



Improvement Plan

2021 – 2022



Belfast
City Council

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Introduction

Under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, we have a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives and produce an annual improvement plan. We must also ensure that we have arrangements in place to deliver those improvements. This is referred to as our “Duty to Improve”.

Our improvement plan sets out our improvement objectives for the year ahead and explains what we will do to achieve them. This document is one of a number of strategic planning documents that drives council activity. However, it does not include every initiative or improvement activity that the council intends to do. Unlike, our corporate plan, which sets out everything we want to achieve, the improvement plan focuses on a small number of improvement areas for the year ahead. This allows us to focus more specifically on a key areas for improvement, agreed in consultation with local people.

For us, ‘Improvement’ is about more than just efficiency savings or enhancements to services. Whilst these are very important, we believe our improvement plan has to make a difference to people’s lives. It must improve local quality of life and it must help build a sustainable future for our ratepayers and communities. Therefore, our planned improvements comprise both service improvements and activity aimed at improving broader quality of life. When identifying improvement objectives, we also consider how they will drive improvement in the following areas as set out in statutory guidance:

- **Strategic Effectiveness**
- **Sustainability**
- **Fairness**

- **Service Quality and Availability**
- **Efficiency**
- **Innovation**

Whilst our improvement plan focuses on improving services and delivering initiatives within our control, civic leadership and joined up working is essential if we are to rebuild better and deliver the longer term improvements that our residents and city demand. Our improvement plan, therefore, also recognises and reflects the need to work in partnership and show leadership for the city.

This past year has been a very challenging year for everyone around the world. Covid-19 has brought new challenges for our health, for society and for the economy. Individuals and communities have pulled together to follow public health guidance and restrictions, and to

support each other during this difficult and unprecedented time. Belfast's response to the pandemic reflects who we are as a city - caring and resilient with a strong community spirit and a warmth and sense of humour that shines through.

Last year, councils were allowed to defer the publication of their improvement plans so that we could all refocus our efforts and reconfigure services to support the pandemic response. Instead, in September 2020 we published the “Belfast: Our Recovery” document that set out the areas we needed to focus on in the short term during the pandemic, and looking forward, what we needed to build on and do to lay the foundations for sustained recovery.

Through our 2021-22 improvement plan, we now want to build on this; to look ahead and help our city recover and bounce back even stronger. This year, to ensure our focus remains on helping the city deal with and recover from the pandemic, we have based the improvement objectives on the Belfast recovery plan. Our recovery plan has six main pillars, which form the basis of our improvement plan.



Our improvement objectives are also assessed against criteria requiring that they should be:

- **Legitimate** - making a demonstrable contribution to at least one of the aspects of improvement listed in the Act, this directed us toward developing objectives where the potential impact would have greatest value.
- **Clear** - setting out the visible improvement that citizens can expect. This involved considering the ‘measurable’ aspect of our commitments and choosing objectives that were more likely to lead to tangible improvements.
- **Robust** - with defined terms of success (quantitative or qualitative). As far as possible objectives have been aligned to performance indicators with agreed targets to help demonstrate what contribution we expect our efforts to make to each improvement activity.
- **Deliverable** - with established links to individual service programmes and budgets. Every improvement objective contains deliverables that will be managed through our programme delivery arrangements.

Our Strategic Planning Framework

The [Belfast Agenda](#) is the city's first community plan. Published in 2017 following extensive engagement with local people, it sets out a vision for Belfast and shared outcomes for the city. To help focus attention and ensure progress, the Belfast Community Planning Partnership agreed four priority areas that all partners would work towards during 2017 - 21:

