



REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, FINANCE, PROCUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

BENCHMARKING INSIGHTS

Purpose of the Report

1. To outline how benchmarking insights are being utilised to help inform the Council's Planning and Performance Management Framework.

Information and Advice

2. The Council's Planning and Performance Management Framework was approved by Policy Committee on 21 June 2017. Improvement and Change Sub-Committee previously received a presentation providing an overview of this on 24 July 2017.
3. This report outlines how benchmarking insights are being utilised as part of the data set to provide an evidence base for informing the development of Departmental strategies and related change and improvement programmes, projects and savings.
4. Benchmarking compares data with peers or over time in order to provide insights regarding performance that can help drive improvements and efficiencies as part of service planning and improvement.
5. It should be noted that initial benchmarking data should be used to promote questions through the identification of noticeable variances that may merit further investigation. Further analysis requires an understanding of the sources, and the potential limitations of the data used, so that real differences in performance and/or efficiency are identified and investigated.

Sources of Benchmarking Insights

6. The County Council utilises a number of sources of benchmarking data including:
 - **CFO Insights.** This is an online financial analysis tool from Grant Thornton and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA). It gives "access to insight around the financial performance, socio-economic context and service outcomes" for Councils and as such can be utilised to provide a high level overview of the relative financial performance of services.
 - **CIPFA Benchmarking Clubs.** The data from CFO Insights can be supplemented by more detailed comparative data sets produced by CIPFA for benchmarking clubs covering social care services and corporate services.

- **LG Inform.** This is the Local Government Association’s benchmarking service for Councils that “brings together in one accessible place a range of key performance data for authorities, alongside contextual and financial information, in an online tool.”
- **Other Comparative Data.** A range of comparative data is available that helps provide more detailed insights into specific service areas, e.g. the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF), which provides data on outcomes for adult users of local authority-funded social care and support (including carers) for each local authority area.

Application of Benchmarking Insights

7. Benchmarking insights are applied in a number of ways including:

- Informing the strategic context for the determination of change and improvement programmes and projects, e.g. through comparative analysis of service expenditure and income.
- Forming part of the evidence base to support the development of Departmental strategies, e.g. through making benchmarking data available via the Council’s Business Intelligence Hub with services supported and challenged by Finance and Performance Business Partners.
- Providing contextual information to support detailed reviews of specific areas. For example, analysis undertaking to inform current work on Remodelling Children’s Care.

8. A presentation will accompany this report to Improvement and Change Sub-Committee on 26 September to share some of the benchmarking reports available from CFO Insights.

Other Options Considered

9. The Council’s approach to benchmarking has developed over a number of years and draws on a range of approaches and data sets.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

10. To provide the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee with an outline of how benchmarking insights are being used to inform work that forms part of the remit of this Committee.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Improvement and Change Sub-Committee:

1. Consider and note how benchmarking insights are being utilised to help inform the Council’s Planning and Performance Management Framework.
2. Discuss and agree any specific areas that the Committee would like to be covered in future reports or presentations on benchmarking.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 01/09/2017)

Improvement and Change Sub-Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report. If Committee resolves that any actions are required it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SES 01/09/17)

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected: All