

**CABINET – 26 MARCH 2024****COUNTY COUNCIL PERFORMANCE AND EXPENDITURE  
BENCHMARKING - UPDATE****REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Cabinet the County Council's overall performance and expenditure benchmarking position and progress, following receipt of more recent, end of year comparative performance data for 2022/23 and in year 2023/24 data.

**Recommendations**

2. The Cabinet is recommended to:
  - (a) Note the outcome of the Performance and Expenditure Benchmarking for 2022/23 and that the Council continues to be one of the highest performing Counties, despite remaining the lowest funded;
  - (b) Note that recent Office for Local Government (Oflog) identified metrics have been added to the benchmarking model and that these will continue to be incorporated where possible;
  - (c) Note the data and update on some of the recent in year improvements and ongoing areas of performance improvement work.

**Reasons for Recommendation**

3. It is best practice in performance management, implicit in the current Sector-Led approach to local authority performance and part of the Council's Internal Governance Framework, to maintain an overview of overall progress, performance and cost effectiveness and to benchmark performance against comparable authorities.
4. The Council continues to maintain a close focus on performance and performance data in terms of outcomes, expenditure, cost effectiveness and service delivery. This draws heavily on and is informed by key metrics set out

in government statutory returns, regulatory frameworks such as those of Oflog (Office for Local Government), the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted and Office for National Statistics (ONS) data.

5. The benchmarking model will continue to be developed to incorporate metrics as they are identified, particularly in relation to the range of new Oflog metrics which are expected to be available over the next few months.
6. Areas of lower comparative performance continue to be a key focus for service improvement in departmental service and commissioning plans and associated transformation projects.
7. The County Council is poorly funded in comparison with other local authorities, with marked differences from some similar authorities and this, until addressed, will continue to affect delivery, performance, risks, and Council Tax levels.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

8. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees receive regular reports on performance and progress. A range of reports were presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in March 2024, with the latest data available at quarter 3 2023/24.
9. The Cabinet will receive a full Annual Performance Report in the autumn when end of year 2023/24 performance data will be available to ensure continued oversight of performance and progress on key performance issues.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

10. The Performance Benchmarking approach feeds into the Annual Performance Compendium analysis, which forms part of the County Council's Policy Framework. The information outlined in the report provides performance data which will help the Council and its partners to ensure services continue to meet standards, provide value for money, and that outcomes are being achieved for local people.
11. The five priority outcome themes in the Council's Strategic Plan, approved by the County Council in May 2022, encompass a number of supporting outcomes. Together they form the overall Single Outcomes Framework which sets priorities for the Authority and enables more effective deployment and targeting of resources. The Council's Performance Framework includes an assessment of progress in relation to the Outcomes Framework and related metrics as well as other key metrics for regulatory agencies.
12. The most recent full Annual Performance Report and related performance issues was considered by the Cabinet on 24 November 2023 and the County Council on 6 December 2024.

**Resource Implications**

13. The report has no direct resource implications. However benchmarking and relevant comparative performance data continue to inform service planning, improvement and budget setting decisions as appropriate.

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

14. None.

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## **PART B**

### **Background**

15. Following the receipt of all end of year performance data and comparative cost information, work has been carried out to compare Leicestershire's overall performance and spend position with 31 other County local authority areas. Eight unitary counties have been included in the county comparator group (Cornwall, Durham, Herefordshire, Northumberland, Shropshire, Wiltshire, Dorset and Buckinghamshire). The latest available performance indicator data has been used, and for most metrics this is end of year 2022/23 data.
16. The comparative analysis uses 257 outcome/performance indicators and 9 revenue outturn expenditure indicators, drawing on Strategic Plan priorities, inspectorate focused data, ONS and statutory returns. The data has all been obtained from nationally published sources.
17. This is a similar group of indicators to that used last year. The main changes are set out in the following table.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	Addition of 5 attainment indicators that were previously unavailable due to pandemic restrictions.
School Quality & Access	Addition of 3 attainment indicators that were previously unavailable due to pandemic restrictions. Addition of 2 indicators covering primary absence and exclusions.
Corporate	Addition of 5 indicators published by Oflog covering financial management and Ombudsman complaints.

18. The overall summary analysis of the data confirms previous narrative from the Annual Report 2023 that Leicestershire continues to be a high performing and efficient Council. Achieving 3<sup>rd</sup> place for core performance, 6<sup>th</sup> for broader outcomes performance and the lowest funded county. Previous analysis by consultancy Impower named the County Council as the most productive authority based on outcome value per pound spent. Figure 1 shows Leicestershire's overall performance ranks for the last 12 years.

