

Oflog Launch Metrics Summary and Initial Update on Leeds Performance

Date: 18 September 2023

Report of: Director of Strategy & Resources

Report to: Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

On 4 July 2023, DLUHC Secretary of State Michael Gove formally announced the launch of the Office for Local Government (Oflog). (Policy Paper: [Office for Local Government: Understanding and supporting local government performance](#))

The launch outlined the Government's vision for Oflog, to provide authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government and to support its improvement. As part of this vision, Oflog identified four key areas of performance on which initial focus will be placed: adult social care, adult skills, waste and finance. The areas of focus are expected to grow as Oflog becomes more established.

This report provides a summary of the performance indicators (metrics) Leeds City Council will be required to report against these focus areas as well as a current set of results for the council's performance against relevant comparators.

This report also highlights any particular issues of concern with performance results for the metrics as well as with the metrics themselves.

Recommendations

Elected members are asked to:

- a) Note the information provided in the appendix to this report which contains an overview of the Oflog metrics and results for Leeds and relevant comparators.
- b) Agree that Oflog metrics should be incorporated into regular performance reporting to the Scrutiny Board which takes place twice per year.

What is this report about?

- 1 The Office for Local Government (Oflog) was first announced by the Secretary of State in June 2022 and formally launched in July 2023 with Lord Amyas Morse as Interim Chair and Josh Goodman as Interim Chief Executive. Government has outlined a vision for Oflog's long-term ambition to become the authoritative source of information for local authorities, with its purpose being outlined as:
 - a) **Increasing transparency** – councils, the public and central government should have a clear understanding of how decisions are being made, how money is being spent, and how this impacts outcomes and delivery of key services.
 - b) **Fostering accountability** – Oflog should improve local scrutiny by councillors and the public alike and enhance the transparency which supports democratic accountability to the public.
 - c) **Use data to further improve local government performance and help identify problems** at an earlier stage to better understand performance, drawing on the best available data and evidence. Quality and meaningful data will be the cornerstone of Oflog.
- 2 There remains some uncertainty about how far and how quickly Oflog will continue to develop, and what its ultimate responsibilities and powers (if any) will become. However, with the launch of the Oflog Local Government Data Explorer and first set of metrics by which it will monitor council performance, we can begin to understand the opportunities and challenge its introduction offers to the sector.
- 3 This report provides members with the opportunity to consider the performance information contained in the Oflog metrics shown in Appendix 1 and the issues which have been highlighted in relation both to performance and the metrics themselves.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 4 While further information on the nature of Oflog's future development is needed, and as detailed in Appendix 1 some clarifications are needed on the work to date, there are clearly some positive opportunities presented by the creation of this new body.
 - a) **Benchmarking and data analysis** – outside of some specific, often statutory, service areas or metrics it can often be a challenge for councils to undertake accurate and effective benchmarking when there is no standard way of collecting and analysing data sets. The council has previously procured a number of benchmarking tools to support activity of this nature but has seen first-hand the pitfalls of comparing Leeds against data from other local authorities which is not like-for-like and therefore has limited use. Early evidence from the Oflog data explorer highlights this same issue, but in the medium-term Oflog's positioning and influence has the potential to deliver improvements in this area.
 - b) **Sharing best practice across the sector** – Insights provided by Oflog provide a further opportunity to understand where councils have made strong improvement in outcomes, highlighting those organisations from which we may be able to learn. This provides an additional route for this peer support, building on existing networks with which we engage including Core Cities, West Yorkshire Combined Authority partners, Yorkshire and Humber Councils, and bilateral relationships held with similar authorities.
- 5 In all of this, it will remain important that the different circumstances and contexts of local authorities are recognised, and we avoid adoption of one-size-fits-all or disproportionately target-driven approaches which risk leading to poorer overall outcomes for citizens. The council will continue to engage positively and constructively with Oflog, both directly and through sector networks, to help inform future developments.

- 6 This report is for information rather than for a decision to be made, so it is not necessary to conduct an equality impact assessment. However, some of the data provided will link to wider issues of equality and diversity, and cohesion and integration, and there may be occasions when Scrutiny Board members will want to look more closely at these issues and request further information to inform their investigations.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 7 This report supports the three pillars by providing performance information relating to aspects underpinning them.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: N/A

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 8 This is an information report and as such does not need to be consulted on with the public. However, performance information is routinely reported to Scrutiny Boards and an Annual Performance Report is submitted to Executive Board and performance is published on the council's website; and in relation to these specific metrics, on the Oflog website.

What are the resource implications?

- 9 There are no specific resource implications from this report, although some performance indicators relate to financial and other value for money aspects.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 10 There is a comprehensive risk management process in the council to monitor and manage key risks that could impact on delivery of the aims set out in the Best City Ambition. The provision of accurate and timely performance information assists the risk management process in functioning effectively, with some of the KPIs acting as 'early warning indicators' that a risk may be increasing in significance or about to occur. This will apply to the indicators required by Oflog.

- 11 Without a comprehensive set of performance indicators, regularly reported to the right stakeholders within the council, there is a risk that poor performance may not be identified, and corrective action not taken to address them. This could result in problems with service delivery and have an adverse impact against the Best City Ambition and the council's reputation.

What are the legal implications?

- 12 Performance information is publicly available and is published on the council website, and in relation to the specific metrics included in the attached appendix, is published on Oflog's website. This report is an information update providing Scrutiny with a summary of performance for the Oflog metrics and as such is not subject to call in.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

13 N/A

How will success be measured?

14 N/A

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

15 The arrangements for reporting the metrics to Oflog are still to be finalised. Directors and Chief Officers have responsibility for performance within their own services and the Director of Strategy & Resources has overall responsibility for performance arrangements and implementing the necessary procedures in relation to these Oflog metrics.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Oflog Metrics Summary and Results (Leeds and Comparators)

Background papers

- None