

## Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

### Audit and Assessment Report 2018-19

Report to the Council and the Department for Communities  
under Section 95 of the Local Government (Northern  
Ireland) Act 2014



**16 November 2018**

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*We have prepared this report for sole use of the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and the Department for Communities. You must not disclose it to any third party, quote or refer to it, without our written consent and we assume no responsibility to any other person.*

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# 1. Key Messages

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## Summary of the audit

<b>Audit outcome</b>	<b>Status</b>
Audit opinion	Unqualified opinion
Audit assessment	The Local Government Auditor (LGA) has not drawn a conclusion [this year only]
Statutory recommendations	The LGA made no statutory recommendations
Proposals for improvement	The LGA made four new proposals for improvement

This report summaries the work of the LGA on the 2018-19 performance improvement audit and assessment undertaken on Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. We would like to thank the Chief Executive and his staff, particularly the Performance Improvement Manager, for their assistance during this work.

We consider that we comply with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) ethical standards and that, in our professional judgment, we are independent and our objectivity is not compromised.

## Audit Opinion

The LGA has certified the performance arrangements with an unqualified audit opinion, without modification. She certifies that an improvement audit and improvement assessment has been conducted. The LGA also states that, as a result, she believes that the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (the Council) has discharged its performance improvement and reporting duties, including its assessment of performance for 2017-18 and its 2018-19 improvement plan, and has acted in accordance with the Guidance.

## Audit Assessment

The LGA has assessed whether the Council is likely to comply with its performance improvement responsibilities under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act). This is called the 'improvement assessment'.

The Council has discharged its duties in respect of Part 12 of the Act as far as possible, in that its arrangements continue to mature. It remains too early for the Council to demonstrate a track record of improvement; consequently, it is not possible for the LGA to conclude as to the extent of improvement that may be made. The LGA did not exercise her discretion to assess and report whether the council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.

This is the second year in which councils have been required to fulfil their full statutory responsibilities under Part 12 of the Act. In the LGA's opinion councils should be able to demonstrate a track record of improvement in 2019 to allow a full assessment to be made.

## Audit Findings

During the audit and assessment we identified no issues requiring a formal recommendation under the Act. We made four proposals for improvement (see Section 3). These represent good practice which should assist the Council in meeting its responsibilities for performance improvement. Detailed observations on thematic areas are provided in Annex C and progress on proposals raised in prior years has been noted in Annex B.

## Status of the Audit

The LGA's audit and assessment work on the Council's performance improvement arrangements is now concluded. By March 2019 she will publish an Annual Improvement Report on the Council on the NIAO website, making it publicly available. This will summarise the key outcomes in this report.

The LGA did not undertake any Special Inspections under the Act in the current year.

The total audit fee charged is in line with that set out in our Audit Strategy.

## Management of information and personal data

During the course of our audit we have access to personal data to support our audit testing. We have established processes to hold this data securely within encrypted files and to destroy it where relevant at the conclusion of our audit. We can confirm that we have discharged those responsibilities communicated to you in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

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## 2. Audit Scope

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Part 12 of the Act provides all councils with 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; and
- key responsibilities for the LGA.

The Department for Communities (the Department) has published '*Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement 2016*' (the Guidance) which the Act requires councils and the LGA to follow. A multi-stakeholder group comprising representatives of the Department and councils has been established and a subgroup of this has drafted guidance to clarify the requirements of the general duty to improve. A working draft has been agreed and further improvements to reporting on the general duty are expected in 2019.

The improvement audit and assessment work is planned and conducted in accordance with the Audit Strategy issued to the Council, the LGA's Code of Audit Practice for Local Government Bodies in Northern Ireland and the Statement of Responsibilities.

### *The improvement audit*

Each year the LGA 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 procedures conducted in undertaking this work are referred to as an "improvement audit". During the course of this work the LGA may make statutory recommendations under section 95 of the Act.

