

Glasgow City Council

Best Value Thematic Report

**Associated to financial
statements audit year ended 31
March 2023**

**Leadership of the development of
new local strategic priorities**

February 2024



EY

Building a better
working world

This report

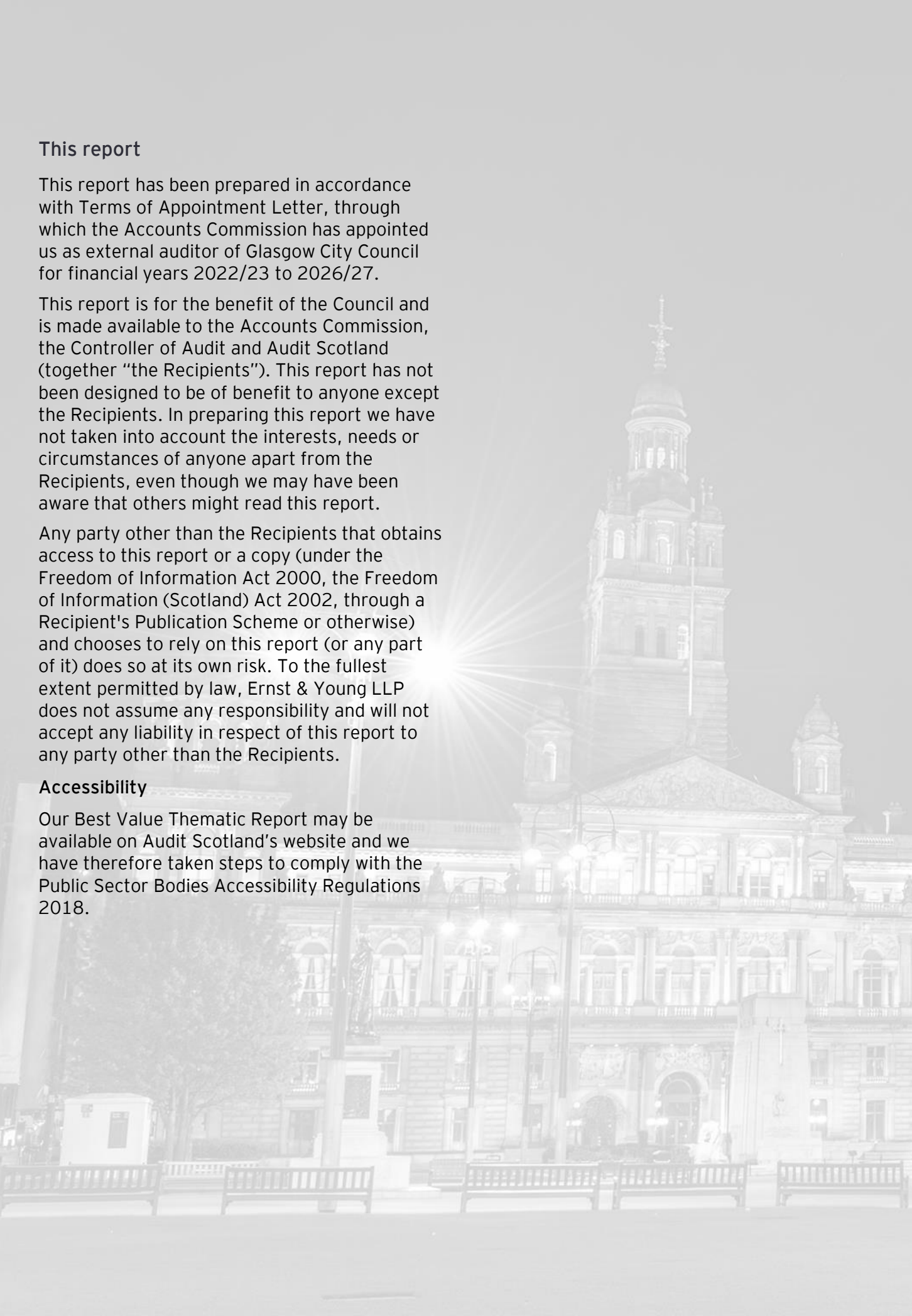
This report has been prepared in accordance with Terms of Appointment Letter, through which the Accounts Commission has appointed us as external auditor of Glasgow City Council for financial years 2022/23 to 2026/27.

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Our Best Value Thematic Report may be available on Audit Scotland's website and we have therefore taken steps to comply with the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018.



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1. Executive Summary

Context

Under the Code of Audit Practice June 2021, we perform an annual programme of work in relation to Best Value and wider scope responsibilities. This work includes reviews based on annual thematic Best Value topics prescribed by the Accounts Commission (the Commission).

For 2022/23, the Commission directed auditors to report on the effectiveness of the leadership of the development of strategic priorities. Our key conclusions to each of the areas we were asked to consider are outlined below.

 How clear is the new Council vision and its priorities?	The Council has set out a clear vision and priorities within the Strategic Plan 2022-27, based on its response to four ‘Grand Challenges’. The grand challenges align with the Community Plan and have been developed and refined based on strong engagement with partners and communities. While the grand challenges signal the Council’s areas of focus, the plan outlines over 230 commitments to be delivered by 2027. Many areas will be very challenging to deliver within the planned timescales and resources. An annual review process is in place to manage expectations about delivery, where decisions will be required to prioritise current commitments.
 How effectively have the views of citizens and communities been reflected in the priorities and decisions taken by the Council?	The Council’s Strategic Plan is based on historic working with partners to reflect the views of communities, along with manifesto commitments for the Administration. The Plan describes its approach to embed community engagement across a range of actions. The Council has also continued to innovate community empowerment, drawing on a dedicated design team to engage directly with citizens. The wards of Wider Pollok and Calton were the first selected to target £1 million of improvements in their area. The Council’s Renewal and Recovery Strategy allowed it to learn from and capitalise on different ways of working during the pandemic. Flexible funding, data sharing and strong partnership working has informed the delivery of a new service, Glasgow Helps, that aims to break down organisational boundaries and focus on the needs of individuals.



How effectively do the Council priorities reflect the need to reduce inequalities and climate change?

The Strategic Plan identifies reducing poverty and inequality as one of the grand challenges facing the city and has committed to continuing to engage directly with communities of interest.

The Council has made a commitment to achieving net zero by 2030. However, plans are not yet linked to an affordable programme of investment.

While the Council has reported that carbon levels have been reduced by 50% to date, (since the 2005/06 baseline year), improvements in data recording mean that the Council's reported emissions increased in 2022/23.

Current estimates suggest that capital investment of £40 billion is required to deliver the net zero target. The scale of ambition is therefore unachievable within the resources currently available. The level of risk means that increased scrutiny will be required to oversee delivery and respond to a changing environment.



How good are the delivery plans and is there alignment of financial, workforce, asset and digital plans with the Council's priorities?

The Council can demonstrate alignment between the current strategic priorities within the Community Plan and it's planning framework. Work remains underway to embed a performance framework that will underpin the delivery of the Strategic Plan in 2024/25.

Further work is required to ensure that priorities, including commitments within the Strategic Plan, are affordable and reflected within the Council's delivery plans including the Medium Term Financial Plan and the Council's Investment Strategy.



How effective has the leadership been in setting clear priorities and a sustainable approach to delivering them?

