

<b>Report on</b>	Performance Improvement - Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2019-20
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	P Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
<b>Contact Officer</b>	L Jenkins, Performance & Quality Officer

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To update the committee and members of the key findings of the Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment Report 2019-20.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p><b>Local government Auditor's Improvement Audit and Assessment Report 2019-20</b></p> <p>Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 ('the Act') places a duty on Councils' to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. This includes setting improvement objectives for each financial year and putting in place arrangements to achieve those objectives, as well as publishing annual progress reports.</p>
2.2.	<p>The Act places a statutory duty on the Local Government Auditor to:</p> <p>a) Report on whether a Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, the publication of improvement information and the extent to which each Council has acted in accordance with the Department's Guidance (LG Circular 21/2016 - <i>Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement 2016 onwards</i>)</p> <p>b) Assess annually whether a Council is likely to make the required arrangements to secure continuous improvement in that year. This is called the "improvement assessment". The Local Government Auditor also has the discretion to assess and report whether a Council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.</p>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b>Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2019/20 and Certificate of Compliance</b></p> <p>NI Audit Office issued correspondence on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November, which included a letter to the Chief Executive (Appendix One), which clarified that the Local Government Auditor had now certified the improvement audit and assessment for Council with a standard, unqualified opinion. Accompanying the letter was a scanned copy of the original Audit and Assessment Certificate of Compliance (Appendix Two) and the final Audit and Assessment Report (Appendix Three). The Local Government Auditor had also forwarded the Council's letter and attachments to the Department of the Communities (DfC).</p>
3.2	<b>Certificate of Compliance – Council's Performance Improvement Arrangements</b>
3.2.1	<p><b>Improvement Planning and Publication of Improvement Information</b></p> <p>The Local Government Auditor (LGA) believes the Council has discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with section 92 of the Act.</p>
3.2.2	<p><b>Improvement Assessment</b></p> <p>The LGA, as a result, of the assessment believes the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department of the Communities' guidance sufficiently. The 2019-20 was the fourth year in which Council was required to implement the performance improvement framework. Of particular note the LGA stated that the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement;</p> <p><i>"...should by now, be well embedded. Whilst the Council continues to strengthen these arrangements, it nonetheless delivered some measurable improvements to its services in 2018-19 and has demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement and is likely to comply with Part 12 of the act during 2019-20."</i></p>
3.2.3	<p><b>Other Matters</b></p> <p>The LGA has no recommendations to make under section 95(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014. It is not minded to carry out a special inspection under section 95(2) of the Act.</p>
3.3	<p><b>Audit &amp; Assessment (Section 95) Report 2019-20</b></p> <p>Following significant engagement with relevant council officers throughout July to October, no formal recommendations were issued to the Council as a result</p>

of the audit. A single new proposal for improvement was introduced however, as outlined.

Thematic Area	Issue	Proposal For Improvement	Management Response
Collection and Publication of Data	Example of incorrect performance improvement information being published	The Council should ensure that appropriate supporting documentation is in place in order to accurately assess targets and that actual performance reported in the annual assessment is agreed back to supporting documentation prior to publication. Appropriate validation procedures should be put in place for all information reported in respect of improvement objectives.	A small number of inaccuracies have been noted. In terms of achieving targets and published assessment of performance (i.e. whether targets and measures were achieved or not) it is noted that this was accurately reported in both cases. The Performance Report has been updated to reflect the minor errors and a revised version published on the Council's web site. Council is currently working towards the introduction of a new validation sub-process, with the aim of improving data quality and accuracy in current hard copy system.

#### 4.0 Other Considerations

##### 4.1 Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications

**Financial:** not applicable, arrangements being delivered within existing resource

**Human:** not applicable, arrangements currently being delivered within existing resource

**Risk Management:** Will assist in council's compliance with Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014

4.2	<b><u>Screening &amp; Impact Statements</u></b>
	<b>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications:</b> Not applicable No specific implications neutral impact on S75 groups and neutral impact on promotion of good relations
	<b>Rural Needs Implications:</b> not applicable
5.0	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That the committee notes the findings of Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2019-20.
6.0	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	Appendix One: NIAO Correspondence dated 28 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 Appendix Two: Audit & Assessment Certificate of Compliance Appendix Three: Audit and Assessment (Sec. 95) Report 2019-20