

## REPORT TO AUDIT COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2021

### CORPORATE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK: SELF-EVALUATION MODEL

#### 1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 Audit Committee is requested to note and agree the adoption and implementation of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) self-evaluation model for Aberdeenshire Council.

#### 2 Recommendations

**The Committee is recommended to:**

- 2.1 Consider, comment on and approve the adoption and implementation of the Public Service Improvement Framework self-evaluation model (attached as Appendix 1 to this report);**
- 2.2 Note that, following approval, training will be rolled out to Officers and Members; and**
- 2.3 Agree that this report satisfies action BV3.1 in the Best Value Action Plan 2020 – review and develop the self-evaluation process – and that this action may now be closed.**

#### 3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 Effective self-evaluation is not a new concept. Rigorous self-evaluation and targeted scrutiny are tools that help us to deliver our commitment to improving services. They can provide important assurance to the Scottish Government, residents and service users that we are working well to deliver outcomes for our communities and residents.
- 3.2 The Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) published in [October 2020](#) concluded that the Council's approach to self-evaluation had been inconsistent and recommended that we should implement an effective council wide approach to self-evaluation, including robust arrangements for monitoring agreed actions.

#### 4 Background

- 4.1 The Council has used the How Good Is Our Council self-evaluation model since 2012. Participation and engagement with corporate self-evaluation have dwindled in recent years and the BVAR provided an opportunity to rethink and refresh our approach, in line with the Code of Corporate Governance which was reviewed in [February 2020](#).
- 4.2 In reviewing the approach to corporate self-evaluation, an outward-looking approach has been adopted and discussions were held with the Improvement

Service, Audit Scotland and a number of other local authorities. There are a number of different models in use across Scottish public sector organisations, ranging from bespoke tools to nationally recognised frameworks. There is no one size fits all, as would be expected.

- 4.3 The Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) has been developed by the Improvement Service and is a recognised self-assessment approach to support improvement in public sector organisations. It is currently used by 18 Scottish local authorities.
- 4.4 The PSIF provides a framework of statements to challenge existing performance through a structured process which is developed to suit organisational needs and drivers. The standard PSIF statements may be adapted for use at a service, corporate or organisational level to support continuous improvement and has established use within local authorities and also Community Planning Partnerships and Health and Social Care. The standard checklist is attached as Appendix 1 to this Report which also explains the process around the self-evaluation. Checklists may be tailored to address specific areas or issues identified at a corporate, service or team level. Support and guidance are available from the Improvement Service. Organisations who use the standard checklist may be viewed using [this link](#).
- 4.5 The PSIF is supported by the Improvement Service who will provide training to Officers and Members and will lead the self-evaluation process at no cost to the organisation. Officers will be trained to enable corporate, service and team self-evaluation to be carried out at all levels across the Council.
- 4.6 The planned approach is that Officers of all levels from across the organisation will be involved in self-evaluation, whether corporate, service or team-based exercises, and, importantly, in the development of improvement actions identified. Improvement actions may inform service and organisational transformation programmes and service planning activities. The PSIF allows service planning to be developed at all levels of the organisation and will provide a sound understanding of where we are and what we want to be.
- 4.7 In PSIF, plans are created by teams to manage the planned activities. Plans will outline the key objectives, the measurable targets and should outline resources and how teams will use the assets to achieve the objectives and outcomes. The PSIF provides a consistent approach that demonstrates how our improvement activity is used to drive performance as required by the Performance Management Framework approved by Full Council on [24 June](#).
- 4.8 Feedback from other local authorities is very positive not only around the level of engagement with the process but also of the improvement actions delivered. Many local authorities have used PSIF since it was piloted in 2006, and a number of authorities that have returned to the PSIF model after trialling different approaches. Testimonials may be viewed using [this link](#).

## 5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 This report helps deliver all six of the Council's Strategic Priorities

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<i>Our People</i>	<i>Education</i> <i>Health &amp; Wellbeing</i>
<i>Our Environment</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i> <i>Resilient Communities</i>
<i>Our Economy</i>	<i>Economy &amp; Enterprise</i> <i>Estate Modernisation</i>

5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Financial			x
Staffing			x
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland			x
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			x
Climate Change and Sustainability			x
Health and Wellbeing			x
Town Centre First			x

5.3 An integrated impact assessment is not required because the report is to Audit Committee on arrangements for performance improvement and there will be no differential impact, as a result of the report, on people with protected characteristics. The actions in the Plan may be individually assessed in terms of impact on people with protected characteristics.