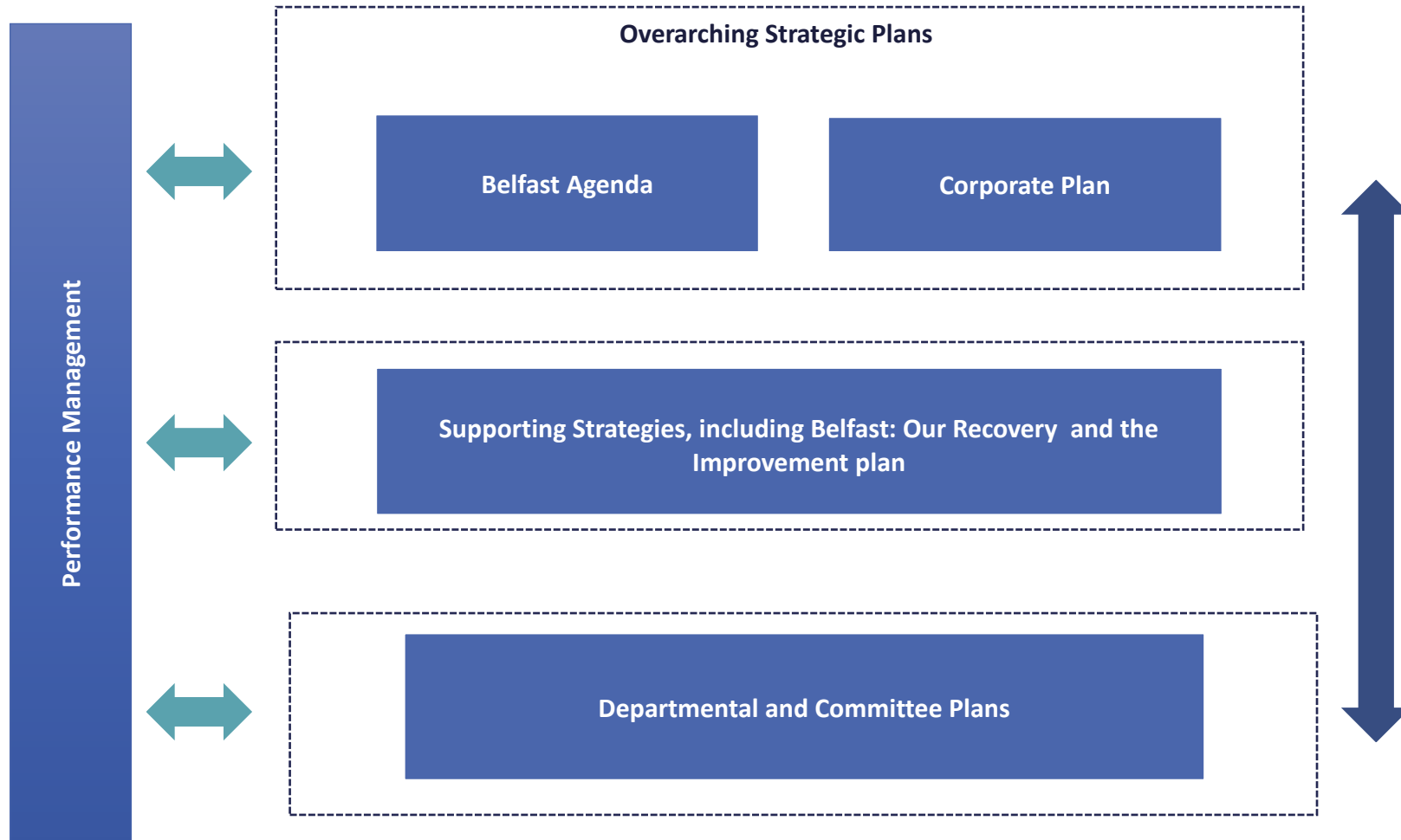
- ❖ Growing the economy
- ❖ Living here
- ❖ City Development
- ❖ Working and learning

Council Planning Framework

The Belfast Agenda is an ambitious and dynamic plan that has shaped and will continue to shape the plans and priorities of the council and its partners. We have aligned our Corporate Plan to the Belfast Agenda, and together, these represent the primary and overarching strategic plans for the city and council. Beneath these, council has a number of supporting strategic plans to help manage and direct particular activity, forms part of a wider strategic planning and performance framework, as illustrated in Figure 1 overleaf.

Given the current uncertain and changing environment, we need to be agile and adapt to changing circumstances. We have tried to reflect this in this year's improvement plan. The principles set out in the Belfast: Our Recovery in particular have guided our improvement plan.

Figure 1:
Strategic Planning and Performance Framework



Our Improvement Objectives 2021 - 2022

To ensure that our focus is correct and continues to meet need, each year we review and update the plan as part of our annual corporate planning process. This includes reviewing our improvement objectives and consulting the public. In the past, we aligned our improvement objectives to the key priorities within the Belfast Agenda. However, to ensure focus remains on helping the city deal with and recover from the pandemic, we have aligned the improvement objectives to the Belfast recovery plan published in September 2020. Feedback from our public consultation demonstrated strong support for this approach and our proposed improvement objectives.

Our recovery plan has six main pillars, which now form the basis of our improvement plan:

Our city
We will support our city to recover by helping to restore the social and cultural vibrancy of our city spaces and places in a safe and sustainable way
Our services
We will take steps to ensure our services adapt and improve in the short and longer term
Our communities
We will work with and support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient
Our economy
We will work in collaboration with others to protect and create jobs and support people into employment
Our environment
We will take action to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast
Digital innovation
We will improve digital inclusion and enhance our digital infrastructure to support jobs, our economy, sustainability and wellbeing

Improvement Objective 1: We will support our city to recover

We will support our city to recover by helping to restore the social and cultural vibrancy of our city spaces and places in a safe and sustainable way.