### *The improvement assessment*

The LGA also has to assess annually whether a council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act, including consideration of the arrangements to secure continuous improvement in that year. This is called the 'improvement assessment'. She also has the discretion to assess and report whether a council is likely to comply with these arrangements in future years.

### *The annual improvement report on the Council*

The Act requires the LGA to summarise all of her work (in relation to her responsibilities under the Act) at the Council, in an 'annual improvement report'. This will be published on the NIAO website by March 2019, making it publicly available.

### *Special inspections*

The LGA may also, in some circumstances, carry out special inspections which will be reported to the Council and the Department, and which she may publish.

### 3. Audit Findings

This section outlines key observations in the form of proposals for improvement, arising from following thematic areas of the Council’s audit and assessment:

- General duty to improve;
- Governance arrangements;
- Improvement objectives;
- Consultation;
- Improvement plan;
- Arrangements to improve; and
- Collection, use and publication of performance information.

These are not formal recommendations, which are more significant matters which require action to be taken by the Council in order to comply with the Act or Guidance. Proposals for improvement include matters which, if accepted, will assist the Council in meeting its performance improvement responsibilities. The LGA will follow up how these proposals have been addressed in subsequent years. We recommend that the Council’s Audit Committee also track progress on their implementation.

Our procedures were limited to those considered necessary for the effective performance of the audit and assessment. Therefore, the LGA’s observations should not be regarded as a comprehensive statement of all weaknesses which exist, or all improvements which could be made.

Detailed observations for the thematic areas can be found at Annex C.

Thematic area	Issue	Proposal for improvement
Various	A number of proposals for improvement from 2016 and 2017 have not been addressed.	The Council should prioritise prior year proposals for improvement and take steps to incorporate them in the 2018-19 performance improvement cycle.
Collection, use and publication of performance information	The Self-Assessment Review does not contain any background information or context as to the reasons why some of the projects did not meet the target specified in the 2017-18 Improvement Plan or what steps the Council intends to take to remedy the situation.	The Self-Assessment report should not focus solely on results, it should include explanations why targets were not met (if applicable) and what steps the Council intends to take to address the issue moving forward. This provides context and background for a reader of the review.
Collection, use and publication of	Collection of performance data in relation to the self-imposed standards	Independent verification of the results of self-imposed standards

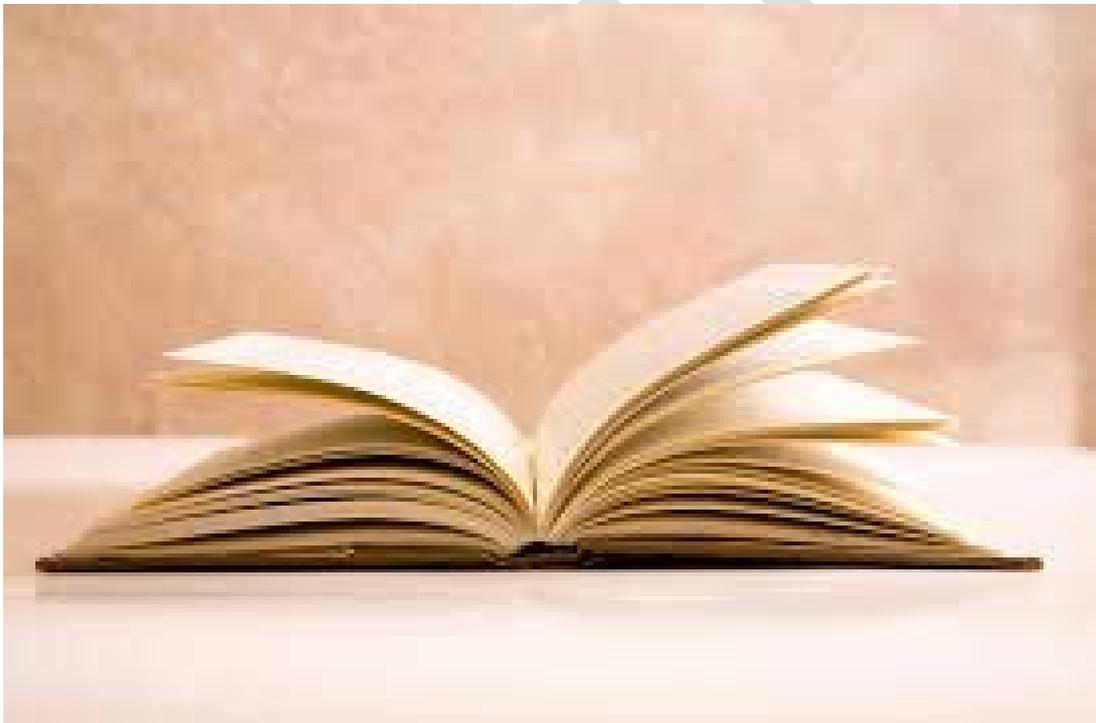
Thematic area	Issue	Proposal for improvement
performance information	and indicators was carried out by the relevant project manager. No independent verification was conducted.	or projects should be undertaken prior to their publication in the Self-Assessment report.
Collection, use and publication of performance information	2017-18 project's performance was published in the Self-Assessment Review, however, no comparator results were provided for those projects that were carried over from the previous year. Providing comparator information would have enabled the reader to assess whether the Council was improving its performance.	Comparator information should be provided where possible for all projects and statutory indicators to enable readers of the Self-Assessment to make an informed opinion on the Council's performance.