The Council experienced a large turnover of elected members in May 2022 and has therefore taken steps to ensure that key roles and duties, including on arms-length bodies, are well-understood. Our observations to date suggest that there is cross-party agreement on priorities, but more work is required to support member scrutiny against specific actions. Member collaboration will continue to be critical to deliver shared strategic priorities, particularly in relation to the 2024/25 budget process.

The Council responded well to the previous Best Value Assurance Report. We have noted areas where the Council has continued to innovate since the completion of the improvement plan, including in its approach to community empowerment.

2. Scope of the audit

Introduction

The Code of Audit Practice (the Code), June 2021, significantly changed the approach that the Accounts Commission takes to Best Value.

Under the updated arrangements, the Accounts Commission's approach to Best Value involves reporting both on:

- ▶ individual local government bodies; and
- ▶ thematically across the local government sector.

The initial programme of Best Value Assurance Reports, covering each of the councils in Scotland began in 2016 and is expected to be completed in 2024. Glasgow City Council's Best Value Assurance Report was published in August 2018.

Future reporting to the Accounts Commission on individual councils will be drawn from local external audit work

performed as part of our Best Value and wider scope responsibilities, including the work we perform in relation to annual thematic topics prescribed by the Accounts Commission.

Thematic focus in 2022/23

The previous Chair of the Accounts Commission noted that: "Councils are operating in a complex and increasingly volatile, unprecedented and unpredictable environment. Strong leadership from councils is needed now more than ever, with new and returning councillors being able and willing to make difficult decisions about where and how to spend highly pressurised resources."

This report considers the effectiveness of the Council's leadership of the development of the Council's strategic priorities, following the local government elections in May 2022.

Exhibit 1: Characteristics of Best Value

The 7 Best Value characteristics are set out in [Statutory Guidance](#) published in March 2020 and are:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Vision and leadership | 5. Working with communities |
| 2. Governance and accountability | 6. Sustainability |
| 3. Effective use of resources | 7. Fairness and equality |
| 4. Partnerships and collaborative working | |

Sustainability and fairness and equality are cross-cutting themes that should be integral to all of the functions and activities carried out by a local authority to deliver good outcomes and achieve Best Value.

The [Accounts Commission's Strategy](#) (2021-26) sets out its priorities to focus on inequalities, funding, communities and recovery. The Code of Audit practice sets out the Best Value work required to report on these priorities.

This report covers the thematic aspect of the Best Value audit requirements. The Commission has directed auditors to report on the effectiveness of the leadership of the development of the Council's strategic priorities. The remainder of the report outlines our considerations against the series of questions set by Audit Scotland:

- ▶ How clear is the new Council vision and its priorities?
- ▶ How effectively have the views of citizens and communities been reflected in the

priorities and decisions taken by the Council?

- ▶ How effectively do the Council priorities reflect the need to reduce inequalities and climate change?
- ▶ How good are the delivery plans and is there alignment of financial, workforce, asset and digital plans with the Council's priorities?
- ▶ Overall, how effective has the leadership been (political and officer) in setting clear priorities and a sustainable approach to delivering them?

An improvement action plan is included at Appendix 1 of this report. This sets out our recommendations in key areas, and the Council's response.

3. How clear is the new Council vision and its priorities?

Our overall conclusions

The Council has set out a clear vision and priorities within the Strategic Plan 2022-27, based on its response to four 'Grand Challenges'. The grand challenges align with the Community Plan and have been developed and refined based on strong engagement with partners and communities.

While the grand challenges signal the Council's areas of focus, the plan outlines over 230 commitments to be delivered by 2027. Many areas will be very challenging to deliver within the planned timescales and resources.

An annual review process is in place to manage expectations about delivery, where decisions will be required to prioritise current commitments.

Introduction

The Commission notes that a council focused on achieving Best Value in how it operates will be able to demonstrate that elected members and officers have a clear vision and priorities for their area.

The Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022 notes that Scotland's councils have had a pivotal role in supporting and working with communities as they responded to the impacts of Covid-19. Following the local government elections in May 2022, each Council was expected to review their priorities to respond to changes in the political and economic landscape.

The Council has set out its vision for the future based on the response to four 'Grand Challenges'

The Strategic Plan 2022-27 (the Plan) was approved in October 2022 and reflects the political priorities of the new administration, based on engagement with communities throughout the election period. The Plan is mission-based and seeks to address four

grand challenges for the Council (refer to **Exhibit 2**).

The Plan identifies over 230 individual commitments to be undertaken over the period to 2027 and is intended to be ambitious. Arrangements are in place to review and update the plan annually to reflect emerging pressures and commitments. For example, the Council agreed in June 2022 to focus actions in 2022/23 on the commitments that have an impact on the Council's response to the cost of living crisis. The annual review of commitments has not yet concluded.

The ability to achieve the ambitions within the plan will be significantly impacted by the pressures and uncertainties in the wider economic environment.

Recommendation 1: The Council should ensure that the annual review process sufficiently refines the commitments within the Strategic Plan to clarify priorities and promote accountability for delivery.

Exhibit 2: Summary of the Strategic Plan

Grand Challenge	Missions
1 Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities	▶ End child poverty in our city using early intervention to support families. ▶ Meet the learning and care needs of children and their families before and through school. ▶ Improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities. ▶ Support Glasgow to be a city that is active and culturally vibrant.
2 Increase opportunity and prosperity for all our citizens	▶ Support Glasgow residents into sustainable and fair work. ▶ Support the growth of an innovative, resilient and net zero carbon economy. ▶ Raise attainment amongst Glasgow's children and young people.
3 Fight the climate emergency in a just transition to a net zero Glasgow	▶ Deliver sustainable transport and travel aligned with the city region. ▶ Become a net zero carbon city by 2030.
4 Enable staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way for our communities	▶ Create safe, clean and thriving neighbourhoods. ▶ Run an open, well governed council in partnership with all our communities. ▶ Enable staff to deliver a sustainable and innovative council structure that delivers value for money.

Source: Glasgow City Council Strategic Plan 2022-27

| The Council has demonstrated engagement with partners in developing and communicating its strategic plans

While the grand challenges are built upon political priorities, the Council was able to demonstrate alignment with key partners. Priorities in relation to poverty and inequality and increased opportunity and prosperity directly link to the focus areas within the Community Plan.

The Strategic Plan identifies the path to a Net Zero Glasgow as a new priority, reflecting both heightened public awareness and concern around climate matters, the legally binding duty to deliver net zero by 2045 and the political make-up of the Council following the elections. The climate emergency grand challenge also reflects the partnership work led by the Council on the Sustainable Glasgow Partnership, which includes partners such as NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Enterprise and the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority.

The final priority within the Strategic Plan is inward looking to support the transformation needed to meet the significant financial challenges facing the local government sector.

During development of the Strategic Plan, Council officers consulted with key partners, including Police Scotland and the Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to ensure that priorities aligned. Key actions against commitments that required HSCP involvement and agreement have been updated to reflect the HSCP's refreshed Strategic Plan.

A user friendly version of the Strategic Plan was published to allow it to be shared widely with citizens and the Council's partners.

| Performance monitoring arrangements are evolving to reflect the complexity of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan was referred to the Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee (OPDSC) to develop the performance management framework to monitor progress overall. The committee agrees an annual workplan of scrutiny.