Activities to support this Improvement Objective

Implement a Revitalisation Fund: Local Business Interventions and Public Realm				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Local business interventions and business cluster and community grants scheme				
Continue to oversee payments & administration of the COVID19 Recovery Grant				
Undertake business support programmes as required e.g. via the Innovation Factory, Brexit support sessions, and development of transformative digital support				
Deliver a capital grants scheme to community groups, charities, social enterprises and business collaborations for environmental improvement schemes, to support business operation and recovery				
Reimagining the public realm				
Deliver the Adelaide Street pavement extension and enhancements scheme				
Deliver Castle Place project				
Deliver Entries Phase 2 project				
Deliver Business Improvement Districts – BID ONE; Cathedral Quarter; Linen Quarter				
Responsible Chief Officer	Director of Economic Development Director of City Regeneration and Development			
Reporting Committee	City Growth & Regeneration Committee			

Improvement Objective 2: We will adapt and improve our services

We will take steps to ensure our services adapt and improve in the short term and longer term. This means planning for the future whilst also ensuring our services adapt to the ongoing and changing requirements brought about by the pandemic and Brexit.

Activities to support this Improvement Objective

Continue to invest in and improve the quality of our leisure centres				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Complete construction of new £8m leisure centre at Avoniel focused on outdoor leisure provision and indoor flexible space				
Launch Avoniel Leisure Centre				
Continue to develop options for the new facility at Girdwood as part of the £105m leisure transformation programme				
Continue construction of a £17 million restoration and extension of Templemore Baths, where the focus is on heritage and spa provision				
Develop options for Leisure Phase 3 – Belvoir, Loughside, Shankill, Whiterock, Ballysillan and Ozone				
Work with GLL to develop effective mobilisation plans to ensure that, on completion of the build programmes, Avoniel and Templemore are open and fully operational on time				
Develop a BCC mobilisation plan to ensure that the Council is, on completion of the build programme, ready to operate the Heritage element of the Templemore project.				
Responsible Chief Officer	Director of Physical Programmes Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services Strategic Policy and Resources Committee People & Communities Committee			
Reporting Committee				

Implement our Customer Focus Programme				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Develop a programme plan for Implementation Phase 2: Service Design of existing services				
Review the corporate telephony and email standards				
Design and develop the corporate efficiency framework				
Develop a suite of KPIs and continue to develop management information (analytics)				
Initiate testing of the corporate efficiency framework and commence programme plan for phase 2				
Further refine the 'deep dive' for Cleansing and Waste services				
Go live with Customer Hub support and training				
Ongoing development of Corporate CRM				
Responsible Chief Officer	Programme Director Customer Focus			
Reporting Committee				
	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee			

Develop new procedures to protect port health and adapt to Brexit transition				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Implement additional security/health and safety measures at Corry Place with relevant protocols				
Work with relevant systems providers to ensure necessary system integrations and functionality				
Prepare updated volumetric and resource models to inform future resource planning				
Prepare updated staffing model to reflect any increased service demands on expiry of grace periods				
Support and facilitate ongoing planning and implementation of necessary protocols and operational activity with competent authorities including FSA, DAERA, DEFRA, and other Ports/Local Council				
Responsible Chief Officer	Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services			
Reporting Committee				
	People & Communities Committee			

Improvement Objective 3: We will support our communities

We will work with and support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient.

Activities to support this Improvement Objective

Develop and implement an £8m neighbourhood regeneration fund				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Develop new £8m physical programme to support communities aligned to corporate strategies including new 10 year tourism plan, resilience strategy and social enterprise action plan				
Launch new Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund physical programme via an open call for proposals				
Responsible Chief Officer	Director of Physical Programmes			
Reporting Committee	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee			

Enhance our parks and open spaces				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Reapply to retain Green Flag accreditation for our current 19 sites				
Reapply for Green Flag Heritage Award for Botanic Gardens				
Agree governance and project plan for a Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS)				
Establish strategic priority groups and develop draft delivery plans (BOSS)				
Invest in playground improvements at Vere Foster, Cavehill and Ormeau				
New Park in Colin - Creation of a new city park in partnership with the Urban Villages Initiative				
Development of Lagan Gateway Greenway				
Creation of Forth Meadow Community Greenway				
Responsible Chief Officer	Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and Director of Physical Programmes			
Reporting Committee	People & Communities Committee			