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## *4. Annexes*

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## Annex A – Audit and Assessment Certificate

### **Audit and assessment of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's performance improvement arrangements**

#### **Certificate of Compliance**

I certify that I have audited Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's (the Council) assessment of its performance for 2017-18 and its 2018-19 improvement plan in accordance with section 93 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) and the Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies.

I also certify that I have performed an improvement assessment for 2018-19 at the Council in accordance with Section 94 of the Act and the Code of Audit Practice.

This is a report to comply with the requirement of section 95(2) of the Act.

#### **Respective responsibilities of the Council and the Local Government Auditor**

Under the Act, the Council has a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions and to set improvement objectives for each financial year. The Council is required to gather information to assess improvements in its services and to issue a report annually on its performance against indicators and standards which it has set itself or which have been set for it by Government departments.

The Act requires the Council to publish a self-assessment before 30 September in the financial year following that to which the information relates, or by any other such date as the Department for Communities (the Department) may specify by order. The Act also requires that the Council has regard to any guidance issued by the Department in publishing its assessment.

As the Council's auditor, I am required by the Act to determine and report each year on whether:

- The Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, published the required improvement information and the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the Department's Guidance in relation to those duties; and
- The Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act.

#### **Scope of the audit and assessment**

For the audit I am not required to form a view on the completeness or accuracy of information or whether the improvement plan published by the Council can be achieved. My audits of the Council's improvement plan and assessment of performance, therefore, comprised a review of the Council's publications to ascertain whether they included elements prescribed in legislation. I also assessed whether the arrangements for publishing the documents complied with the requirements of the legislation, and that the Council had regard to statutory guidance in preparing and publishing them.

For the improvement assessment I am required to form a view on whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act, informed by:

- A forward looking assessment of the Council's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and

- A retrospective assessment of whether the Council has achieved its planned improvements to inform a view as to its track record of improvement.

My assessment of the Council's improvement responsibilities and arrangements, therefore, comprised a review of certain improvement arrangements within the Council, along with information gathered from my improvement audit.

The work I have carried out in order to report and make recommendations in accordance with sections 93 to 95 of the Act cannot solely be relied upon to identify all weaknesses or opportunities for improvement.

### **Audit opinion**

#### **Improvement planning and publication of improvement information**

As a result of my audit, I believe 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 and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.

#### **Improvement assessment**

As a result of my assessment, I believe the Council has as far as possible discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.

