

Solace/IS Transformation Work

# National Self Evaluation Framework

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**How good is our management?**

**Self evaluation areas:**

**6.1: Policy review and development**

**6.2: Service planning and strategic planning**



# How good is our management?

## Self-evaluation area 6.1: Policy review and development

### Explainer

Policy review and development is central to ensuring that a Scottish local authority remains responsive, legally compliant, evidence-based, and aligned with the needs of its communities. A structured, reflective approach can improve the quality, relevance, and impact of policies across all functions.

### Potential sources of evidence

- Council Strategy Suite
- Policy Review schedules
- Policy development and review protocols
- Use of data and research in policy papers
- Links to national strategy or legislation
- EQIAs
- Consultation and engagement records
- Post implementation policy reviews or evaluations
- Tracked revisions of key policies
- Joint policy development with external bodies
- Policy training for staff and councillors
- Results and impact of any relevant internal self-evaluation or improvement activity e.g. PSIF and Peer Collaborative Improvement

### Reflective questions

#### Strategic Alignment

- Are our policies clearly aligned with our strategic priorities, statutory duties, and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)?

- How well do our policies support delivery of national frameworks such as the National Performance Framework, Fairer Scotland Duty, and Net Zero targets?
- Do we regularly assess whether our policy framework remains relevant and responsive to emerging trends or community needs?

### Clarity and Accessibility

- Are policies clearly written, accessible, and easy to understand for staff, partners, and the public?
- Do policies include clear objectives, scope, definitions, and implementation responsibilities?
- Are our policies available in formats and languages that meet accessibility standards and user needs?

### Evidence and Data Use

- Are our policies based on robust evidence, data analysis, and good practice?
- Do we consider equality data, socio-economic data, and community intelligence in shaping policy options?
- How well do we use evaluation evidence and research to inform policy development or refresh?

### Equality, Inclusion, and Human Rights

- Do we systematically carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) and Fairer Scotland Duty assessments for all relevant policies?
- Are these assessments used to shape policy choices and mitigate potential negative impacts?
- How do we ensure our policies support inclusive outcomes and advance equality of opportunity?

### Stakeholder and Community Engagement

- Are we engaging service users, communities, staff, and partners in shaping new or revised policies?
- Do we consult meaningfully — not just formally — and incorporate diverse views into final decisions?
- How transparent are we about how consultation responses influence the final policy?

## Policy Development Process

- Do we have a clear, consistent process for policy development, approval, and communication?
- Are policies developed with cross-departmental input where relevant, to avoid siloed approaches?
- Are roles and responsibilities clear for developing, approving, and implementing new policies?

## Implementation Planning

- Do our policies include a clear plan for implementation, including training, communications, and resource implications?
- How do we ensure that front-line staff and managers understand and apply new policies in practice?
- Are there systems in place to monitor compliance and impact once policies are implemented?

## Review and Evaluation

- Do all policies have defined review dates and mechanisms for evaluation?
- Are we routinely reviewing policies to ensure they remain up to date, effective, and legally compliant?
- What happens when a policy is found to be underperforming or out of step with current needs?

## Innovation and Improvement

- Are we open to new approaches and innovation in policy design — including co-production with users and partners?
- How do we learn from other councils, sectors, or international practice in shaping better policy?
- Do we use pilots or test-and-learn approaches before fully implementing major policy changes?

## Risk, Governance and Compliance

- Do we assess and manage risks associated with policy decisions (e.g. legal, financial, reputational)?

- Are policies regularly audited or reviewed by governance structures (e.g. audit committee, scrutiny panel)?
- How do we ensure we remain compliant with evolving legislation, regulation, and best practice?

## Self-evaluation area 6.2: Service planning and strategic planning

### Explainer

Service planning and strategic planning are key pillars of effective local government. Strong planning processes ensure that resources are aligned with priorities, performance is monitored, and services are responsive to changing needs.

### Potential sources of evidence

- Council strategic plan
- LOIP
- Directorate or service-level plans
- Operational planning at team level
- Strategic Needs Assessments
- Populations and demographic projections
- Medium term financial plans
- Capital investment strategies
- Workforce and asset management plans
- Corporate risk registers
- Scenario or contingency planning documents
- Audit and scrutiny reports
- Public consultations on plans
- Use of logic models or outcome frameworks
- Contingency across budgets, policies and workforce plans
- Results and impact of any relevant internal self-evaluation or improvement activity e.g. PSIF and Peer Collaborative Improvement
- Reviews against Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework – Principle D

## Reflective questions

### Strategic Vision and Direction

- Do we have a clear, long-term vision that reflects local priorities and aligns with the National Performance Framework?
- Are our strategic goals realistic, measurable, and meaningful to communities?
- How well do our service plans link to and support delivery of corporate objectives and LOIP outcomes?

### Evidence-Based Planning

- Are our plans informed by robust data, needs assessments, and performance trends?
- Do we use horizon scanning and scenario planning to anticipate future challenges (e.g. demographic change, climate risks)?
- Are decisions supported by community insight and feedback?

### Community and Stakeholder Involvement

- Are we involving citizens, service users, staff, and partners meaningfully in shaping our plans?
- How inclusive are our planning processes — especially for those who are seldom heard?
- How do we demonstrate that stakeholder views have influenced strategic or service priorities?

### Integration and Alignment

- Do service plans across departments align with each other and avoid duplication or conflict?
- Are we aligning resources, assets, and budgets with our strategic and service priorities?
- How effectively do we link strategic planning with operational delivery, workforce planning, and financial planning?

### Priority Setting and Resource Allocation

- Are we clear about what our top priorities are, and why?
- How do we balance statutory duties with local needs and discretionary services?
- Are resources allocated transparently and in ways that reflect needs, impact, and fairness?

## Performance Monitoring and Review

- Do our plans include clear objectives, KPIs, and milestones?
- Are performance indicators focused on outcomes, not just activity?
- How regularly do we review progress, and what action do we take if we're off track?

## Flexibility and Responsiveness

- Are our plans agile enough to respond to emerging issues (e.g. cost of living, public health crises)?
- How quickly can we shift priorities or reallocate resources when circumstances change?
- Do we build in flexibility to test new ideas or scale up what works?

## Partnership and Collaborative Planning

- Are we working with partners (e.g. health, police, education, third sector) to develop shared plans and priorities?
- How well does the LOIP influence and align with partners' strategic plans?
- Are we pooling resources or aligning investments to deliver shared outcomes?

## Equality, Fairness, and Sustainability

- Do our plans actively address inequalities, poverty, and environmental sustainability?
- Are we applying the Public Sector Equality Duty, Fairer Scotland Duty, and climate commitments within planning processes?
- How do we ensure our plans benefit all communities — not just the most vocal or visible?

## Culture of Improvement and Accountability

- Do we use learning from past plans, inspections, and audits to improve future planning?
- Are managers and teams engaged in planning and held accountable for delivery?
- Do we review and update our planning frameworks regularly to reflect best practice?