Encourage participation in sport and physical activity				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Commence development programme for a sport and physical activity strategy				
Undertake pre-consultation and develop a draft strategy				
Deliver the Physical Activity Referral Programmes: Prevention, level III, Healthwise				
Deliver the Physical Activity Referral Programmes: Chronic Conditions Level 4				
Responsible Chief Officer	Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services			
Reporting Committee	People & Communities Committee			

Develop enhanced approaches to civic engagement and the involvement of the VCSE sector				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Introduce new approaches to engagement and deliberative participation through the new Your Say Belfast platform				
Work with CVSE and other partners to develop and co-design an engagement programme for the review of the Belfast Agenda				
Develop innovative and inclusive methods of engaging young people and other seldom heard communities in the review of the Belfast Agenda				
Continue to develop and grow the VCSE Advisory Panel and Network by establishing a support contract, information mechanisms and annual conference				
Responsible Chief Officer	Director of City and Organisational Strategy			
Reporting Committee	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee			

Improvement Objective 4: We will support people into employment

Building and adapting to the economic challenges brought about by the pandemic, we will work in collaboration with others to protect and create jobs and help support people into employment.

Activities to support this Improvement Objective

Deliver employment academies, local business start-up and growth programmes and support for social enterprises and co-operatives				
Milestones (covid permitting)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Employment Academies				
Working with employers to identify opportunities for academies				
Deliver employer-led academies as opportunities emerge (Covid allowing)				
Local business start-up and growth programmes				
Ongoing delivery of support – growing a business				
Ongoing delivery of <i>statutory</i> support - business start (Go for it)				
Social Enterprise and Cooperatives				
Ongoing delivery of support - social enterprises				
Identification of opportunities to enhance support for social enterprises & co-ops				
Responsible Chief Officer	Director of Economic Development City Growth & Regeneration Committee			
Reporting Committee				

Improvement Objective 5: We will protect the environment and improve sustainability

We will take action to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast

Activities to support this Improvement Objective

Manage and develop a council climate adaptation and mitigation plan				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Coordinate the Belfast Climate Commission, its work programme and associated working groups				
Produce a Belfast City Council Environmental Sustainability Review phase 2 report				
Finalise the BCC Climate Adaptation Plan and agree a delivery and governance framework				
Develop a communications plan and commence delivery of the climate adaptation plan				
Delivery of Belfast Mini Stern – Net Zero Roadmap for Belfast (assessment workshops and next steps)				
Finalise and approve Belfast Ambitions Document Delivery Plan				
Responsible Chief Officer	Belfast Climate Commissioner			
Reporting Committee	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee			

Develop a Local Biodiversity Action Plan				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Complete final draft strategy				
Carry out public consultation				
Finalise and disseminate strategy				
Responsible Chief Officer	Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services			
Reporting Committee	People and Communities Committee			

Coordinate the Belfast One Million Trees Programme				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Coordination of Million Trees site assessment and planting process				
Manage delivery of Belfast I-Tree Eco Report				
Manage Woodland Trust SLA and delivery of Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Fund activity and				
Manage delivery of TCV tree supply and workshop contract				
Coordination of Million Trees Steering Group, Delivery Group and Communication Group				
Ongoing liaison with key stakeholders, including public engagement through Your say Belfast				
Responsible Chief Officer	Belfast Climate Commissioner			
Reporting Committee	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee			

Re-assess our statutory waste obligations and approach (impact of covid restrictions on waste)				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Conduct an economic evaluation on waste collection schemes to inform capital programme and medium term financial plan				
Explore opportunities to divert items of bulky household waste from landfill				
Introduce carpet recycling at household recycling centres				
Develop waste acceptance policy at recycling centres and civic amenity sites				
In partnership with ACR+ conduct a baseline assessment of the carbon impact of waste management				
Participate in and respond to the consultation on the Extended Packaging Responsibility (EPR) scheme and Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)				
Responsible Chief Officer	Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services			
Reporting Committee	People and Communities Committee			

Improvement Objective 6: We will improve digital inclusion and enhance infrastructure

We will improve digital inclusion and enhance our digital infrastructure to support jobs, our economy, sustainability and wellbeing.