5.4 The following [Corporate Risks](#) have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

- ACORP001 – budget pressures
- ACORP002 – changes in government policy, legislation and regulation (including Education reforms and potential impact on integration of children' services; Brexit)
- ACORP004 – business and organisation change (including ensuring governance structures support change; managing the pace of change)
- ACORP006 – reputation management including social media

- ACORP007 – social risk (e.g. population changes, poverty and social inequality, demographic changes, crime and anti-social behaviour)

## **6 Scheme of Governance**

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section G.1.2.a. of the [List of Committee Powers in Part 2A](#) of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to the review of internal control systems.

### **Ritchie Johnson, Director of Business Services**

Report prepared by Fiona McCallum, Business Strategy Manager  
Date 15 August 2021

### **List of Appendices –**

Appendix 1: Public Service Improvement Framework Standard Checklist 2020



# PSIF

# Public Service Improvement Framework

## Standard Checklist 2020



## Focus of the Checklist

The checklist is based on PSIF 2020. It contains all 61 statements under the six criterion parts of the model.

- Service Planning
- Staff
- Partnerships and Resources
- Processes and Services
- Leadership
- Results

## The Checklist Approach

### Stage 1 - Issuing the Checklist

Following a brief awareness session, the checklist is issued as an electronic survey to those officers taking part in the self-assessment.

The checklist contains 61 statements and should take approximately 1 hour to complete. The checklist leads you through the PSIF 2020 statements. You are asked to rate the extent to which you as an individual agree/disagree with each statement, as per the table below:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know

**The 'Don't Know' option should be used when you feel you do not have sufficient information about the particular statement to enable you to make a judgment.**

At the end of each section there are two comments boxes. The first requires you to provide details of positive examples that support your views on how well the service is performing in relation to the statements covered by the section (strengths).The second requires you to provide further details of how you think the service can improve in relation to the statements covered by the section. You will not be able to proceed through the checklist without providing input to the comment boxes.

**All checklist responses are anonymous and non-attributable.**

### Stage 2 - Consensus Session

In advance of the Consensus session, checklist findings are analysed and a short report is compiled summarising the responses and highlighting key points for discussion during the Consensus session. This session should typically take between 2 to 3 hours. The purpose of the session is to discuss the strengths and issues emerging from the checklist responses, agree appropriate improvement actions and prioritise them.

### Stage 3 - Improvement Planning Session

This session will focus on the development of an Improvement Plan, which will cover the following areas:

- The improvement actions
- The actions/tasks that will be undertaken to deliver improvement
- Ownership of improvements
- Timescales for implementing improvements
- Resources/costs/risks associated with improvements
- Defined measures to demonstrate the impact of improvements

If you require any additional advice or support, please contact the PSIF team at the Improvement Service, [psif@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:psif@improvementservice.org.uk).

### Results

Results are an important element of the self-assessment. It's recommended that results are gathered as evidence to support the self-assessment process and used to identify improvement actions at the Consensus session.

## 1. Service Planning

This section of PSIF explores how the service operates in relation to service planning and performance management. It leads you to consider how effective the service is at this and the role of customers, partners and stakeholders in this area.

### Why is Service Planning Important?

Having a sense of purpose is important in any organisation, but having a plan to achieve priorities is crucial. Successful organisations have a sound understanding of what they are and what they want to be, and it happens from planning. They know their customers, their capability and they know where they want to be.

### What are Strategies?

Strategies are created to define the vision, values and outcomes of an organisation. They will outline the long-term objectives and identify a clear way in which they will be achieved.

### What are Plans?

In PSIF, plans are created by teams to manage the planned activities. Plans will outline the key objectives, the measurable targets and should outline resources and how teams will use their assets to achieve the objectives and outcomes.

### What are Policies?

Policies support the strategies and plans by providing the framework for processes and services to be delivered.

### What is Engagement and Consultation?

No organisation operates in a vacuum. Organisations exist to meet the needs of communities, customers, partners and stakeholders and as such they must interact with these groups to find out what they want, expect and need from us.

