

Title of Report: Performance Improvement Duty - Audit and Assessment Report for 2017-18	Officer Presenting: Lead Democratic Services and Improvement Officer Author: As above
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To advise of and seek Elected Member endorsement of the outcome of the Improvement Audit and Assessment for 2017-18, carried out by the Local Government Auditor.

2 Background

- 2.1 Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) sets out that all councils are under a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. It sets out a number of council responsibilities under a performance framework. It also sets out key responsibilities for the Local Government Auditor. The Department for Communities (the Department) has published '*Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement 2016*' which councils and the Local Government Auditor have to follow.
- 2.2 Each year the Local Government Auditor has to report whether each 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. The Local Government Auditor's procedures to do so are called "improvement audits".
- 2.3 The Local Government Auditor also has to 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.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 In the Annex of Audit and Assessment Report for 2017-18 (Appendix 1), the Local Government Auditor certifies that she has performed the improvement audit and improvement assessment for the Council and that, as a result of this work, she is satisfied that the Council has discharged its statutory performance improvement and reporting duties and that it acted in accordance with the Guidance.

- 3.2 She also reports that, as 2017-18 was the second year in which councils were required to implement the new performance improvement framework, the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement are, as is to be expected, still in various stages of development and implementation. The Council is strengthening its arrangements to secure continuous improvement, and delivered measurable improvements to its services in 2016-17. However, until the Council's arrangements mature and it can demonstrate a track record of continuous improvement the Local Government Auditor is unable to determine, the extent to which improvements will be made.
- 3.3 The local Government Auditor has no recommendations to make under section 95 (2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 and is not minded to carry out a special inspection under section 95 (2) of the Act.
- 3.4 The signed Certificate of Compliance is attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.5 Whilst the Local Government Auditor has no statutory recommendations to make and there is no requirement for a special inspection this year there are some areas which could be developed. These are set out under Section 3 'Key audit and assessment findings' of the Audit and Assessment Report. These suggestions are currently being considered by Officers with a view to consolidating and enhancing existing arrangements.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and other Implications

- 4.1 The Local Government Auditor has confirmed that, for 2017-18, the Council has discharged its statutory performance improvement and reporting duties and that it acted in accordance with the Guidance issued by the Department for Communities.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That Elected Members consider and endorse the outcome of the Improvement Audit and Assessment for 2017-18, carried out by the Local Government Auditor.

Background Papers

Annex of Audit and Assessment Report for 2017-18 Appendix 1
Certificate of Compliance Appendix 2