The 2018-19 year was the third in which councils were required to implement the new performance improvement framework. The Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement, as is to be expected, are still developing and embedding. The Council continues to strengthen its arrangements to secure continuous improvement, and has delivered some measurable improvements to its services in 2017-18. However, until the Council's arrangements mature and it can demonstrate a track record of ongoing improvement in relation to the framework, I am unable to determine the extent to which improvements will be made.

I have not conducted an assessment to determine whether the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 12 of the Act in subsequent years, I will keep the need for this under review as arrangements become more fully established.

#### **Other matters**

I have no recommendations to make under section 95(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014.

I am not minded to carry out a special inspection under section 95(2) of the Act.

PAMELA McCREEDY  
Local Government Auditor  
Northern Ireland Audit Office  
106 University Street  
Belfast  
BT7 1EU

30 November 2018

## Annex B – Follow up of implementation of prior year proposals for improvement

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
2016-17	2016/GD1	Causeway Coast and Glens (CCG) should use service data (or other qualitative data) to support the identification and prioritisation of functions in need of improvement	A Multi-Stakeholder Group has been established with representatives from the Department for Communities and the councils, and is also attended by NIAO. The work plan of the group includes consideration of benchmarking. We expect that progress will be made by September 2019 to allow a broader range of functions to be compared with other councils.	<b>Partially Implemented</b>
	2016/GD2	A performance improvement policy should be developed.		<b>Implemented</b>
	2016/GD3	Details of the improvement arrangements (the duty and associated responsibilities) should be cascaded down to all staff.	Sessions were held on Performance Improvement with Heads of Service and Directors prior to the setting of objectives.	<b>Partially Implemented</b> – further engagement at all levels of the Council needed.
2017-18	2017/GD1	Council should ensure that priority areas selected for improvement are supported by a full range of information, including performance management data from across all Council's functions and services.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2017/GD2	CCG should ensure that the decision-making process through which functions are prioritised and selected for improvement is transparent and well documented.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2017/GD3	The Council should ensure that its performance improvement function is adequately resourced and its roles and responsibilities adequately segregated, to ensure that its arrangements develop at a faster pace		<b>Implemented</b>

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
		and reduce the risk of any future statutory non-compliance.		
2016-17	2016/GA1	Revise terms of reference for the CP&R and Audit Committees to reflect their scrutiny roles in relation to Council's performance improvement arrangements.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/GA2	Performance improvement should be included as a standing item on CP&R and Audit Committee agendas.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/GA3	Members of CP&R and the Audit Committees should be provided with training and support to discharge their Performance Improvement responsibilities	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/GA4	The Audit Committee should monitor the activity of the other Council Committees charged with the scrutiny of performance improvement.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/GA5	The CP&R and Audit Committee members should be provided with appropriate performance improvement documentation to enable them to perform their scrutiny and monitoring functions.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
2017-18	2017/GA1	Council needs to ensure that it's Corporate Policy & Resources Committee, other functional committees and the senior management team are subjecting the Council's priorities, improvement objectives, activities, projects, risks and performance to appropriate scrutiny, challenge and evaluation.	Performance Improvement was included in the Councillors' workshop and the objectives were discussed prior to their ratification.	<b>Partially Implemented</b> – the CP&R Committee subjected the selection of the performance Improvement objectives to a degree of scrutiny and requested additional objectives be included. However, there was no ongoing consideration of performance during the course of the year.

