

Local government in Scotland:

Performance and challenges 2017

Good Practice

This supplement provides a summary of the good practice we identified during the audit. It is not an exhaustive list of all good practice across Scotland but provides examples of councils improving performance, improving processes, making savings or adopting innovative approaches. This may be a useful source of reference for councillors and senior officers when considering service redesign.

The Improvement Service and SOLACE also maintain the Innovation Exchange www.innovationexchange.scot/. This may also be a useful source of information on innovative projects being taken forward by Scottish councils. Councils can also access contact details for each project if they would like to find out more about a particular case study.

Digital and online solutions

Digital and online solutions provide opportunities for councils to significantly reduce costs. The estimated cost of a face-to-face visit is £8.21, a telephone call is £2.59 and an online transaction is £0.09. (Figures from Society of Information Technology Management).

Glasgow City Council

Glasgow City Council has launched a myglasgow app and a new website which allows users to request services online (for example, request a bulk uplift). This is expected to deliver savings of £3 million a year and improve the customer experience.

Improving procurement

East Ayrshire Council

Through service redesign, councils are also procuring new models of care. For example, in East Ayrshire Council, changes to its model of care for supported living from 24-hour care per person to more flexible care that promotes independence has saved the council almost £500,000 in 2016/17 (around 40 per cent of costs). The council also reports improved service user satisfaction.

Reducing unit costs

Glasgow City Council

Glasgow City Council reduced the cost of collecting council tax in real terms from £18.48 per dwelling in 2010/11 to £10.98 in 2015/16. It achieved this by redesigning processes, better use of technology and closer working with partner organisations. Over the same period, the collection rate increased

from 92.3 per cent to 94.7 per cent.

City of Edinburgh Council

City of Edinburgh Council has reduced the net cost of street cleaning per 1,000 residents by over 50 per cent in real terms, from £37,006 to £16,646, with the council's cleanliness score only falling by 0.4 percentage points from 90.5 per cent to 90.1 per cent.

Community engagement

North Ayrshire Council

North Ayrshire Council reviewed its library opening hours in consultation with local communities and reduced the service by 475 hours a year, saving £315,000.

Options appraisal/review

South Ayrshire Council

The council has developed a comprehensive review system to help approve and reform services. This follows a nine-step process and includes topic selection, approval, consultations and options appraisal. The reviews and consultation procedures involve staff at all levels, trades unions and service users.

Through this approach, the council has reported that it is starting to achieve positive results. For example, in April 2015, the council carried out a property maintenance service review that concluded that there has been an overall average increase in productivity of staff of 15 per cent from 2014; and an increase in the number of jobs completed on time, from 68 per cent in 2013/14 to 87 per cent in 2015/16.

Stirling Council

Auditors at Stirling Council reported that the council has a project-driven approach where all projects need to be fully backed up by business cases and completed option appraisals before a decision is taken. Options are effectively challenged throughout the process to ensure that they are achievable and that the project provides value for money.

Sharing services

East Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire councils

East Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire councils are exploring opportunities to share a range of services, beginning with roads and transportation services. In February 2016, the councils estimated that they may be able to generate recurring savings of 15 per cent of current spending on these services by 2020.

Participatory budgeting

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Community members were involved in designing and procuring the Uist and Barra public bus service. The procurement process involved using an 'output performance specification'. In this, participants were asked at various public meetings to define their priorities, rank types of services and vote for their preferred price/quality ratio. The final decisions were made by panels of local people. This participatory budgeting approach has provided a more responsive service for the local community and the council has reported an increase in uptake since it began in March 2016.

City of Edinburgh Council

'Leith Decides' is the longest-running participatory budgeting project in Scotland and has been used by Leith Neighbourhood Partnership since 2010/11. The approach involves the local community deciding how 50 per cent of the partnership's community grants fund is spent. In 2014/15, a total of 1,625 people took part in scoring projects (an increase of 66 per cent on the previous year) and £22,092 (in grants of up to £1,000) was allocated to 25 projects. In addition to this, the number of people engaged in local decisions has increased significantly, from 320 in 2010/11 to 1,625 in 2014/15.

North Ayrshire Council

In November 2016, the council launched one of Scotland's largest online participatory budgeting projects in collaboration with Young Scot. Around 5,000 young people aged 11-25 years in North Ayrshire used Young Scot's online voting platform to allocate a share of £60,762 to youth projects in their local area.