b>	Continue to implement, monitor and publicly report on the progress made in the delivery of the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan.	There is a greater understanding of how employees and communities can contribute towards sustainability goals.	31 Mar 2025	Director, Environment and Regeneration	SD1 SD2 SD3 SD4



### Section 3: Inverclyde Council Best Value Improvement Plan

No.	Improvement area	How will this be delivered?	What difference will it make?	Due Date	Lead owner	Link to BV action
		<p>Continue to ensure that new builds are energy efficient.</p> <p>Delivery of sustainability training for Council employees.</p> <p>Awareness raising on sustainability issues carried out within local communities.</p> <p>Build capacity within communities to support sustainable development initiatives.</p>	<p>Energy efficiencies are achieved in support of Net Zero targets.</p> <p>Community skills and knowledge are increased.</p>	Ongoing	Head of OD, Policy & Communication / Director, Environment and Regeneration	