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
	2017/GA2	Council should ensure that its officers provide relevant committees with appropriate timely information in relation to the delivery of the improvement objectives.	The Performance Manager is currently designing a dashboard system to report organisational performance to the CP&R Committee on a quarterly basis. The dashboard does not report on the projects within the Performance Improvement framework, however, he has stated that he intends to link the information in the dashboard to the Performance Improvement objectives in the future	<b>Partially Implemented</b> – the dashboard was first presented to the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee in September, work is ongoing on linking it to the Performance Improvement Plan, this may in the future address this issue.
2016-17	2016/IO1	Objectives do not directly identify the functions that Council intends to improve, instead functions for improvement derive from the 'Performance Improvement projects' identified in respect of each objective. Objectives would be improved by identifying the specific functions or services it intends to improve.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/IO2	Targets in relation to projects e.g. efficiency related projects, customer engagement and estates strategy projects, should be expressed in outcome terms, rather than merely reflecting their outputs.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
2017-18	2017/IO1	Council should avoid improvement objectives that are excessively broad, aspirational and open-ended as they may lack the capability to inform effective action and accountability. Objectives should ideally both describe the overall purpose and the scope of action to deliver it (e.g. "we will provide more and better opportunities for citizens to engage in physical activity").	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2017/IO2	Council should ensure that each improvement objective and its underlying projects are focused on outcomes for	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
		citizens in relation to improved functions and/or services rather than simply outputs		
	2017/IO3	Council should ensure that improvement can be demonstrated at the objective level and, where possible, measured through the use of meaningful performance indicators and data collection and/or other qualitative methods. These indicators should not just concentrate around, nor be limited to, the statutory indicators and standards imposed by central government.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2017/IO4	Where possible and relevant, the Council should use baseline performance data/information (and set standards which they hope to achieve) against which future improvement can be demonstrated.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
2016-17	2016/C1	Council should raise the profile and transparency of the performance improvement framework throughout the year on the Council's website and other communication channels for example social media, citizen magazines etc.	The Council's website has a page on Performance Improvement where stakeholders may comment or request further information. Details of the Performance Improvement framework were included in the Citizen Newsletter which is supplied to all households in the area, and the consultation was trailed on social media.	<b>Partially implemented</b>
	2016/C2	Council should consider other methods of obtaining views (as well as service level feedback) from citizens and organisations, for example, a citizen panel, staff and councillor workshops, and focus groups.	Performance Improvement was included on the agenda of the Councillor workshop this year. The Performance Manager took a table at the Open day for the Community sector, which proved very successful in garnering opinions on	<b>Partially Implemented</b>

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
			the Council's Improvement objectives.	
	2016/C3	Council should consider providing additional discussion points and explaining any specific matters the Council wishes to obtain comment on, or guide consultees to matters they may wish to reflect upon to encourage more meaningful responses.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/C4	Council should consider Increasing the length of the consultation period		<b>Implemented</b>
	2016/C5	Consider responses in a timely manner, publish a transparent synopsis of responses (incl a detail on what impact, if any, these had on improvement objectives) to help demonstrate to consultees that their views are being considered.	Consultation responses were included in the Performance Improvement Plan however, no details were provided in relation to the impact that the responses had on the formulation of the objectives.	<b>Partially Implemented</b> - however, the objectives were agreed by the Council prior to the consultation taking place.
2016-17	2016/IP1	Improvement objectives are high level, the plan would benefit from more detail to enhance both transparency and meaningfulness of the Council's commitment to continuously improve its functions.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/IP2	There is a need for more specific detail on how individual projects address particular objectives and how they provide positive benefits for citizens/ratepayers.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/IP3	More detail should be provided on how the Council intends to achieve statutory indicators and standards set by central government.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/IP4	Consideration should be given to wider dissemination of the plan and its contents beyond the Council website, including to staff, through newsletters and other group contacts etc.	Information on Performance Improvement was included in the Citizen's Newsletter which is delivered to all houses in the area.	<b>Partially Implemented</b>

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
2017-18	2017/IP1	The Improvement Plan should contain a description of the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions (section 84 (1))	The Performance Improvement Plan includes a description of the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement.	<b>Implemented</b>
	2017/IP2	The Improvement Plan should include a description of Council's arrangements to exercise its functions so that any applicable statutory performance standards are met, rather than a list of published indicators and standards (section 89(5).	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
2016-17	2016/AI1	Council should demonstrate the impact of its arrangements for continuous improvement on the outcomes for citizens	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/AI2	Project plans should be in place for all the performance improvement projects.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2016/AI3	Performance measurement/data collection arrangements should be in place for all projects at the start of the year	Operational monitoring is via the individual project managers through their reporting chain. Additionally, management of the projects is reported quarterly to the Performance Manager, however, this is not currently reported on to either the CP&R or Audit Committee	<b>Partially Implemented</b>
	2016/AI4	There is little evidence of regular scrutiny and monitoring of the progress against improvement objectives and targets.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
2017-18	2017/AI1	Council has no established baselines from which to measure improvement and it does not yet have a track record of improvement.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
2016-17	2016/PR1	The Council should consider including performance reporting against statutory indicators and standards as a standing item for relevant Committees.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>

