



**PUBLIC SERVICE IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK – C2(b)2 OUTCOME REPORT**

Report by Chief Executive

**PURPOSE OF REPORT** To inform the Comhairle of the progress with self-assessment and seek approval of the recommendations of the PSIF self-assessment exercise C2(b)2: 'Engagement and Consultation with Stakeholders'.

**COMPETENCE**

- 1.1 There are no legal, financial, equalities or other constraints to the recommendations being implemented.

**SUMMARY**

- 2.1 At its meeting of 8 March 2017, the Comhairle agreed the next phase of PSIF self-assessments. Three self-assessments have been undertaken to date, the progress of which is appended to the Report. The first of the self-assessments approved is C2(b)2: 'Engagement and Consultation with Stakeholders'. The PSIF review explored how the service has made engagement with customers, partners and stakeholders an integral part of planning and improving the service using a range of different methods. The key findings are summarised in the main body of the report.
- 2.2 The PSIF review evidenced that Services are committed to ensuring residents and service users are actively involved in the design and development of local services and use a variety of methods to fulfil the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to engage with their stakeholders.
- 2.3 The review also identified two key areas of improvement. The first is to include a link to the online equalities monitoring form with all consultations to monitor participation rates, including those across the protected characteristics, a paper version will be made available on request. The form can be previewed, at:

[http://www.surveymoz.com/s/57MZJ?Equalities\\_Monitoring\\_Form\\_Preview](http://www.surveymoz.com/s/57MZJ?Equalities_Monitoring_Form_Preview).

The second key area of improvement is to provide hyperlinks to all consultations from one Corporate Consultations web page and incorporate a "We Asked, You Said, We Did" Consultations Outcomes section to communicate back to participants and the wider community. Web Support advised that this is best developed within the Comhairle's new website due to go live later this year.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle notes the outcome of the self-assessment exercise C2(b)2: 'Engagement and Consultation with Stakeholders' and approve the following two key areas of improvement:**
  - a) **to include the equalities monitoring form at item 2.5 of the report with all consultations to monitor participation rates, including those across the protected characteristics; and**
  - b) **to hyperlink all consultations from one Corporate Consultations web page that includes a "We Asked, You Said, We Did" Consultations Outcomes section to communicate back to participants and the wider community, within the Comhairle's new website.**

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Appendix PSIF self-assessment progress report

Background Papers: PSIF Framework (2013)

## BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At its meeting on 11 February 2015, the Comhairle agreed the proposals for the development of its Continuous Improvement Agenda to reflect best practice and audit requirements. The Comhairle also agreed to migrate from the self-evaluation methodology outlined in 'How Good is Our Council' to the self-assessment process of the Public Services Improvement Framework (PSIF) to identify areas for improvement, to inform the proposals and to facilitate effective benchmarking with other authorities.
- 4.2 Service Business Plans are aligned to the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy 2012-17, which was approved by the Comhairle in 2012. The Outer Hebrides Single Outcome Agreement 2013-23 provides the basis for the structure of the Corporate Strategy 2012-17. The Comhairle will be reviewing the Corporate Strategy in 2017 in light of the new Local Outcome Improvement Plan and the election of a new council.
- 4.3 The next phase of PSIF self-assessments include three PSIF criteria from section two (C2), Service Planning, to guide the consultation for the new Corporate Strategy and subsequent Service Business Plans and measures. The first of the three self-assessments approved is C2(b)2: 'Engagement and Consultation with Stakeholders'. The PSIF review explored how the service has made engagement with customers, partners and stakeholders an integral part of planning and improving the service using a range of different methods.