Scrutiny to date has primarily focused on the commitments that services have prioritised to respond to the cost of living crisis. More recently, reporting has widened to reflect key priorities in 2023/24. The areas that have been subject to scrutiny were selected based on service delivery priorities, and agreed by the officer-led Strategy and Performance Working Group.

As part of our review of scrutiny reporting to date, we noted that the Council makes use of RAG ratings, but in a number of cases no definition or explanation was provided for individual ratings. In addition, there is not yet a mechanism in place to ensure that every measure within the Strategic Plan is subject to scrutiny.

| Recommendation 2: The Council should ensure that performance reporting allows elected members to monitor progress against each of the commitments in Strategic Plan, against a common set of criteria.

The scrutiny workplan for the next committee term will be informed by the ongoing development of a performance dashboard, to provide a tiered approach to data monitoring. In August 2023, the OPDSC considered the first iteration of a Performance Manual, and in November 2023 the Committee considered examples of good practice performance reporting formats from other local authorities around the UK.

4. How effectively have the views of citizens and communities been reflected in the priorities and decisions taken by the Council?

Our overall conclusions

The Council's Strategic Plan is based on historic working with partners to reflect the views of communities, along with manifesto commitments for the Administration.

The Plan describes its approach to embed community engagement across a range of actions. The Council has also continued to innovate community empowerment, drawing on a dedicated design team to engage directly with citizens. The wards of Wider Pollok and Calton were the first selected to target £1 million of improvements in their area.

The Council's Renewal and Recovery Strategy allowed it to learn from and capitalise on different ways of working during the pandemic. Flexible funding, data sharing and strong partnership working has informed the delivery of a new service, Glasgow Helps, that aims to break down organisational boundaries and focus on the needs of individuals.

Introduction

Recovery from the pandemic requires councils to work alongside their local communities. There must be a focus on getting the services people need in place as pressures and stresses escalate and impact the day to day lives of individuals and communities.

Under Best Value Statutory Guidance (theme 5: working with communities), the Council, along with their community planning partners, has a responsibility to ensure that people and communities are able to be fully involved in the decisions that affect their everyday lives.

The Community Empowerment Act 2015 notes that communities must be at the heart of decision-making processes that agree

strategic priorities and direction. Early and meaningful engagement and effective collaboration with communities to identify and understand local needs, and decisions that affect the planning and delivery of services should therefore be a core part of determining a council's vision and priorities.

The Council's strategic planning has been informed by engagement with communities at a number of levels

The Council can demonstrate community engagement at a number of levels, including:

- ▶ work with community councils; and
- ▶ in response to specific issues such as the Citizens Climate Assembly, ahead of the city hosting COP 26, and on equality outcomes.

The Community Plan was developed in 2017 and sets out the shared priorities for the city with local and regional partners. It was based on significant community engagement with over 330 community organisations and individuals.

While the key themes from the current Community Plan are reflected within the grand challenges, the Community Planning Partnership will shortly begin an overarching review of the priorities for the medium term. We understand that the grand challenges will be used during a process of city wide consultation.

| The Council has embedded community empowerment across the commitments within the Strategic Plan

The principles of community empowerment are reflected throughout the Strategic Plan. Engagement with specific groups is built into the commitments, including foster and kinship carers, equalities groups and planned consultation on the refurbishment of George Square.

The Strategic Plan also includes a commitment to explore options to improve citizen engagement, especially for those who are currently under-represented, in council decision making, and enable them to directly create city policy including by hosting more Citizen's Assemblies.

The Council's Centre for Civic Innovation ('CCI') has engaged with Council wards in Pollok and Calton to lead citizen-centred design in the participatory budgeting process. The wards were selected to target £1 million of improvements in their area via the CCI. As a result, hundreds of local people and community groups in Pollok and

Calton submitted ideas on how to make improvements in their areas and are helping to co-design and influence the decisions that will transform their communities.

Engagement sessions (Your Citizen Voice) have been held online and in venues in the wards to enable as many local voices as possible to be heard and to ensure a variety of ideas and opinions were developed. The process is overseen by the Wellbeing, Equalities, Communities, Culture and Engagement City Policy Committee. The CCI team arranged for residents to select their favourite options out of the ideas generated as part of a voting process.

As part of the Council's Property and Land Strategy 2020-2030, a People Make Glasgow Communities programme has been developed to support and empower communities to make their own decisions, and meet the changing needs of their neighbourhoods through, for example, running sports and community venues.

There have been 585 expressions of interest submitted since the programme was launched in February 2021. To date, 14 organisations have successfully progressed into the Development Phase of the process, and eight of these now operate venues, with the remaining six working with Council officers on funding applications and legal agreements.

A further 30 organisations are now in the Engagement Phase of the process, where they are undertaking community consultations on their proposals and are working on a detailed application with business plan. The Council is also working with an additional 30 organisations to develop initial proposals.

| The Council drew upon targeted engagement to learn from and respond to the pandemic

The Council's response to the pandemic, and recovery and renewal was informed by community engagement. A Social Recovery Taskforce was established during the pandemic, with membership drawn from partners on the Glasgow Community Planning Partnership Strategic Partnership alongside the third sector. The Taskforce committed to engaging with citizens about its work, to support the social and economic renewal of the city both during and following the pandemic. A short life working group was formed to carry out a community engagement project with people on the City's shielding list and with young people.

As part of the engagement work, many people reported a lack of confidence that their voices would be heard and make a difference. As a result, one of the key recommendations was a commitment to evidence ongoing engagement with citizens and communities in workplans and to:

- ▶ evidence community influence on workstreams;
- ▶ identify community engagement resources across partners and gaps; and
- ▶ make future links to the Community Planning Partnership and Community Plan.

The work of the Social Recovery Taskforce has now been incorporated within the Community Planning Partnership, and will therefore be used to inform the community engagement work to support the development of the next Community Plan.

| The Council worked innovatively with partners to deliver support to communities throughout the pandemic, and have embedded services as business as usual

The creation of *Glasgow Helps* (Exhibit 3) allowed the Council to hear directly from a wide range of citizens throughout the pandemic, including traditionally hard to reach groups.

The Council commissioned an evaluation of the service by the University of Glasgow which notes that the "merging or pooling of capacity across the public and third sector in response to needs, stimulated thinking and contributed to the development of shared understandings of citizen needs and how they might be addressed in innovative ways.¹"

| The Council has re-launched a review of its approach to community empowerment, building on the learning from the pandemic

Prior to the impact of the pandemic, the Council's Community Engagement Team had begun work on reshaping the approach to community empowerment, including a review of Area Partnerships. While this was paused to allow focused engagement during the pandemic, a review has recently been launched to inform ways of working both for the Council and Community Planning Partnership.