Year of report	Reference	Proposal for improvement	Action taken by Council	Status
	2016/PR2	Officers should initiate a process to identify key performance indicators.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
2017-18	2017/PR1	Council should select a range of local indicators and standards to enable it to measure and monitor improvement across its full range of functions, as part of its general duty arrangements to continuously improve. This information should be included in the published self-assessment and provide year on year comparisons.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2017/PR2	Council should ensure that a performance management framework should be established and embedded across all Council's functions.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>
	2017/PR3	Council should continue working with other councils and the Department to agree a suite of self-imposed indicators and standards. This will enable meaningful comparisons to be made and published in line with its statutory responsibility.	A Multi-Stakeholder Group has been established with representatives from the Department for Communities and the councils, and is also attended by NIAO. The work plan of the group includes consideration of benchmarking. We expect that progress will be made by September 2019 to allow a broader range of functions to be compared with other councils.	<b>Partially Implemented</b>
	2017/PR4	Self-assessment reports must include a section on performance in relation to its general duty to improve as required under the legislation		<b>Implemented</b>
	2017/PR5	Self-assessments should not focus solely on the underlying projects, but also include an assessment of the Council's progress in delivering its improvement objectives.	Action not yet taken	<b>Not implemented</b>

## Annex C – Detailed observations

Thematic area	Observations
General duty to improve	<p>The Council derived its improvement objectives from the Community Plan. This is a recognised method of setting objectives but the Council is still required to identify and document the underlying functions that require to be improved.</p> <p>Three of the four objectives for 2018-19 have been rolled forward from 2017-18, as in previous years all the objectives have been set at a strategic level, and it is difficult to see how they would ever be viewed as accomplished e.g. improve operational efficiency and improve local area sustainability.</p> <p>The projects that contribute to the identified objectives are at an operational level and it is difficult to identify in most incidences how the accomplishment of the project would contribute toward or impact on the achievement of the objective to which it has been assigned. e.g. the project - improving safety in home and in public settings for residents impacting on the objective improve local area sustainability.</p> <p>The improvements that the Council expects to see as a result of each of the projects has been set out in the Improvement Plan but they do not have an outcome focus, it is therefore not clear how the Council would demonstrate the impact the projects would have on its citizens.</p> <p>A Multi-Stakeholder Group has been established with representatives from the Department for Communities and the councils, and is also attended by NIAO. The work plan of the group includes consideration of benchmarking. We expect that progress will be made by September 2019 to allow a broader range of functions to be compared with other councils.</p> <p>A sub group of the Multi-Stakeholder group referred to above was tasked with drafting guidance to clarify the requirements of the General Duty to Improve. A working draft has now been agreed and we expect that further improvements to reporting on the General Duty will be made in 2019.</p>
Governance arrangements	<p>Progress has been made in relation to governance arrangements for performance improvement in Causeway Coast and Glens with the introduction of a new Performance Improvement Policy. The policy was ratified by the Council in March 2018 and includes a detailed system of governance included with the policy.</p> <p>However, the system of governance included within the policy is not currently operating within the Council. Issues identified are similar to previous years:</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms of Reference for the Corporate Policy and Resources (CP&amp;R) Committee or the Audit Committee have not been revised to reflect the scrutiny roles they have undertaken in relation to Performance Improvement.</li> <li>• Performance improvement is not a standing item on the agenda for either the CP&amp;R Committee or the Audit Committee</li> <li>• Training has not been provided to either the CP&amp;R or Audit Committee members in relation to their scrutiny role for performance improvement</li> <li>• The Audit Committee has not monitored the activity of other committees charged with scrutiny of performance improvement; and</li> <li>• Senior management have not provided either the CP&amp;R or Audit Committee with appropriate performance improvement documentation to perform their scrutiny role.</li> </ul> <p>We reviewed a number of projects as part of the performance improvement audit and noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outputs were identified for each of the projects rather than outcomes;</li> <li>• The budget was not in place for one of the projects;</li> <li>• Where a risk analysis was in place the focus was generic and at too high a level to be meaningful for the specific project; and</li> <li>• It was not clear how some of the projects would contribute to the improvement objective to which they are attributed.</li> </ul>