#### **1a. Strategy and Plans**

- 1a.1 The service has policies, strategies and plans in place which reflects Best Value as well as financial, political, local and national considerations.
- 1a.2 The service has policies, strategies and plans in place clearly linked to the outcomes identified in strategic plans/ LOIP/ Locality Plans.
- 1a.3 The service can demonstrate effective short, medium and long-term financial planning ensuring that financial information is provided to the appropriate people at the appropriate time.
- 1a.4 The service has developed a structure that delivers outcomes and priority activities efficiently and effectively.
- 1a.5 The service has effective workforce planning in place that takes account of factors such as staff profiles and skill gaps.



- 1a.6 The service can demonstrate how digital innovation has improved service design and delivery.
- 1a.7 The service effectively manages risk and considers the implications of this for the service.
- 1a.8 The service has explored options for income generation and assessed the feasibility of such options.
- 1a.9 The service embeds environmental sustainability in service delivery and is working to support organisational targets.

**1b. Empowering and Involving Communities, Customers and Stakeholders**

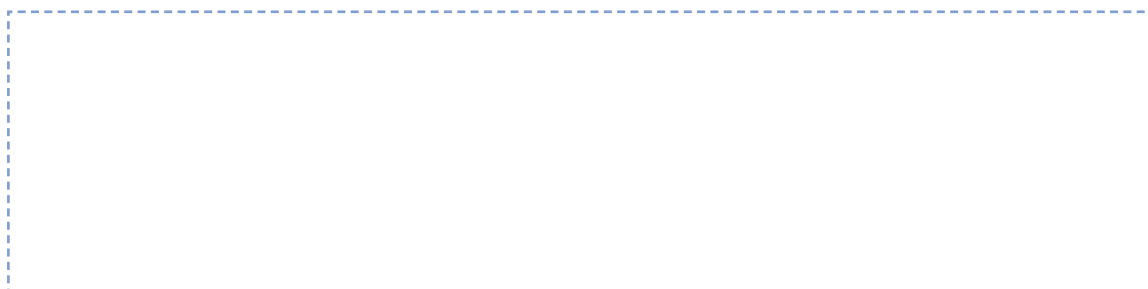
- 1b.1 The service at an early stage engages and communicates with all customers and communities in service design and delivery to ensure they are involved in shaping the service.
- 1b.2 The service is taking steps to upskill and support communities to facilitate engagement around service improvement.
- 1b.3 The service effectively engages communities through Participatory Budgeting and can demonstrate positive impacts.

**1c. Performance Management**

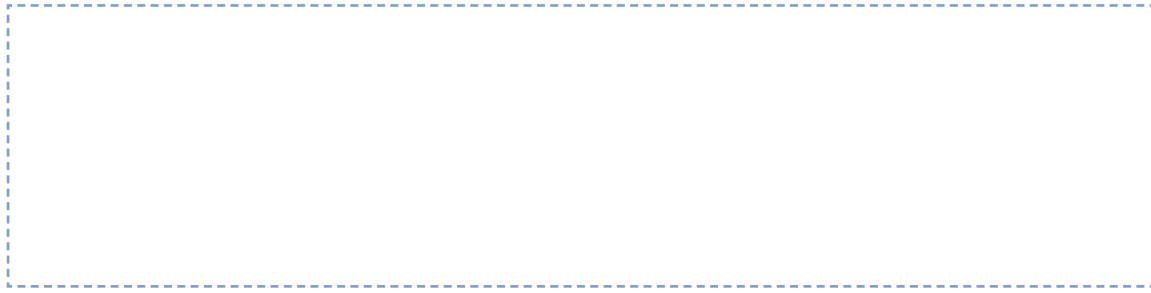
- 1c.1 The service has a robust performance management framework which supports effective decision making and service improvement with clear linkages to strategic plans/ LOIP.
- 1c.2 The service analyses the right data and reports on performance to the relevant staff, partners, customers and stakeholders.
- 1c.3 The service sets comprehensive and measurable standards for all aspects of the quality of customer service which takes account of its responsibilities for delivering national and statutory standards.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Please provide positive examples to evidence how the service is performing in terms of service planning.



Please provide details of how the organisation could improve their approach to Service Planning.



## 2. Staff

This area of PSIF refers entirely to the staff who work in the service – this includes full-time, part-time, fixed term, temporary, permanent and secondees.

### **Why are staff important?**

It is the staff employed by the service who are responsible for delivering high quality services and delivering on planned objectives. Staff who are well supported and motivated will provide a higher quality of service on a more consistent basis which, in turn, affects the results that the service aims to achieve. Staff who are well informed and empowered to deliver the service will act as positive ambassadors of the service when encountering all internal/external stakeholders.