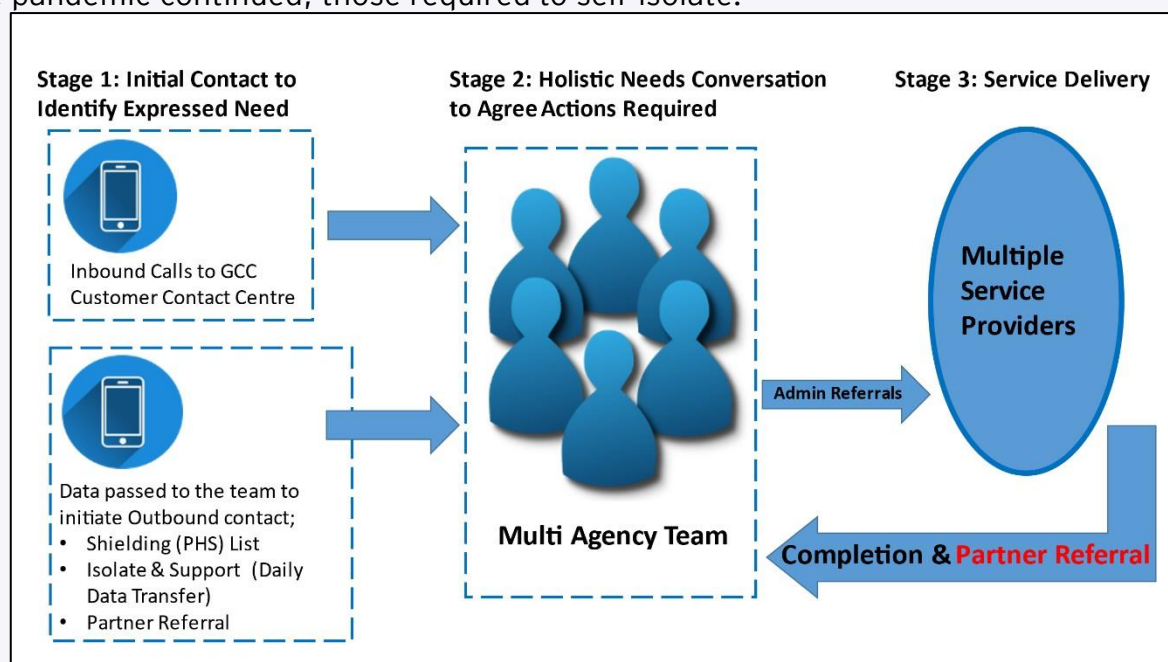
The recommendations made before the pandemic will be reviewed to consider, for example, how to conduct more focused consultations, and targeted at a more local level.

1: *Glasgow Helps An evaluation by the University of Glasgow for the Glasgow City Council, Policy Scotland, University of Glasgow, 2021, page 43*

Exhibit 3: “Glasgow Helps” developed in response to the pandemic

Early in the pandemic, the Scottish Government provided additional funding with flexibility for the Council to lead the provision of support for people who had been asked to shield. Glasgow City Council worked with a range of partners, including the voluntary sector, Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue service and the Health and Social Care Partnership to develop a telephone service response, which became known as *Glasgow Helps*.

Staff from across city partners were seconded into the Glasgow Helps service to facilitate access to support provided nationally by the Scottish Government for those asked to shield. Glasgow Helps also developed a wider package of assistance, working in partnership with the network of third sector organisations. Initially Glasgow Helps was demand led, concentrating on citizens who reached out for assistance. As the model developed, Glasgow Helps refocused and shifted to outreach, using the data sets shared by Public Health Scotland to initiate contact with those on the shielding list and then, as the pandemic continued, those required to self-isolate.



Source: Glasgow Helps

Outcomes

The Council engaged the University of Glasgow to review the outcomes of Glasgow Helps, from the perspectives of citizens who used the service, and staff who worked on the project in the initial, crisis response, phase. The evaluation noted that the service logged almost 33,000 calls between March 2020 and 2021, with highest volume of case types for food-related support (39%), followed by advice and prescription or medication support.

Staff were able to identify and respond to complexity and the multi-dimensional aspects of needs for individual citizens and as a result, preventative measures and support to foster resilience could be provided to avoid later crises. The evaluation report noted that as Glasgow Helps developed, the different partners understood one another's strengths and expertise better and the collaboration became more efficient.

The Council and its partners intend to continue the service, recognising that the network of support available delivers the whole system change envisaged by the Christie Commission.

5. How effectively do the Council priorities reflect the need to reduce inequalities and climate change?

Our overall conclusions

The Strategic Plan identifies reducing poverty and inequality as one of the grand challenges facing the city and has committed to continuing to engage directly with communities of interest.

The Council has made a commitment for the City to achieve net zero by 2030. However, plans are not yet linked to an affordable programme of investment.

While the Council has reported that carbon levels have been reduced by 50% to date, (since the 2005/06 baseline year), improvements in data recording mean that the Council's reported emissions increased in 2022/23.

Current estimates suggest that capital investment of £40 billion is required to deliver the net zero target. The ambitions are therefore unachievable within the resources currently available. The level of risk means that increased scrutiny will be required to oversee delivery and respond to a changing environment.

Introduction

Council priorities are expected to reflect the Best Value expectations that all activity should contribute to tackling poverty, reducing inequality and promoting fairness, respect and dignity for all citizens, alongside a focus on sustainable development, including climate change.

The Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022 report says that the impact of the pandemic and service disruption have been felt most strongly by those already experiencing inequality. Councils have worked hard and adapted to maintain service delivery but those most in need of support are still being affected. Councils must evaluate these impacts so that recovery and renewal supports those most affected and addresses inequalities.

Around two-thirds of councils have formally

declared a climate emergency, and COSLA's Blueprint for Local Government states that climate change is a 'greater threat than COVID'. The Scottish Government has published guidance on public sector leadership on the global climate emergency to help public bodies in leading climate action. The guidance notes that addressing the climate emergency and setting actions to achieve net zero will need to be a key element of councils' recovery and renewal from the pandemic.

The Strategic Plan identifies poverty and inequality as one of the grand challenges facing the city

Glasgow is the largest and most diverse city in Scotland. It has the largest, and growing, percentage of black and ethnic minority populations and 24% of people in Glasgow have a limiting long term physical or mental health condition.

The Council recognises that there are significant challenges for the poorest and most disadvantaged people in the city, and for those who face barriers because of protected characteristics.

The Strategic Plan sets out four missions to reduce poverty and inequality in communities (refer to **Exhibit 2**), including ending child poverty, meeting the learning and care needs of children before and through school, and improving the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Progress to date against this grand

challenge was reported to the Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee in February and September 2023. Key areas of progress include:

- ▶ the development of a network of Welcome Places, to provide a warm and safe space for citizens,
- ▶ support for employability and targeted cost of living assistance; and
- ▶ The embedding of the Glasgow Helps project, including the completion of a fuel campaign to provide support to families.

Exhibit 4: Child Poverty Pathfinder

In 2022, organisations with a role in supporting children and families came together to discuss child poverty in Glasgow. Facilitated by the Improvement Service, a series of intensive workshops collated detail on the successes and ongoing challenges to the effective delivery of child poverty interventions. This process identified and agreed practical actions and new ways of working necessary to deliver the well functioning system required to address child poverty. Specifically, city partners agreed the need to invest in change capacity to understand and articulate the complexity and opportunities to deliver whole system change.

Glasgow's Child Poverty Pathfinder, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government as part of the 'Best Start, Bright Futures - Child Poverty Action Plan', focuses on facilitating a shift to prevention and early intervention, delivering reform in line with the vision of Christie. This is being progressed by:

- ▶ Improving the wellbeing of our children and young people with targeted action.
- ▶ Identifying and addressing barriers to the systemic change required to shift from crisis to prevention and early intervention. These have been identified as how we share and use data, how we design and deliver funding and commissioning models, and how we agree and demonstrate our accountability and culture.
- ▶ Delivering a No Wrong Door model at scale across the city. This model will provide access to person-centred, holistic support. This builds on the learnings from services such as the HSCP's Family Support model and Glasgow Helps.