Improvement objectives	<p>As noted previously the objectives set by the Council are strategic and aspirational in nature rather than something that the Council could achieve in the short to medium term. While this is acceptable under the legislation it makes it difficult for the Council to assess whether it is improving. It may be helpful for the Council to place a quantum on the objective e.g. improve operational efficiency by 5%. In addition, the Council’s strategic and ambitious approach towards improvement is likely to require working with partner organisations, especially in relation to the 2018-19 objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist to diversify the local economy; and</li> <li>• Improve local area sustainability.</li> </ul>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p>The performance improvement framework was legislated to encourage councils to improve their own statutory functions and services. The introduction of partnership working to this framework, may introduce an additional measure of risk to the Council's performance improvement responsibilities, as in some circumstances, it may not always control the delivery of some aspects of an improvement objective.</p> <p>The identified projects are largely concerned with ongoing long-term work programmes that our audit work would suggest have been 'made to fit' the performance improvement programme. This leads to problems identifying linkages between the projects and the high level objectives, as it is difficult to see how their completion would impact (in any real manner) on the achievement of the identified objective.</p> <p>Department for Communities Guidance requires the objectives to be legitimate, clear, robust, deliverable and demonstrable. Our consideration of the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council objectives under each of these criteria is detailed below:</p> <p><b>Legitimate</b> The objectives selected by the Council are very high level and in some instances difficult to link to the Department of Communities' aspects of improvement. The projects are directly linked to the aspects of improvement. However, the projects were all taken from the wider Council business planning process and as such are ongoing areas of work. From our review of the plan it would appear that the projects chosen have been 'made to fit' the objectives rather than being designed to achieve the objective.</p> <p><b>Clear</b> Each of the projects has a section providing details of the improvement that a citizen can expect to see, however, these in most instances are vague e.g. increased income and output based rather than outcome based as required by the guidance.</p> <p><b>Robust</b> As noted above each of the projects has a section providing details of the improvement that a citizen can expect to see, and details of the targets and key actions expected for the 2018-19 year.</p>

Thematic area	Observations
	<p><b>Deliverable</b></p> <p>It is not clear in most instances how the improvement projects identified under each of the objectives will assist in the accomplishment of the objectives, since the projects are at quite a low operational level and the objectives are at a strategic level e.g. implement an energy management strategy is one of the projects under the improve operational efficiency objective.</p> <p>The projects do have links to individual services programmes and budgets since they were chosen via the business planning system and were already scheduled to take place prior to their inclusion within the performance improvement framework. However, from our review of five projects it was noted that the budget for one of them was insufficient to cover employee salaries, this has been the case for a number of years and the manager has sought to address the situation but has so far been unsuccessful.</p> <p><b>Demonstrable</b></p> <p>Due to the strategic nature of the objectives set by CCG it is not clear how the Council would demonstrate evidence of improvement in the objectives it have chosen. Additionally, the Council does not provide information on what it would consider as an improvement for its chosen objectives.</p>
Consultation	<p>There were significant improvements in the consultation process utilised by the Council from the previous year.</p> <p>The Council received 120 responses to the 2018-19 objective-setting consultation, which was a considerable improvement on the no replies that were received in the previous year.</p> <p>Cognisance was taken of a number of the recommendations made in this area in the current year, including extending the consultation period from 8 to 10 weeks and adding performance improvement to the Council website – this allows stakeholders to comment on performance improvement all year round. Furthermore, performance improvement was included on the agenda of the Councillor workshop and the Improvement Manager participated in a local Council community sector open day.</p> <p>However, as in previous years the consultation took the form of a template seeking agreement/disagreement on the appropriateness of the proposed objectives rather than providing additional discussion points as previously recommended. Additionally, the consultation did not impact on the setting of the objectives, as these had already been agreed by the Council prior to the consultation taking place.</p>