## KEY FINDINGS

- 5.1 The PSIF review explored what engagement tools and methods the service use to provide information and gather insight and understanding on the needs and preferences of customers, partners and stakeholders in order to inform their plans, decisions and improvement activity. It was evident that Comhairle services use a variety of tools and methods that vary according to the nature of the service/function and the customer base/needs. The key findings evidenced during the course of the review are, as follows:
  - traditional verbal methods of community engagement continue to include: individual meetings, interviews, videoconferencing, seminars, and attendance at public and partnership events, including locality planning groups and service user groups;
  - traditional non-verbal communication is primarily through publications on the Comhairle's website, with hard copies circulated via partnership agencies and placed in libraries. Online and paper surveys are also evident, as are service user questionnaires and customer focused 'Feedback, Complaints & Suggestions' information sheets. Consultations are also published on the communities' website e-Sgìre, which allow communities to provide ideas and feedback to the Comhairle on an ongoing basis. Email is another popular tool;
  - modern technology is increasing with more services using social media to engage with communities, such as: facebook, twitter and blogs, and the use of plasma screens in public offices for performance reporting; and
  - new community planning and engagement tools have recently been introduced to services. These new tools aim to initiate positive conversations and collaborations between key groups by providing a framework for structured conversations to occur, and allows participants to consider to identify areas where quality can be improved, what action might be taken and to identify where their priorities lie, such as:
    - self-evaluation for individual casework, which is then shared back through discussion with the stakeholders involved and ensures continuous improvement in all aspects of service delivery;
    - the [Outer Hebrides 'Community Signature'](#) in Education and Children's Services that provides data on local needs and priorities, which identifies areas of strength and barriers to overcome to enable communities to benefit from new forms of service delivery;
    - the new [Place Standard](#) tool for Scotland, which provides a framework to assess the quality of a place and is currently being used for the development of the Local

Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). The tool is also available to all partners for them to use within their own strategy and policy development; and

- [Participatory Budgeting](#), which is recognised internationally as a way for local people to have a direct say in how, and where, public funds can be used to address local needs e.g. Youth grants and Bus Service redesign.

5.2 Services exist to meet the needs of customers, partners and stakeholders. As such, Services must interact with these groups to find out what they want, expect and need from the service. One of the ways to do this is to consult with service users. During the PSIF review, the frequency of consultations for service planning purposes was explored. The review identified that the frequency of consultations varies between strategic and operational plans and policies, such as:

- Strategic Policies: every 3-5 five years e.g. the Outer Hebrides Single Outcome Agreement, Corporate Strategy, Communication Strategy, Gaelic Language Plan, and the employee survey;
- Annually: Director's Service survey, customer satisfaction surveys;
- Quarterly: recruitment survey; Skills Development Scotland performance reporting;
- Every Committee Series: Service performance; and
- Frequently throughout the year at key stages/milestones of a project lifecycle and as the needs of the service require e.g. emergency "planning", H&S Committee and community resilience meetings, Trade Union meetings, licensing, following a complaint, press releases, and as legislation dictates.

5.3 The Public Sector Equality Duty was created by the Equality Act 2010 and came into force in April 2011. It covers the following [protected characteristics](#); age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation. The Comhairle's publication of the [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2013-2017](#) as required by the duty is available to the public on the Comhairle's website. The PSIF review explored how services take account of the experiences of groups of people who share common characteristics in terms of the protected characteristics and also vulnerable and marginalised groups. The review evidenced that:

- Comhairle and partner agencies meetings adhere to the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#), Equality and Diversity policies and guidance are followed, and equality impact assessments are completed when examining options for changes to policies, practises, or budget changes, which covers all protected characteristics;
- learning is available to all; is a standing item on the Accredited Training Section agendas and the main focus group of the Educational Psychology Service;
- surveys are open to all and made available online, in paper copy in public buildings and include the option for feedback on the process;
- additional resources are provided to ensure community engagement activities are accessible e.g. suitable transport to/from meetings;
- performance reports are created in engaging and accessible language, feature a range of outputs that target specific audiences and are offered in alternative formats or languages upon request;
- all fitness equipment is Disability Discrimination Act compliant;
- One-to-One discussion held with service user or representative to ensure that any special needs/assistance are identified and addressed accordingly, including the services of an interpreter; and that
- specific programmes target people with barriers to securing employment/training and also childcare in remote rural areas.

However, there is no evidence of:

- participation rates being recorded and analysed for community groups and individuals across the protected characteristics in each consultation exercise; or
- of a corporate database of consultation activity to ensure that there is no duplication of activity or overuse of key stakeholders and respondents. Both of which are identified by PSIF as illustrations of good practice.