The Pathfinder works with the University of Glasgow's Social & Public Health Sciences Unit to leverage academic expertise and research capabilities, embedding ongoing learning and evaluation to continually inform and reshape the work necessary to deliver this challenging agenda.

Source: Glasgow City Council

Two emerging commitments have also been identified:

- ▶ The need to deliver the Child Poverty Pathfinder (refer to **Exhibit 4**) of whole system change; and
- ▶ A Fair Work First approach, to deliver good quality and fair work both as an employer, and as a commissioner of services.

| The Council has embedded equality outcome reporting and monitoring

The Council has had an agreed Statement of Intent on Equality since 2017 and has recently produced a mid-term report on progress towards its Equalities Outcomes 2021-25. The report outlines the arrangements across the Council group structure, encompassing arms-length organisations (ALEOs), such as Glasgow Life. Key arrangements include:

- ▶ The appointment of a City Convener for Equalities, who links in with key strategic leads from the Chief Executive's Department and other services as appropriate.
- ▶ The establishment of an Equality Working Group, comprising senior officers representing each service and ALEO, allowing consideration of equalities.
- ▶ Collaborative working with the Glasgow Community Planning Partnership and active links to the Community Planning Equality Working Group.
- ▶ Established links and co-ordination with the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Equality Working Group.

The report notes the impact of the pandemic in compounding existing inequalities. The Council's Poverty Leadership Panel commissioned research which identified that at least 2,510 more children in Glasgow were living in poverty since the beginning of the pandemic.

In October 2023, the Council issued updated guidance on the completion of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA). The updates responded to an internal audit recommendation to reflect emerging developments in Human Rights and planned changes in the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The EQIA process is intended to ensure that the Council's Equality Outcomes, and any impact on protected characteristics, are considered as part of decision-making processes.

| The Council has committed to engage directly with equality communities within the Strategic Plan

The Council has arrangements to engage directly with communities, which includes representatives from the voluntary sector and equality networks, who meet with community planning partners to inform strategy and policy development.

The Council established The Glasgow Communities Fund in October 2022, enabling direct access by third sector organisations to grant funding support. One of the commitments within the Strategic Plan is that funding decisions should not undermine the ability of equalities and community groups to engage fully in the city's democratic life.

| The Council has made a significant climate change commitment to deliver net zero carbon across the City by 2030

The Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019. The Council is one of only six in Scotland to set a target of net zero emissions area-wide by 2023³.

Grand challenge 3 in the Strategic Plan reflects the need to deliver a just transition to a new zero Glasgow, but sustainability and the climate change emergency are also widely reflected within the response to other grand challenges.

The Council leads the Sustainable Glasgow partnership, working alongside diverse partners including the Chamber of Commerce, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport and the universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde to deliver the Sustainable Glasgow Charter. The Charter is a commitment by leading businesses to take action within their own organisations and sectors to contribute to a green recovery and radically reduce the City's carbon emissions.

The Council also funds and supports Climate Ready Clyde, which launched the Region's first Adaptation Plan in June 2021, ahead of COP 26, to provide a joined up response across sectors within the Glasgow region, including councils, NHS, higher education and central government institutions, and supported by the Scottish Government to create a shared vision, strategy and action plan. The Adaptation Plan for the Region was published alongside the Council's own Climate Plan.

| The Council has developed its governance arrangements for climate change

The Council has established a Net Zero and

Climate Progress Monitoring Committee, supported by a Net Zero Committee and a Just Transition Working Group, alongside officer led groups including:

- ▶ The Council's Climate and Sustainability Board (Chaired by the Executive Director of NRS);
- ▶ A Climate and Sustainability Scoping Group; and
- ▶ A new Carbon Management Steering Group.

The Glasgow Climate Adaptation Plan 2022-2030 was approved by the committee in August 2022. The plan includes more robust risk management strategies to give prominence to climate change issues and aid informed climate resilience planning.

The Council's first Just Transition Skills Action Plan was published in November 2023, recognising that a systematic response is required to ensure that communities disproportionately affected by the transition can access the new opportunities that will come from it. In Glasgow, the Council has focused on those at risk of unemployment or in-work poverty, and advancing equality of opportunity.

| The Council uses Climate Change Impact Assessments to support decision-making

In February 2023, the Operational Performance Delivery and Scrutiny Committee considered the proposed approach to Climate Change Impact Assessments (CCIAs) across the Council (Exhibit 5). The assessment was subject to internal testing, and a training module was developed for staff and elected members. The assessments will be implemented within relevant committee reports throughout 2024/25.

3: Scotland Councils' approach to addressing climate change, Accounts Commission, September 2022

Exhibit 5: The Council has developed a three phased approach to the Climate Change Impact Assessments

1

Mapping the impact the proposal has on local governance

Consideration against the UN Sustainable Development Goals and how it addresses the Grand Challenges set out in the Strategic Plan.

2

Analysing the impact the proposal is likely to have on the city's ability to achieve its vision for the following areas set out in the climate plan:

- ▶ Land use & spatial planning
- ▶ Housing and energy
- ▶ Mobility & transport
- ▶ Responsible consumption
- ▶ Biodiversity
- ▶ Communities
- ▶ Just transition

3

Reflecting and summarising the analysis undertaken in phases 1 and 2, and to then highlight the next steps and a timeline for review.

Source: Climate Change Impact Assessment, OPDSC, February 2023

A summary of the results of CCIAs will be reported to the Net Zero Committee on an annual basis. The approach to assessments was updated in January 2024 but the Council notes that there is not yet a single tool for carbon calculation that can be deployed across the Council to monitor progress. This will impact all councils' approach to delivering net zero.

The Council's public reporting highlights that emissions increased in 2022/23, principally reflecting improvements in the collation of data

The Council publishes annual data on its emissions as part of its public duties in relation to climate change. Emissions are

categories across three areas:

- ▶ **Scope 1 emissions:** These include those that the Council directly produces itself – from assets it owns or controls.
- ▶ **Scope 2 emissions:** Including those that the Council is indirectly responsible for, such as the emissions created through its energy consumption.
- ▶ **Scope 3 emissions:** Emissions within the Council's supply chain. This includes reducing emissions produced by the businesses that they buy goods or services from.

The Council notes within its Annual Public Body Duties reporting that for Scope 1 and 2 emissions, a significant decrease has been achieved overall. On a like for like basis, emissions have decreased by 50% compared to the 2005/06 baseline year. This reduction is primarily as a result of key investments such as:

- ▶ The installation of LED lighting, insulation and Building Management System upgrades to Glasgow Life properties;
- ▶ The replacement of diesel fleet vehicles with over 300 electric vehicles and installation of EV infrastructure to support this transition;
- ▶ Glasgow's Low Emission Zone came into effect in 1st June 2023, which aims to reduce levels of harmful vehicle emissions in the city centre.
- ▶ Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure - a tariff for consumption of electricity was introduced on the Council's public EV charging infrastructure in April 2023 to support growth of the network.

The Council has also recently approved a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) to contribute to the renewable heating aims within the Climate Plan. The LHEES notes that heating Glasgow's buildings contributes significantly to the city's total emissions.