Thematic area	Observations
Improvement plan	<p>The Improvement Plan was published on time and complied with legislation, however, as in previous years there were a number of issues with the publication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The projects within the Improvement Plan do not have outcomes attached to them, instead the focus is on outputs and there is no clear link to how these outputs would assist in achieving the objective.</li> <li>• There is no information provided in relation to how the Council intends to achieve its statutory indicators and standards.</li> <li>• The Performance Improvement Plan was not published in other formats or languages.</li> <li>• The Council did not provide performance improvement planning information in other formats to assist in facilitating wider engagement e.g. summary form, etc.</li> </ul>
Arrangements to improve	<p>It is not clear in the majority of instances how the achievement of the identified projects (which are at quite a low level) e.g. retail development programme the target for which is to ensure 40 retail businesses engage in the programme- will assist in the achievement of the identified objectives i.e. how will engaging in the programme diversify the local economy - the objective to which it is mapped.</p> <p>In addition, CCG has not provided any information on what it would consider improvement would look like for any of its objectives, e.g. a 3% reduction in costs or a 5% increase in income for improving operational efficiency. It is therefore difficult to assess whether the arrangements that the Council has put in place are sufficient to ensure that the projects included within the plan will be appropriate to achieve the stated objectives.</p>
Collection, use and publication of performance information	<p>Information was provided in relation to the outputs (rather than the outcomes) for each of the 2017-18 projects. The collection of data to illustrate the Council's performance for each of the projects is carried out by the relevant project manager and reported to the Performance Manager on a quarterly basis however; during the course of the 2017-18 year this project performance information not reported onward to either the CP&amp;R or Audit Committees. No independent verification of the results is carried out, or assessment of whether stakeholders consider that the Council has improved.</p> <p>The Council's Self-Assessment Review did not include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on CCG's performance in relation to discharging its general duty to secure continuous improvement, the Council subsequently re-issued its self-assessment review and included this section in order to comply with legislation.</li> <li>• Comparisons in relation to:</li> </ul>

Thematic area	Observations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement objectives; or</li> <li>• Self-imposed indicators and standards.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on the objectives that the Council set for the 2017-18 year or which projects are linked to a specific objective, it is therefore difficult to read this document independent of the Improvement Plan.</li> </ul> <p>Information on projects within the Self-Assessment review is limited to whether a target was met, or if not met the percentage of the activity completed. The review does not provide information on circumstances why a target was not met or what (if any) steps the Council intends to take to remedy the situation.</p> <p>Results of all the 2017-18 projects were provided this was the first year that a number of these projects were included within the Improvement Plan. However, for those projects carried over from the previous year no comparator information was provided to enable the reader to assess whether the Council was improving its performance despite the fact that in one case the reason given for carrying forward the project from 2016-17 was to enable the Council to compare performance from one year to another.</p> <p><b>Reporting of Statutory Indicators</b></p> <p>The Self-Assessment Review reports how the Council has performed against each of the statutory indicators with at least one year of comparative data (except for the economic development indicator or the amount of Local Authority collected municipal waste).</p> <p>The Self-Assessment Review included national average figures for the planning figures but no context was provided for these figures or for any of the results in the review.</p> <p>The Council met its statutory targets for waste and economic development. However, it failed to reach the standard for two of the three planning indicators and no information was provided to explain the reasons and what steps it intends reach this target in the future.</p>