5.4 It is important that the outputs of community engagement exercises are clearly identified and communicated to participants. It is also important that services ensure it has considered the views of individuals covered by protected characteristics and can demonstrate that the needs and preferences of all groups have been understood in order to inform their plans, decisions and improvement activity. During the PSIF review it was revealed that:

- Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) must be completed when examining options for changes to policies, practises, or budget changes. This covers all protected characteristics. The Comhairle is also required to make available and publish all the results of its EQIAs and does so on its [website](#).
- Services follow the Comhairle's Policy and Guidance Procedures on [Equality and Diversity](#);
- the views of individuals and the results of Workshops/Meetings are fed back to participants and, where appropriate, used to inform the service planning process, the development of local plans and have also resulted in the renovation of facilities for additional support needs;
- social inclusion programmes exist and are targeted at helping vulnerable individuals/groups faced with multiple barriers which exclude them from the mainstream;
- care and support is adapted to an individual's specific needs and preferences in consultation with and agreement of the service user, ensuring equity of access to services and empowering individuals regardless of their characteristics; and
- Action plans to address any issues are integrated into Services Business Plans, which are regularly reviewed, monitored and reported on at each Committee Series and made available to the public on the web site, at each quarter and at the end of the year.

However,

- not all consultations are listed within the Comhairle's [Consultation](#) web page; and
- the outcomes of [previous consultations](#) to inform customers of all groups, partners and stakeholders are not evident within the consultations section of the Comhairle's website.

## CONCLUSION

- 6.1 It is evident that Services are committed to ensuring residents and service users are actively involved in the design and development of local services. At present the Comhairle is challenged by the uncertainty about the local government settlement for 2018-20 and will be faced with further challenging budgets in the next council. As a result Services need to ensure the Comhairle's priorities, plans and practices meet the needs and expectations of customers, partners and stakeholders whilst fulfilling its continuing economic constraints and statutory obligations.
- 6.2 By using effective and appropriate consultation activity, Services help create an honest and valuable dialogue with individuals and communities. This encourages customers, partners and stakeholders to take an active role in their communities and strengthen their role to influence decisions for their local area, as seen recently in the Participatory Budgeting approach to award the contracts for public transport services in Uist and Barra.
- 6.3 It is equally important that Services take account of the experiences of groups of people who share common characteristics in terms of the protected characteristics and also vulnerable and marginalised groups. This area may be strengthened by including an equality monitoring section in all consultations.

- 6.4 It is also important that the outputs of community engagement exercises are clearly identified, evaluated and communicated back to participants and the wider community. This area may be strengthened by linking to all Services consultation pages from one Corporate Consultation page and adding the adopted “We Asked, You Said, We Did” Scottish Government’s consultation approach, which the Comhairle approved in March 2016. This would introduce a standard format of advising communities on the outcome of consultations. Web Support advised that they could incorporate this format into the Comhairle’s new website that is due to go live later this year.

## PSIF SELF-ASSESSMENT PROGRESS REPORT

Assessment	Reporting Year	Section	Criterion (sub) Theme	Progress	Next Report Due
1	2015/16	Customer Results	6(a) Customer Perceptions 6(b) Internal Measures	The first self-assessment using PSIF addressed the cross cutting theme of 'customer services' and concluded with a recommendation to the Continuous Improvement Sub Committee 24 February 2016 to approve that departments use the Scottish Government's consultation approach of " <a href="#">We Asked, You Said, We Did</a> " to inform the business planning processes and evidence improvement planning. To ensure corporate improvement, at its meeting on <a href="#">29 March 2016</a> the Audit and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Comhairle agree to adopt this approach. <a href="#">Approved 30 March 2016</a> .	Sept'17
2	2016/17	Partnerships & Resources	4(b)2 Managing Financial Resources	The second self-assessment addressed the cross cutting theme of 'managing financial resources' and concluded with a recommendation to the Continuous Improvement Sub Committee 17 August 2016 to approve the development of Interplan's risk management module to incorporate departmental operational risk registers for improved monitoring and reporting. To ensure corporate improvement, at its meeting on <a href="#">26 September 2016</a> the Audit and Scrutiny Committee agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note this recommendation. <a href="#">Approved 5 October 2016</a> .	Sept'17
3	2016/17	People	3(b)2 Developing People	The cross cutting theme of 'developing people' was approved as the second self-assessment to be undertaken in 2016/17. It is closely related to the themes explored by the Accounts Commission and the Scottish Government's <a href="#">the 3-Step Improvement Framework for Scotland's Public Services</a> . The assessment concluded with a recommendation to the Continuous Improvement Sub Committee 1 February 2017 to approve a review of the Comhairle's Exit Interview Policy that was issued in 2009 to enhance the gathering of management information and subsequent use in strategic planning. To ensure corporate improvement, at its meeting on <a href="#">7 March 2017</a> the Audit and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Comhairle agree that there be a review of the Comhairle's Exit Interview Policy. Approved 8 March 2017.	Nov'17