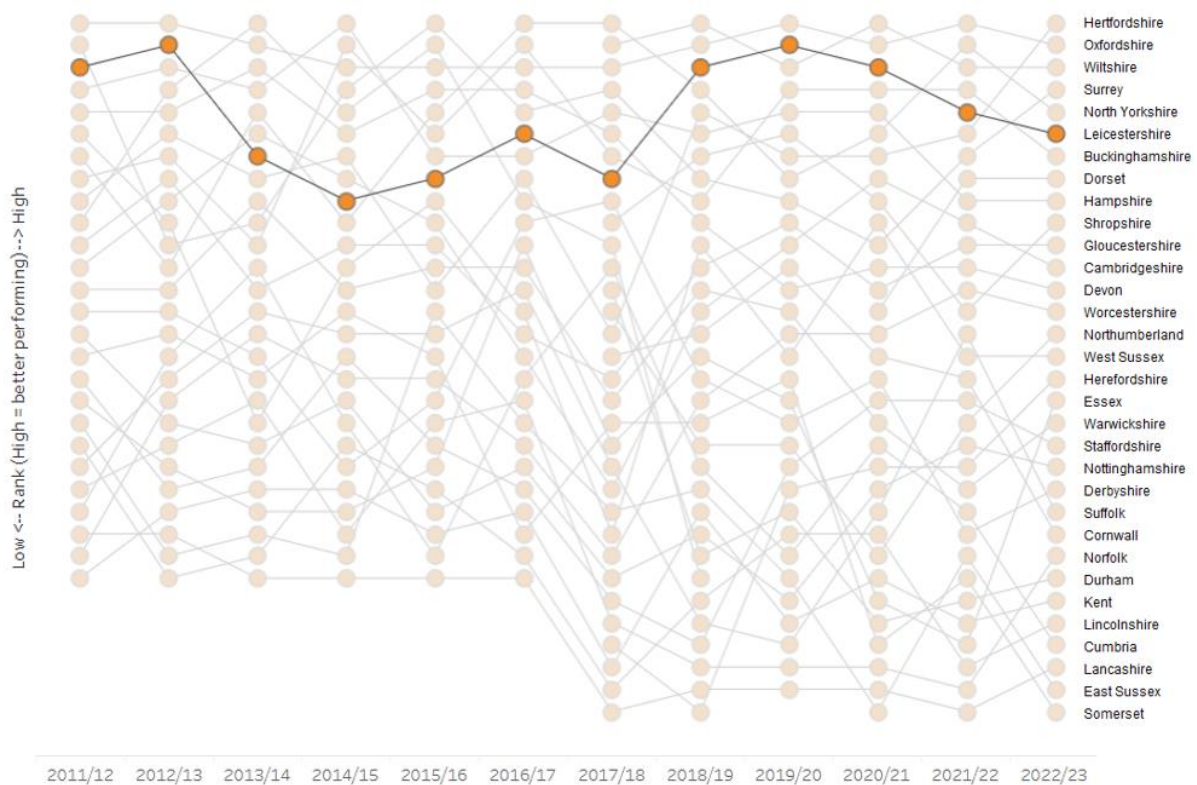

















Chart 1 – Leicestershire's overall ranks (last 12 years)

19. The table below shows relative net expenditure per head compared to performance for Leicestershire and other counties across a range of service theme areas. The previous year's performance rank is shown in brackets. Overall, the year 2022/23 saw some positive progress including an improvement in Core Performance rank to 3<sup>rd</sup>, some theme rank improvements, as well as ongoing impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic on areas such as health and social care, increased crime levels and associated pressures impacting some service outcome areas.

Theme/Service (sparkline shows 7 years ranks where available)	Performance (rank of 32)	Expenditure (rank of 32)	Comments
Core Performance (council services) 	3 (7) ↑	32/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in performance rank from 7<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>.</li> <li>Previously ranked most efficient by Impower and continued lowest County spend per head.</li> </ul>

Theme/Service (sparkline shows 7 years ranks where available)	Performance (rank of 32)	Expenditure (rank of 32)	Comments
Overall Outcomes 	6 (5) ↓	32/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in performance rank from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>.</li> <li>• Lowest County net spend per head.</li> <li>• Impact of covid pandemic in some areas such as health and worsened crime position.</li> </ul>
Corporate - finance and complaints	6	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New theme covering financial management (Oflog) and complaints.</li> </ul>
Adult Social Care – Delivery 	2 (6) ↑	29/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong performance and 4<sup>th</sup> lowest net spend per head.</li> </ul>
Adult Social Care – Perception 	31 (32) ↑	29/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been an improvement in the survey results compared to the previous year, however a number of survey perception indicators remain lower quartile and this remains an area of focus for the service.</li> </ul>
Health – Child 	10 (7) ↓	22/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slightly lower performance rank than last year. Covid impact.</li> <li>• Drop in quartile position for good level of development at age 2.5 and age 5 (eligible for free school meals)</li> </ul>
Health – Adult 	14 (10) ↓	22/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slightly lower performance rank than last year. Likely covid impact.</li> <li>• Drop in quartile positions includes self-reported wellbeing. Performance relatively lower on physical activity and air pollution.</li> </ul>
Children's Social Care 	9 (11) ↑	26/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slightly higher performance rank than last year.</li> <li>• Generally good Ofsted rating in service inspection and that improvements are being evidenced in practice.</li> </ul>