### **2a. Planning and Managing Staff**

- 2a.1 The service has policies, strategies and workplans for staff to support their work in achieving the priorities and outcomes of the service.
- 2a.2 The service understands the benefits and opportunities of new ways of working, such as using digital technologies, agile working and various other tools and approaches.
- 2a.3 The organisation works with employee forums and trade unions to develop and review staff policies, strategies and plans.

### **2b. Developing Staff**

- 2b.1 The service has appropriate induction and training for new staff, for those changing roles and refresher training for current staff.
- 2b.2 The service and its staff understand the competencies and skills necessary to deliver the intended priorities and outcomes and identifies any gaps.
- 2b.3 Managers work with staff to review their performance against the skills and competencies that are required to deliver outcomes and priorities, providing training and development opportunities.

### **2c. Involving Staff**

- 2c.1 The service involves its staff in reviewing and improving the organisation/ service.
- 2c.2 The service empowers staff to be creative and innovative.

### **2d. Staff Communication**

- 2d.1 The service use appropriate strategies and tools to communicate with staff and help them understand the outcomes and priorities they are working towards.
- 2d.2 The service can evidence that staff share information, knowledge and good practice and work together as a team.

**2e. Recognising and Caring for Staff**

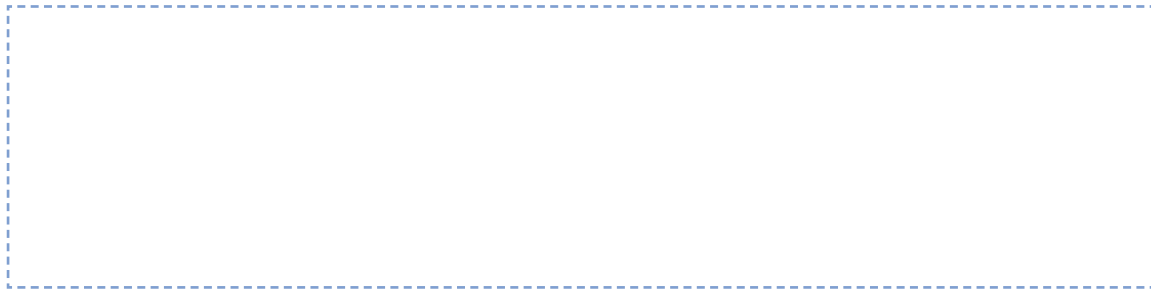
2e.1 The service has a range of policies to support equality, fairness and wellbeing.

2e.2 The service recognises and values the contribution of its staff.

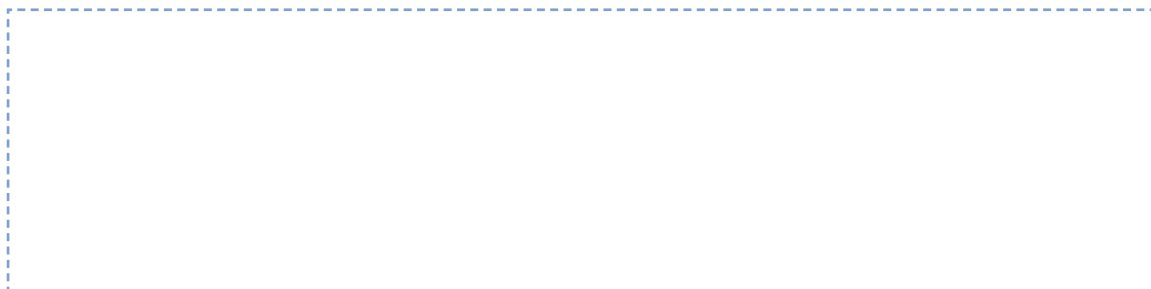
2e.3 The organisation promotes and encourages a work-life balance and provides a healthy and safe working environment.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Please provide positive examples to evidence how the service is performing in terms of staff.



Please provide details of how the organisation could improve their approach to staff.



### 3. Partnerships and Resources

This section looks at how the service works in partnership to support the delivery of improved outcomes and also how it manages its resources in the most efficient, effective and sustainable way.

#### **What are partnerships and why are they important?**

A partnership is a working relationship between two or more parties creating added value for the customer. If partnerships and other forms of collaborative working are designed, led and managed well they offer the potential to help organisations work in a more effective way, creating well-functioning collaborative working arrangements.