Emissions from gas, which heats 84% of domestic properties in the city, accounts for 43% of total emissions in Glasgow.

The Council estimates that significant

investment of around £40 billion is required to achieve the level of decarbonisation required to meet its targets. A series of major improvement works would be required to be undertaken concurrently within a short period of time.

While the Scottish Government has made funding available for specific areas of focus, there are no plans at this stage to provide funding to fully implement the Climate Plan.

The current rate of reductions in emissions requires to accelerate to reduce the gap required to be covered through carbon sequestration to get to the Council's net zero target by 2030

Like other local authorities, the Council has been unable to fully report Scope 3 emissions due to difficulties in the underlying data calculation methodology. The Council has established a programme of work to continue to develop Scope 3 reporting, including waste and water consumption statistics, but the current net zero target focuses only on Scope 1 and 2 emissions.

During 2022/23, the Council's reporting on its own emissions from the transmission and distribution of electricity and homeworking emissions have been reported for the first time. **Exhibit 6** highlights that this has resulted in an increase in emissions overall. Scope 1 emissions also increased by 3% as a result of an increase in the use of diesel following the return to normal practices following the pandemic.

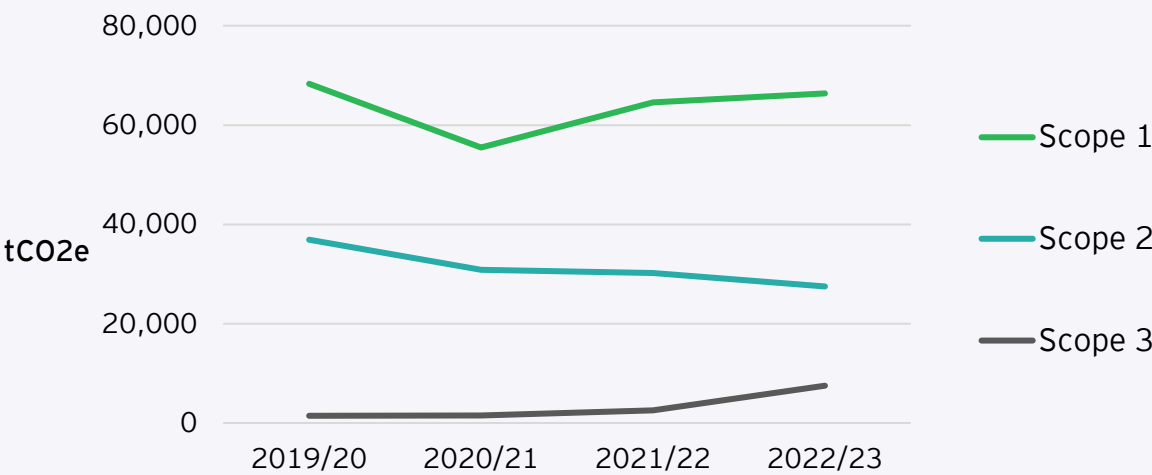
The Council established investment-ready plans within its “Greenprint” in September 2021 to seek private sector funding for a range of projects. However, like all local authorities, at this stage the Council will be unable to deliver its net zero ambitions in full without additional funding.

As a result, the current trajectory is likely to be insufficient to achieve the Council’s net zero aims. The gap in residual emissions will require to be met via carbon sequestration to meet the target in 2030. Further work is necessary to understand and report on progress, and on the impact of Scope 3 emissions.

We also note that the Council’s internal auditors review of Carbon Management Governance concluded that limited assurance could be placed on the controls in place to monitor emissions. An updated Carbon Management Plan, due in May 2023, was presented to the Net Zero Committee in February 2024 and is expected to be adopted in March 2024.

Recommendation 3: The Council should review arrangements in place to capture and reduce emissions, including Scope 3.

Exhibit 6: Improvements in data collection mean that Council emissions have increased overall. Data on citywide emissions is reported 2 years in arrears.



Source: Scottish Sustainability Network 2022/23 Public Duties reporting

| The Council’s scrutiny arrangements will need to adapt to respond to the scale of the challenge ahead

In November 2023, the Net Zero and Climate Progress Monitoring Policy Committee considered the Annual Report against the Climate Plan. This noted that progress against some target completion dates has been impacted by the pandemic, but that no actions are assessed as “red” (**Exhibit 7**, below).

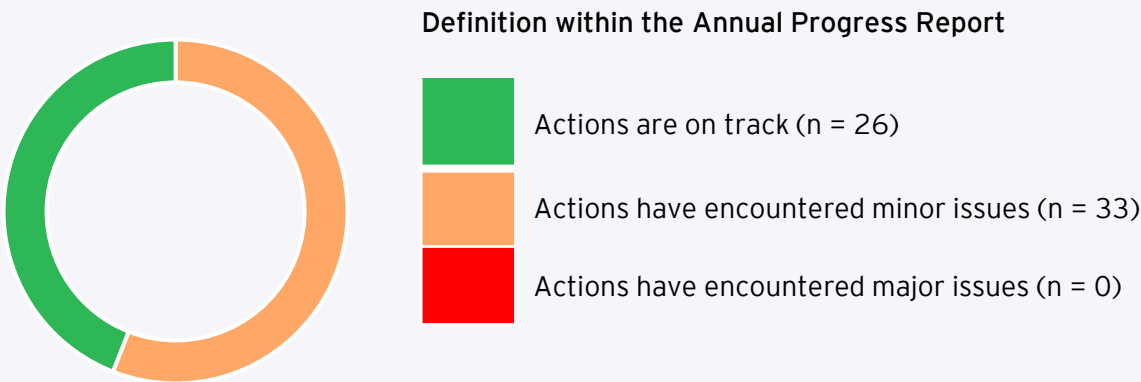
Similarly, the OPDSC considered an update against the Strategic Plan’s Climate Emergency grand challenge in November 2023 which highlighted just one red action, relating to a delay in a tendering process. In our view, neither of these reports sufficiently reflect the risk that the Council’s

target on emissions will not be achieved.

Annual reporting arrangements do not provide elected members with the opportunity to respond to the current rate of emissions, and financial challenges in achieving the 2030 target.

| Recommendation 4: The Council should ensure that scrutiny arrangements are robust enough to support delivery of its climate ambitions.

Exhibit 7: The Council’s current reporting flags that there are only minor issues impacting 56% of planned actions against the Climate Plan.



Source: Climate Plan Annual Monitoring Report, Net Zero and Climate Progress Monitoring Policy Committee, November 2023

6. How good are the delivery plans and is there alignment of financial, workforce, asset and digital plans with the Council's priorities?

Our overall conclusions

The Council can demonstrate alignment between the current strategic priorities within the Community Plan and its planning framework. Work remains underway to embed a performance framework that will underpin the delivery of the Strategic Plan in 2024/25. Further work is required to ensure that priorities, including commitments within the Strategic Plan, are affordable and reflected within the Council's delivery plans including the Medium Term Financial Plan and the Council's Investment Strategy.

Introduction

Making the best use of public resources is at the heart of delivering Best Value. With clear plans and strategies, and with sound governance and strong leadership, a council will be well placed to ensure that all of its resources are deployed to achieve its strategic priorities, meet the needs of its communities and deliver continuous improvement.

