

Best Value Introduction

Audit Scotland describes Best Value as “ensuring that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.” The duty of Best Value applies to all public bodies in Scotland. It is a statutory duty for local authorities, such as councils.

In 2016 a revised framework for the auditing of Best Value was approved by the Accounts Commission. A key element of the framework is the publication of a Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) for the council at least once during a five-year period. It is informed by the Annual Audit Report, other statutory reports and Audit Scotland reports including the Local Government Overview series (performance, finance) published annually.

The BVAR will be considered by the Commission, in public, and action may be required of the council. The fieldwork for the BVAR for Aberdeenshire Council will take place between February and April 2019.

The fieldwork for the development of the BVAR includes:

- Interviews with councillors, senior officers and partner organisations;
- Observation of council, committee and board meetings;
- Review of documents and performance data and;
- Focus groups with councillors, officers and community groups.

Each council’s BVAR incorporates an analysis of the Best Value characteristics aligned to the themes of:

- Vision and strategic direction;
- Performance;
- Use of resources;
- Partnership working;
- Improvement and transformation

Case Study Criteria

As part of our preparation for our Best Value Assurance Report we will be compiling a narrative to show the council's transformation since the last Best Value Audit. In order to do this, the Best Value Key Officer group will be sourcing case studies from all services. To ensure that the case study stays relevant to Best Value's key themes, the below criteria has been set out:

- Please ensure that a relevant link with BV criteria is demonstrated throughout
- Where relevant, please complete each section of the template as fully as possible
- Each section must contain narrative along with relevant links of evidence
- Each case study should show a consistent and clear link to at least one of the council's [11 priorities](#) (point 6).

Case Study Template

Virtual Community Wards

How does this link with the criteria of Best Value?

This is an example of Partnership Working.

How does this link to our priorities?

Effective community planning contributes to all priorities but in particular:

Work to reduce poverty and inequalities within our communities

Encourage active lifestyles and promote well-being with a focus on obesity and mental health

Have the best possible transport and digital links across our communities

Have the right people, in the right place, doing the right thing, at the right time.

This is in part due to the role of Community Planning in addressing the three Aberdeenshire Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) priorities.

What research was undertaken to ensure best practice?

Community Planning Officers engaged extensively with Statutory Partners and others from across the communities of Buchan. They engaged in a collaborative process to develop the new structures and actively worked through a series of discussions and events to develop a wider understanding of the requirements locally. These included the regular Local Community Planning Groups meetings, wider joint meetings including elected members and community councillors and intensive work through a Statutory Partner Working Group.

What was the background to the case story?

In response to the strategic changes within the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and subsequent advice on these provided to local community groups in March 2018, Statutory Partners in Buchan, as well as the Third Sector Interface, saw an opportunity to come together to focus on developing local working arrangements. These could then align with both the strategic changes and Council priorities whilst embedding stronger practices to meet the statutory purposes set out by the Community Empowerment Act 2015.

Aberdeenshire Community Planning Board had previously established Strategic lead partnership groups for each of the three Aberdeenshire Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) priorities: Reducing Child Poverty, Changing Aberdeenshire's relationship with Alcohol, and Connected and Cohesive Communities.

What activity was undertaken?

Buchan Statutory Partners have worked through a carefully considered process to engage with the wider community planning partnership locally.

The Statutory Partners Working group has been expanded and realigned to take a coordination role as the new Buchan Local Community Planning group.

Local coordination hubs will now be aligned to each of the three LOIP priorities. Visual guides to the relationships have been drafted showing how this has evolved to date.

These hubs will enable wider and more effective partnerships to be built and will create a focus for the identification and delivery of local priorities and needs.

The new structures are being implemented. The first meeting of the Buchan Communities Hub taking place in October 2019. This hub aligns with the Connected, Cohesive Communities LOIP priority. Work to establish and launch the other coordination hubs continues.

How did this contribute to improved outcomes?

The collaborative approach has improved engagement across all Local statutory partners with the LOIP agenda. Locally this ensure that we effective place-based practice that take a wholistic approach and better meets the priorities addressed by the LOIP.

However, it should be noted that this is an area in transition and impact on specific performance indicators cannot yet be evaluated.

How did this assist in delivering value for money?

This area is in transition but the aim to create robust mechanisms that ensure strategic and local levels of the Community Planning Framework are well informed and can make sound decisions about the prioritisations of resources to meet needs and improve priority outcomes.

What did we learn?

There was genuine and enthusiastic engagement from the local statutory partners to work in a collaborative way. They identified clear service benefits and have taken leadership roles moving forward. The whole process has had effective local, place- based leadership and is a demonstration that this approach works.

It emphasised that building an effective collaboration was not necessarily a quick win and that time and commitment was required from all partners.

*****Please attach any supporting documents/evidence relevant to the case study*****