#### **3a. Managing Partnerships**

- 3a.1 The service can provide evidence that partnership/ cross-service working delivers more benefits than would be achieved by working in isolation.
- 3a.2 The service and its partners have effective governance arrangements in place to manage, deliver and review the partnership and progress against outcomes and priorities.

#### **3b. Managing Financial and Information Resources**

- 3b.1 The service's procurement strategy ensures that resources are used efficiently and effectively with due consideration given to environmental sustainability and local economic development.
- 3b.2 The service ensures that people have access to the information they require to make decisions and deliver efficient, improving services.
- 3b.3 The service ensures customer information is protected and made available securely to appropriate and relevant organisations.

#### **3c. Managing Assets and other Resources**

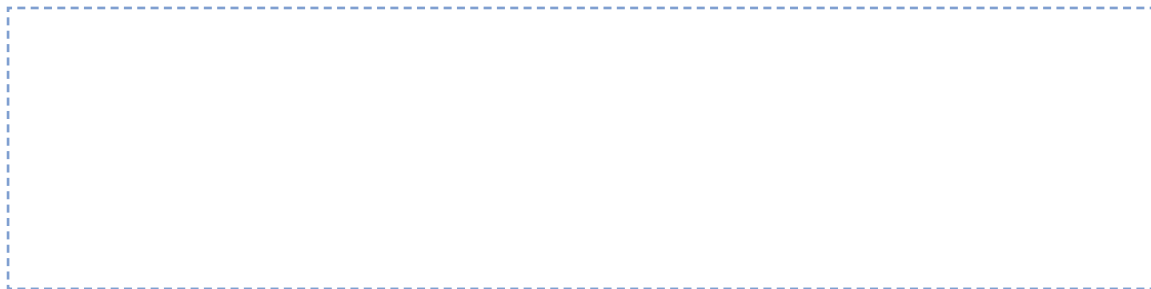
- 3c.1 The service pools a range of resources between partners and communities where appropriate.
- 3c.2 The service manages assets and other resources securely, efficiently and effectively.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Please provide positive examples to evidence how the service is performing in terms of partnerships and resources.



Please provide details of how the organisation could improve their approach to partnerships and resources.



## 4. Processes and Services

This section of PSIF assesses how well the service manages customer needs and expectations and how customers are involved in reviewing and improving what we do. It will challenge you to explore if we are meeting the needs of customers and stakeholders and if we are doing so in the best way.

### Why are processes and services important?

Processes and services are the activities through which the needs of customers and/ or statutory obligations are met. This is the link that pulls together all the strategy, policy and resources and uses them in a planned way to deliver something tangible to and for customers.

#### **4a. Managing Customer Needs and Expectations**

- 4a.1 The service has a range of approaches to gather customer experiences, needs and preferences and makes positive changes as a result of analysing these.
- 4a.2 The service agrees with its customers (and potential customers) at the outset what they can expect from the service it provides.

#### **4b. Developing Services around Customer Needs**

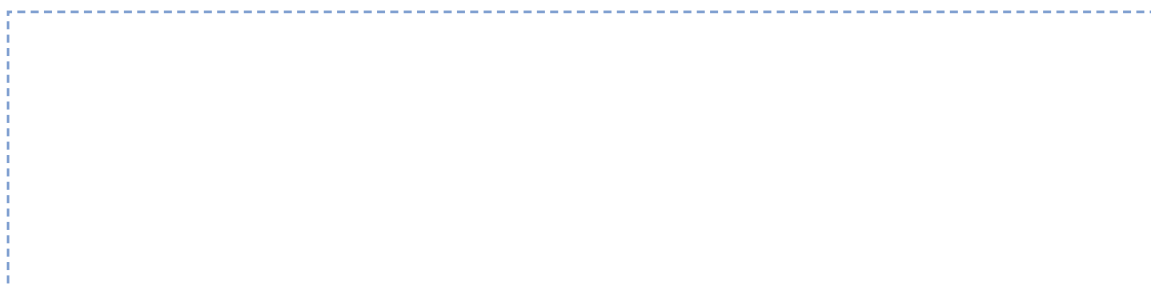
- 4b.1 The service effectively deals with all customers, ensuring that services are accessible through a range of channels in ways that meet their needs and expectations.
- 4b.2 The service analyses the way that customers use and access services and uses this information to make services more accessible.