The Council's financial planning framework has been impacted by a range of uncertainties. As a result, the Council does not yet have a medium term financial plan that fully aligns to the Strategic Plan

The Council's financial forecasting usually covers a five year period. The current five-year framework covers the period from 2018-2023 and has not, therefore, been updated to reflect the priorities within the Strategic Plan.

Due to the unprecedented financial pressures and uncertainties facing the local government sector, the Council has elected

to prepare a three year financial forecast (2024-27). Uncertainties relating to the impact of inflation, equal pay and ongoing Covid-19 costs remain financial risks impacting the revenue budget in 2023/24.

The most recent update on the budget forecast (presented to the City Administration Committee in November 2023) noted a requirement to identify £120 million of savings over the next 3 years.

The cross-party Budget Working Group is the Council's key mechanism to allow discussion and build political consensus for decisions to be reflected in the annual revenue budget.

The budget papers considered by the Council in February 2023 were necessarily focused on delivering savings to bridge the spending gap. Some priorities were effectively protected within the budget decision making process, including preventative measures such as the Poverty Pathfinder and holiday activity programme, which aligns to the priorities within the Strategic Plan.

Key capital investments, such as the Council's fleet and Scotland's first Low Emissions Zone, demonstrate prioritisation for climate change measures.

| The Council has a range of interlinked strategies to support the delivery of its priorities

The Strategic Plan outlines a number of detailed plans that support the delivery of its objectives, including:

- ▶ Glasgow Economic Strategy (2022-2030)
- ▶ The Climate Adaption Plan (2022-2030) and local biodiversity action plans;
- ▶ The City Centre Recovery Plan (2022-24) and Strategy;
- ▶ The Strategic Housing Investment Plan (2023-2028)
- ▶ The Just Transition Plan
- ▶ The development of a Community Wealth Building Strategy; and
- ▶ Glasgow's Transport Strategy (2022-2030).

While each of these policies were approved at the City Administration Committee noting the financial and other implications, overall, there is a lack of clarity within the strategies about the financial and other resources required to deliver. The Council's Investment Programme outlines the Council's current capital investment plans, including City Deal projects and ensures that each project is reviewed against the strategic objectives within the Strategic Plan. However, without an assessment of the full financial

requirement, strategies and action plans may be unachievable.

In some cases, strategies are in place which precede the Strategic Plan, and therefore require to be reviewed in light of changed priorities and the challenging financial outlook. Examples would include the Corporate Asset Management Framework (2021-2024) which was developed to create a consistent reporting model of asset classes (property, information, ICT, infrastructure, open spaces, fleet, and the civic Collections) and key objectives for each. While this formalises arrangements to understand and manage the asset base, the plan was written prior to the approval of both the Strategic Plan and the climate emergency action plan.

| Recommendation 5: The Council must ensure that deliver plans are aligned to the Strategic Plan and are underpinned by the financial and other resources required to deliver

The Council's Digital Glasgow Strategy was updated in November 2020 and broadly aligns with the aims within the Strategic Plan to include digital master-planning within overall city planning, and to promote inclusiveness, particularly for children of school age.

In other cases, such as workforce planning, the Council continues to work with partners such as the Glasgow City Health and Safety Partnership to deliver a sustainable workforce model.

| Delivering the Council's climate change ambitions will remain challenging in the financial environment

The Council estimates that £40 billion of new investment is required to deliver the 2030 net zero target. While significant projects, such as the Low Emission Zone, are underway, like many other local authorities, the availability of capital funding will impact the delivery of the Council's ambitions.

In May 2023, the Net Zero and Climate Change Monitoring Committee considered a report on the opportunities and challenges around securing climate finance.

The Council has taken steps to learn from other cities and networks to secure investment. This includes the UK Cities Commission for Climate Investment (3Ci). Potential sources of climate investment include the UK Investment Bank, finance vehicles and strategic partnerships with the private sector.

The ability to respond to potential

investment will be underpinned by a prioritised list of all projects.

| Areas for audit focus in 2023/24

Our Annual Audit Report will provide an update on the development of the Council's medium term financial plans and the Capital Investment Strategy to assess whether plans reflect the priorities identified within the Strategic Plan.

As part of the 2023/24 audit, the Best Value thematic review will focus on the Council's Workforce Planning arrangements.

7. How effective has the leadership been in setting clear priorities and a sustainable approach to delivering them?

Our overall conclusions

The Council experienced a large turnover of elected members in May 2022 and has therefore taken steps to ensure that key roles and duties, including on arms-length bodies, are well-understood. Our observations to date suggest that there is cross-party agreement on priorities, but more work is required to support member scrutiny against specific actions. Member collaboration will continue to be critical to deliver shared strategic priorities, particularly in relation to the 2024/25 budget process.

The Council responded well to the previous Best Value Assurance Report. We have noted areas where the Council has continued to innovate since the completion of the improvement plan, including in its approach to community empowerment.

Introduction

Effective leadership from councillors, chief executives and senior officers, is key to councils achieving their objectives and providing clear strategic direction. The complex local government environment means collaborative leadership, working with partners, communities and citizens to improve outcomes is more important than ever.

Leaders need to be skilled in effective strategic thinking, decision-making and collaborative working and able to learn lessons from new ways of working. Councillors and officers must be clear on their roles in setting the vision and planning for its delivery.

Leaders should demonstrate behaviours and working relationships that foster a culture of cooperation, and a commitment to

continuous improvement and innovation. Good conduct and behaviours when working together are crucial. Working relationships between members and between members and officers should be constructive and productive. Councillors should show a commitment to agreed council priorities and work together to achieve them.

The Council established an induction programme for each elected member following the elections in May 2022

The Council experienced a large turnover of elected members in May 2022, and has established arrangements to deliver a training programme to support all elected members to fulfil their roles effectively. The training was supported by the Improvement Service and covered key responsibilities, including equalities duties.

In addition, the Council reviewed the allocation of elected members to ALEOs within the Council group structure to ensure that skillsets and training can be aligned as effectively as possible. This has also supported the provision of specific training for individual elected members, including expectations and requirements when acting as a charity trustee.

| The Council has an established approach in place for self-evaluation across the Council Group

The Council uses a programme of Family Reviews to review arrangements across a range of services, ensuring that they remain effective and fit for purpose. The most recent review, considering the ALEO Glasgow Life, was reported to the City Administration Committee in January 2023, and resulted in recommendations to improve the current ALEO governance framework.

An update on ALEO performance and governance was considered by the City Administration Committee in May 2023 which noted that the framework now includes alignment to the grand challenges/missions within the Strategic Plan. Further improvements are intended to be made as the performance manual and reporting arrangements are finalised. It is expected that ALEOs will be required to submit financial and operational performance reports on a quarterly basis.

| Recommendation 6: The Council should finalise the development of a Performance Dashboard to allow elected members to scrutinise all areas of the Strategic Plan.

| The Council responded positively to the Best Value Assurance Report

The Council's former external auditor assessed progress against the specific agreed actions in response to the 2018 Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) as part of the 2021/22 Annual Audit Report (considered by the Council in April 2023). The auditor concluded that the Council was making good progress in securing best value.

The Council established an action plan to address the BVAR recommendations and in March 2020 reported the specific agreed actions as complete, and that ongoing wider work would continue with progress reported within existing governance structures.