Theme/Service (sparkline shows 7 years ranks where available)	Performance (rank of 32)	Expenditure (rank of 32)	Comments
SEND 	12 (13) ↑	18/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar performance rank to last year.</li> <li>• Significant performance improvement work progressing.</li> </ul>
Transport & Highways 	2 (5) ↑	20/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second highest ranked county (after Durham).</li> <li>• Generally strong performance position including on road maintenance.</li> </ul>
Environment & Waste 	15 (22) ↑	23/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher performance rank than last year. Progress on a range of environmental issues including tree planting and biodiversity work.</li> <li>• Performance has been relatively lower on % of waste landfilled but improvement starting to feed through.</li> </ul>
Economy 	9 (9)	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance is relatively good and significant economic work underway including implementing the new Freeport, enterprise zones and plans for an effective LLEP service transition.</li> </ul>
School Quality & Access 	4 (4)	27/32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some positive recent improvements in educational attainment following the significant moves to all through 11-16/19 education in Leicestershire. Performance focus on 'A' level results and secondary schools rated good or outstanding.</li> </ul>
Police & Crime 	21 (11) ↓	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 place lower ranking than last year.</li> <li>• All indicators dropped in relative terms.</li> <li>• Performance is bottom quartile for vehicle crime, theft, public order and residential burglary.</li> </ul>

<b>Theme/Service</b> <i>(sparkline shows 7 years ranks where available)</i>	<b>Performance</b> <b>(rank of 32)</b>	<b>Expenditure</b> <b>(rank of 32)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Housing 	2 (7) 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher performance rank than last year.</li> </ul>

20. Looking across 257 indicators for which quartile data is available for Leicestershire, 37 (14%) fall within the lower quartile compared to other counties and continue to be the focus of targeted service improvement activity.
21. Looking back at last year's benchmarking exercise, 5 bottom quartile indicators have shown a significant improvement in performance. These indicators are set out in the table below.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Children's Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of children who became the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time</li> </ul>
Adult Social Care - Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of service users who have control over their daily life</li> </ul>
Environment & Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electric Vehicle charging devices per 100,000 population</li> </ul>
School Quality & Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of offers made to applicants of first preference (secondary)</li> </ul>
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% 5-year Survival of New Enterprises</li> </ul>

### **Performance Update at Quarter 3 2023/24**

22. Work continues by Oflog to develop the new Oflog metrics and approach. The [Oflog Data Explorer](#) includes indicators relating to adult social care; waste management; roads; complaints; finance; planning (district level); and skills (mayoral combined authority level). Theme areas due to be added next are children's social care; homelessness and rough sleeping; public health; and youth justice and accommodation.
23. A summary of performance issues as at quarter 3 2023/24 has been reported to the following Overview and Scrutiny committees:
- Adults and Communities (22 January)



- Environment and Climate Change (11 March)
- Children and Families (5 March)
- Highways and Transport (7 March)
- Health (6 March)

### **Summary of Main Changes**

24. The table below summarises some of the key in year data point changes.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Strong Economy, Transport & Infrastructure	Satisfaction with the condition of roads and overall satisfaction with transport and highway services: the Council remains amongst the highest rated for these indicators, though some have seen some minor decline since 2022.
	Use of local bus services and park & ride services continues to recover and is around three quarters of pre-pandemic levels.
	Road casualties are lower than the pre-pandemic numbers although numbers killed or seriously injured on the roads are higher than pre-pandemic.
Clean and Green	The % of waste sent to landfill continues to improve.
Safe and Well	Total reported crime shows a further year on year increase with significant increases in acquisitive crime levels.
	The percentage of child protection cases reviewed within timescales has improved.
Improved Opportunities	The % of pupils achieving the expected standard at key stage 2 was the same as in 2022, however, it remains below pre-pandemic levels.

### **Consultation**

25. A range of surveys and consultation arrangements are used to inform some of the metrics used in the benchmarking and in monitoring service performance and improvement.

### **Conclusion**

26. The Council continues to have a high comparative performance ranking as well as being the lowest funded county. Benchmarking has identified a number of targeted improvement issues which are being picked up in Department service planning. Given the Council's low funding/spend and strong overall outcomes, overall cost effectiveness continues to compare well with other counties.

### **Equality Implications**

27. There are no equality implications arising directly from this report. The Benchmarking, Annual Report and Performance Compendium incorporate the

progress of the County Council against key equalities outcomes and indicators.

### **Human Rights Implications**

28. There are no human rights implications arising directly from this report.

### **Other Implications and Impact Assessments**

29. The benchmarking includes a range of indicators showing progress on outcomes related to health and wellbeing, crime and disorder and environmental issues. A range of the metrics/outcomes require effective collaborative partnership working to ensure good performance and progress.

### **Background Papers**

Report to the Cabinet – 24 November 2023 - Annual Delivery Report and Performance Compendium 2023

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s179822/Report%20to%20Cabinet-%20APR%20Nov%202023v2.pdf>

Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2022-26

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/council-plans/the-strategic-plan>

Local Government Association: LG Inform Benchmarking System

<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/>

CIPFA/Institute for Government Performance Tracker 2023 -

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/performance-tracker-2023/cross-service-analysis>

Oflog Data Explorer - <https://oflog.data.gov.uk/>