#### **4c. Reviewing and Improving Service Delivery**

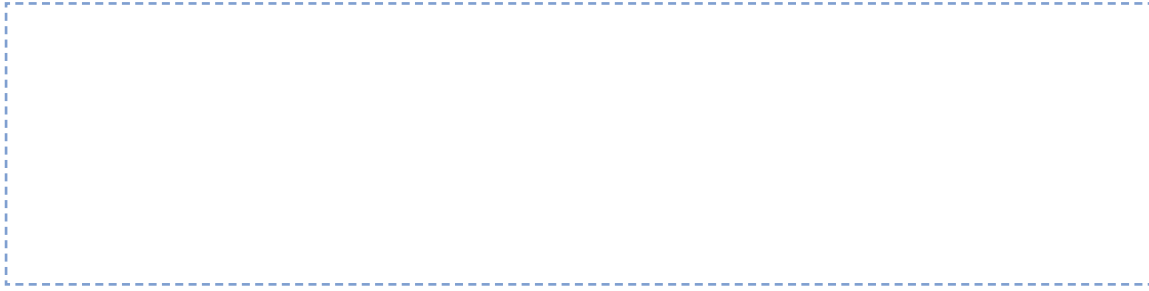
- 4c.1 The service identifies, reviews and improves its key processes sharing learning and good practice internally and externally.
- 4c.2 The service identifies patterns from complaints and comments through its complaints procedure and uses this information to improve services, publicising action taken.
- 4c.3 The organisation has appropriate project management methodologies in place to ensure the successful delivery of projects/change processes.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Please provide positive examples to evidence how the service is performing in terms of processes and services.



Please provide details of how the organisation could improve their approach to processes and services.





## 5. Leadership

This section of PSIF assesses the effectiveness of our leaders. It explores how leaders plan for the future, create a positive culture and engage with our customers, partners and stakeholders.

### Why are Leaders Important?

Leaders are the people who shape the future of an organisation, who make change and improvements happen. They are responsible for identifying a clear direction for the organisation and for inspiring staff, customers, partners and stakeholders. In addition to managing people, leaders have the ability to inspire people by motivating and supporting them to go the 'extra mile'.

### Who are our Leaders?

Leaders include the people responsible for managing staff and resources, they develop plans for the service and make decisions about budgets and long-term objectives.

#### **5a. Planning for the Future**

- 5a.1 Leaders demonstrate the vision, values and ethics of the organisation/ service and act as role models.
- 5a.2 Leaders have established strong governance arrangements with clear lines of accountability for the organisation/ service.
- 5a.3 Leaders define, monitor and drive improvement using evidence-based approaches.
- 5a.4 Leaders are clear about the priority outcomes identified in strategic plans/ LOIP and communicates the difference the service ultimately aims to make in the community.
- 5a.5 Leaders promote and demonstrate a culture of Best Value and are held accountable for delivering services cost effectively.
- 5a.6 Leaders drive transformational change, are clear about transformation projects within the organisation and how they are aligned with organisational priorities and plans.
- 5a.7 Leaders understand how digital working will lead to innovation in service design and delivery and share this vision with staff and communities.

#### **5b. Creating a Positive Culture**

- 5b.1 Leaders create a positive, supportive and inclusive culture that inspires people and encourages success.
- 5b.2 Leaders are committed to and own any service improvement plans developed, with clear lines of accountability, priorities and actions identified.
- 5b.3 Leaders promote and demonstrate equal opportunities and diversity within the organisation/service.

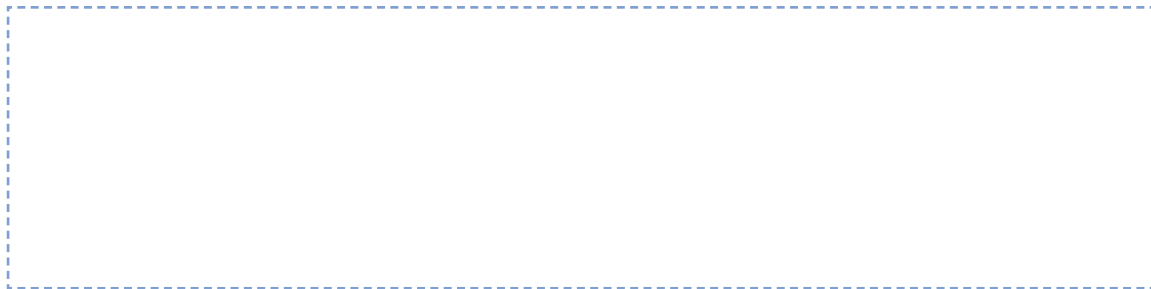
**5c. Engaging Communities, Customers, Partners and Other Stakeholders**

5c.1 Leaders commit to engaging with communities in the setting of budgets from the start to the end of this process.