This will include our assessment of financial sustainability, and in particular ongoing work on equal pay and financial and performance monitoring and reporting arrangements.

| Areas for audit focus in 2023/24

We will continue to monitor member collaboration and decision-making to support the delivery of shared strategic priorities, particularly in relation to the 2024/25 budget process.

| Appendices

A

Recommendations and action plan

B

Best Value responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice

We include an action plan to summarise specific recommendations included elsewhere within this report. We grade these findings according to our consideration of their priority for the Council or management to action.

Classification of recommendations

Grade 1: Key risks and / or significant deficiencies which are critical to the achievement of strategic objectives. Consequently management needs to address and seek resolution urgently.

Grade 2: Risks or potential weaknesses which impact on individual objectives, or impact the operation of a single process, and so require prompt but not immediate action by management.

Grade 3: Less significant issues and / or areas for improvement which we consider merit attention but do not require to be prioritised by management.

No.	Findings and / or risk	Recommendation / grading	Management response / Implementation timeframe
1	The Strategic Plan outlines an ambitious programme of work, formed of over 230 individual commitments. Since the publication of the plan, the Council has continued to respond to increasing financial pressures and uncertainties, which risk impacting the delivery of the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan makes provision for an annual review process, to allow the Council to respond to emerging risks and opportunities.	The Council should ensure that the annual review process sufficiently refines the commitments within the Strategic Plan to clarify priorities and promote accountability for delivery. Grade 1	Response: Accepted. At the time of reporting the review is underway and will be completed post the budget being agreed. Significant work has been undertaken to ensure that the Strategic Plan remains flexible enough to incorporate areas of emerging priority; and utilises the agreed change control process to review the suitability of Commitments as appropriate. Responsible officer: Head of Corporate Policy and Governance Implementation date: 30 June 2024

Appendix A: Recommendations and Action Plan

No.	Findings and / or risk	Recommendation / grading	Management response / Implementation timeframe
2	The Council continues to develop the performance management framework that will support the delivery of the Strategic Plan. The Council's progress reporting makes use of Red/Amber/Green (RAG) ratings, but in a number of cases no definition or explanation is provided for individual ratings.	The Council should ensure that performance reporting allows elected members to monitor progress against each of the commitments in Strategic Plan, against an agree set of criteria. <i>Grade 1</i>	Response: Head of Corporate Policy and Governance Responsible officer: Accepted. The Council has an Operational Performance Delivery and Scrutiny Committee (OPDSC), which noted the Performance Management Framework in August 2023, OPDSC is the key public scrutiny mechanism for the Strategic Plan delivery. Reports are taken to each OPDSC outlining the progression of key commitments within each of the Grand Challenges. Implementation date: 30 September 2024

Appendix A: Recommendations and Action Plan

No.	Findings and / or risk	Recommendation / grading	Management response / Implementation timeframe
3	The Council has set one of the most ambitious targets for reducing emissions in Scotland, but the current trajectory suggests that net zero will only be achieved for Scope 1 and 2, and carbon sequestration will be required to offset residual emissions. The current emissions plans are not linked to a realistic programme of investment.	The Council should review arrangements in place to capture and reduce emissions, including Scope 3. <i>Grade 1</i>	Response: Accepted. Existing Climate and Sustainability Board undertakes this role, however, the updated Carbon Management Plan captures reviewed arrangements, and approach to monitoring. The Plan is due to be considered at the Net Zero Committee in February with a view to being adopted in March 2024. Responsible officer: Head of Sustainability Implementation date: 30 April 2024
4	The Council's progress reporting notes that key actions within the Climate Plan are broadly on target. The Net Zero Progress Monitoring Committee currently receives an annual report on progress against the plan, which may be insufficient to effect change.	The Council should ensure that scrutiny arrangements are robust enough to support delivery of its climate ambitions. <i>Grade 1</i>	Response: Accepted. The updated Carbon Management Plan will provide adequately robust scrutiny arrangements. The Plan is due to be read at the Net Zero Committee in February with a view to being adopted in March 2024 Responsible officer: Head of Sustainability Implementation date: 30 April 2024

Appendix A: Recommendations and Action Plan

No.	Findings and / or risk	Recommendation / grading	Management response / Implementation timeframe
5	The Council has a number of significant strategies and plans that underpin the delivery of the Strategic Plan. However, the plans are not fully aligned to the Strategic Plan and have limited detail about the financial and other resources required to deliver.	The Council needs to ensure that key plans are linked to a medium term financial plan to support delivery. <i>Grade 1</i>	Response: Accepted. The Council has recently undertaken a Corporate Governance Review, which outlined a similar recommendation. That recommendation is currently being implemented. Responsible officer: Head of Corporate Policy and Governance Implementation date: 31 March 2025
6	The Council is committed to the development of performance reporting, including dashboards to enhance member scrutiny against individual commitments.	The Council should finalise the development of a Performance Dashboard to allow elected members to scrutinise all areas of the Strategic Plan <i>Grade 2</i>	Response: Accepted. The Council has developed and is currently implementing a Performance Management Framework. This will include a series of case studies which are being developed to enhance member scrutiny. This process will also look at the suitability of a number of existing and potential options of how performance information can be presented in the most concise and accessible way. Responsible officer: Head of Corporate Policy and Governance Implementation date: 30 September 2024

Appendix B: Best Value responsibilities

The Council's responsibilities

Local government bodies have a duty to make arrangements to secure Best Value. Best Value is defined as continuous improvement in the performance of the body's functions. In securing Best Value, the local government body is required to maintain an appropriate balance among:

- ▶ the quality of its performance of its functions
- ▶ the cost to the body of that performance
- ▶ the cost to persons of any service provided by it for them on a wholly or partly rechargeable basis.

In maintaining that balance, the local government body shall have regard to:

- ▶ efficiency
- ▶ effectiveness
- ▶ economy; and
- ▶ the need to meet the equal opportunity requirements.

The local government body shall discharge its duties under this section in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

In measuring the improvement of the performance of a local government body's functions for the purposes of this section, regard shall be had to the extent to which the outcomes of that performance have improved.

The Scottish Government's Statutory Guidance on Best Value (2020) requires bodies to demonstrate that they are delivering Best Value in respect of seven themes:

1. Vision and leadership
2. Governance and accountability
3. Effective use of resources

4. Partnerships and collaborative working
5. Working with communities
6. Sustainability
7. Fairness and equality.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is designed to help empower community bodies through the ownership or control of land and buildings, and by strengthening their voices in decisions about public services.

Specified audited bodies are required to prepare and publish performance information in accordance with Directions issued by the Accounts Commission.

Auditor's responsibilities

As part of their integrated wider-scope annual audit work appointed auditors use a risk-based approach to assess and report whether the audited body has made proper arrangements for securing Best Value and is complying with its community planning duties, including reporting progress against previous Best Value findings and recommendations.

The Accounts Commission also requires the Controller of Audit to report to the Accounts Commission on each council or Integration Joint Board (IJB) at least once over the five-year audit appointment on the body's performance on its Best Value duty. This enables the Accounts Commission to make findings for improvement where appropriate.

The Accounts Commission reports nationally on thematic aspects of local government bodies' approaches to, and performance in, meeting their Best Value and community planning duties. Local government appointed auditors report locally on any such Best Value thematic work prescribed by the Accounts Commission.

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