Activities to support this Improvement Objective

Invest in the city's wireless and data infrastructure and implement projects aimed at improving urban innovation and citizen inclusion				
Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Advanced Wireless Infrastructure (for the Smart District)				
Complete Infrastructure Study and Recommendations				
Carry out Feasibility Study and develop business case for funding				
Urban Smart District				
Complete the development of the Smarter Belfast Strategy and Smart District Masterplan				
Establish Barrier busting group involving asset owners, land owner, Dept for Infrs, city planners				
Co design the Urban Healthy Neighbourhood Programme working cross sector and with developers				
Co design Sustainable movement of goods and people programme				
Co design Sustainable energy programme				
Urban Innovation Programme				
Working with Connected Places Catapult develop citizen participation /co creation blueprint to				
Design 'Your Belfast ' programme to build citizen/community capability to understand the nature of new technologies in the public realm				
Deliver Phase 2 of the Smart Spaces / Amazing places programme				
Development of 'Data for Innovation' delivery framework to support cross sector collaboration				
Development of 'Data for Innovation' framework and Data Science capability to support Council				
Completion phase 1 of the Development of an Innovation Hub for communities surrounding the				
Responsible Chief Officer	Strategic Director of Finance and Resources, Director of City and Organisational Strategy			
Reporting Committee	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee			

Measuring our Performance

Improvement Objectives - Reporting Framework

Each reporting year we publish an annual self-assessment report, setting out how we have performed against our improvement plan for the previous year, and during the year, we bring quarterly progress reports to the Audit Committee. In addition to these formal reporting mechanisms, our Corporate Management Team monitors progress against our improvement plan as part of the management team's wider performance management responsibilities.

Improvement Objectives - Performance Indicators

We have adopted an outcomes based approach to measuring our performance and progress as a council and will use the following indicators to help us determine how well we have done things and what impact we have made.

Improvement Objective	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Target 2021-2022
Our city	Resident satisfaction with Belfast as a place to live	86%	88%
	% residents who agree the city centre is vibrant and attractive, with lots going on	81%	83%
Our Services	% residents satisfied with Belfast City Council	65%	68%
	% residents who agree that Council provides good customer service	62%	65%
	% residents who agree that council consults with and listens to the views of local residents	63%	66%
Our Communities	% residents who are satisfied with their local area a place to live	84%	86%
	% residents who agree that their local area has good quality parks and green space	78%	80%
	Number of Parks and Green Spaces with Green Flag accreditation	20	20
	% residents using council parks at least monthly (from resident survey data)	56%	60%

	Physical Activity Referral Programmes participation:		
	- PARs Level 3- Healthwise	n/a	677
	- Chronic Conditions	n/a	406
	Number of registered participants on Your Say Belfast	248	2000
	Number of registered VCSE participants on Your Say Belfast	113	400
Our environment	% residents who agree that Belfast is environmentally friendly; it protects and values its natural resources	74%	77%
	One Million Trees Programme:		
	- Number of participants and pins submitted per annum (Your say Belfast)	114 / 275	100 / 200
	- Number of site assessment undertaken	n/a	10
	- Number of trees planted	n/a	66,000
	Amount of (tonnage) of biodegradable BCC collected waste that is landfilled	30,299	30,000
	% of household waste collected that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for re-use)	45%	45%
	Amount (tonnage) of BCC collected municipal waste arisings	168,515	172,000
Our economy	Number of jobs promoted through BCC employment academies	338	270
	Number of participants on Employment Academies	458	350
	BCC statutory business start-up and growth activity:		
	- Number of jobs promoted	258	325
	- Number of business plans developed	419	560
	- Number of participants/businesses supported	698	800
	Number of social enterprises and cooperatives accessing support to start up	11	45
Our digital innovation	% of residents who agree that Belfast is a well-connected city with excellent infrastructure	79%	82%

Arrangements for Achievement of Statutory Performance Indicators

The Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 requires councils to collect and publish information to allow them to measure performance against a number of indicators set by the Department for Communities. This relates to activity in respect of economic development, waste management and planning applications. We closely monitor these indicators to ensure they are progressing in line with our targets

The indicators are outlined as follows:

	Statutory Performance Indicators	Baseline	Target
		2019-21	2021-2022
Environment (waste)	Amount of (tonnage) of biodegradable BCC collected waste that is landfilled	30,299	30,000
	% of household waste collected that is sent for recycling (including waste prepared for re-use)	45%	45%
	Amount (tonnage) of BCC collected municipal waste arisings	168,515	172,000
Economy	Number of jobs promoted through the Go For It programme	258	325
Planning	Average (weeks) processing time for major planning applications	37	30
	Average (weeks) processing time for local planning applications	14	15
	% of Enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks	93.2	70

Our Improvement Objectives: Statutory Criteria

Statutory criteria for improvement objectives:							
Improvement objectives 2021 - 22	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality	Service availability	Fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
Our city	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Our Services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Our Communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Our environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Our economy	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Our digital innovation	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

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