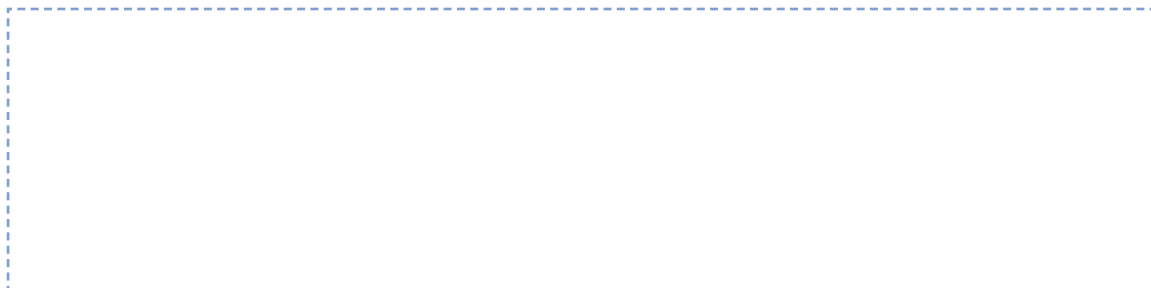
5c.2 Leaders can demonstrate engagement with communities, customers, partners and stakeholders when planning and improving the service, using a range of approaches.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Please provide positive examples to evidence how the service is performing in terms of leadership.



Please provide details of how the organisation could improve their approach to leadership.



## 6. Results

Results demonstrate what a service achieves. A service will decide which measures are the most appropriate and most useful. The service will be clear what measures it requires to manage the service and contribute to its success, whilst being able to share and learn from best practice elsewhere. A service will decide the right level for targets to be set and continue to work towards those targets.

### **6a. Customer Results**

6a.1 The service measures service user/customer data and feedback to drive improvements in service delivery that link to organisational priorities and can evidence this.

### **6b. Staff Results**

6b.1 The service measures staff data and feedback to drive improvements in service delivery that link to organisational priorities and can evidence this.

### **6c. Community Results**

6c.1 The service measures community data and feedback to drive improvements in service delivery that link to organisational priorities and can evidence this.

### **6d. Key Performance Results**

6d.1 The service can evidence how it is using key performance information to improve service delivery.

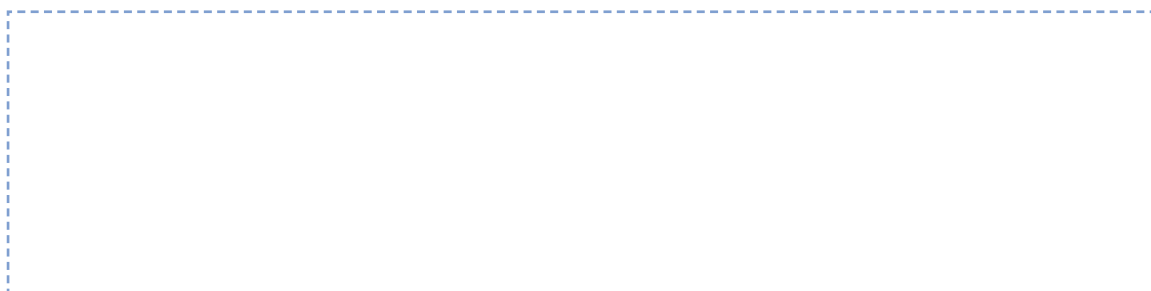
6d.2 The service ensures performance information is presented in an easy and accessible way for staff and other stakeholders.

6d.3 The service compares its performance with relevant benchmarks and uses this information to understand its strengths and areas for improvement.

6d.4 The service can demonstrate how its results link to the outcomes of the organisation.

Thinking about the statements covered in this section:

Please provide positive examples to evidence how the service is performing in terms of results.



Please provide details of how the organisation could improve their approach to results.





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