

## Best Value assurance framework

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**Date of meeting** 15 March 2024

**Date of report** 25 January 2024

**Report by Director of Finance & Corporate Support**

### 1. Object of report

To provide the Partnership with a report on a formal review of the Best Value assurance framework and an assessment of the board's Best Value arrangements in accordance with a recommendation from the Annual Audit Report 2022/2023.

### 2. Background to report

Members may recall a report titled *SPT Annual Audit report 2022/2023* presented to the Audit & Standards Committee at its meeting on 8 September 2023. In this report there was a recommendation in relation to Best Value where SPT agreed to undertake a formal review of the Best Value assurance framework and an assessment of the Partnership's Best Value arrangements. This report outlines the outcome of this formal review.

#### Best Value

Statutory Ministerial Guidance, published in 2004, set out the fundamental framework for councils in delivering the duty and consequently for auditing Best Value. In March 2020, the Scottish Government published refreshed Best Value guidance to reflect the significantly changed policy and public service delivery landscape, with councils needing to demonstrate a focus on continuous improvement in performance around seven themes:

- 1 Vision and leadership
- 2 Governance and accountability
- 3 Effective use of resources
- 4 Partnerships and collaborative working
- 5 Working with communities
- 6 Sustainability
- 7 Fairness and equality

### 3. Outline of proposals

The seven themes outlined above have been used as a framework to assess SPT's Best Value arrangements.

#### 1 Vision and leadership

The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for the west of Scotland 2023-2038 was presented to and approved by the Partnership, following approval by Scottish Ministers, at its meeting of 29

September 2023. The new RTS sets the regional framework for transport over the next 15 years and will guide decision making in the development of transport strategies and plans and the delivery of transport services and infrastructure.

SPT has committed to jointly working with councils to recommend governance solutions for the region through delivery of the new RTS. On this basis, any potential delivery of change would only be possible with the support of the Partnership and councils across the region. Engagement with, feedback from and, crucially, sign-up by SPT and councils to an agreed way forward is therefore fundamental to taking any proposals to delivery. Alongside this, feedback, and support from wider industry stakeholders, and above all, the public and communities of the west of Scotland, will be essential in this process and so consultation and engagement will be a core part of any future work.

A report on Corporate Plan Delivery supporting the RTS was presented to and noted by the Partnership at its meeting of 15 December 2023. This plan sets out the strategic actions and deliverables and provides a clear statement to the Partnership and all SPT stakeholders of how we intended to approach our aim to be a collaborative and informed partner, and to set out the standards and outcomes of our leadership and staff.

## 2 Governance and accountability

SPT has well established standing orders and terms of reference that regulate the operation of the Partnership and committee meetings. These standing orders are supported by a scheme of delegated functions, standing orders relating to contracts, the code of corporate governance and financial regulations with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for decision making and communication, and codes of conduct defining the standards of behaviour for employees and members.

SPT management have a designated role profile and these profiles are easily accessible for employees via the intranet and are structured to provide clear responsibility and accountability at both strategic and operational levels.

In the *SPT Annual Audit report 2022/2023*, Audit Scotland concluded that SPT's *Governance arrangements are appropriate and operated effectively*.

SPT is committed to transparency with meetings of the Partnership and its committees are open to the public, and agendas, papers and minutes are published on our website in accordance with the Publication scheme. Video recordings of our Partnership and Committee meetings are also available on our website.

## 3 Effective use of resources

Public sector bodies need to make best use of their resources to meet stated outcomes and improvement objectives, through effective planning and working with strategic partners and communities.

The SPT annual report 2022/2023 was presented to and approved by the Partnership at its meeting of 23 June 2023.

This report highlighted the achievements of SPT during 2022/2023 and how SPT used its resources to progress projects and invest in service delivery across the region and outline the work SPT has done at a national level, responding to numerous consultations as well as local transport priorities.

## 4 Partnerships and collaborative working

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport is the Regional Transport Partnership for the west of Scotland covering twelve council areas and a population of 2.14 million people.

SPT's Partnership Board is made up of twenty elected members representing twelve constituent councils, and in 2022/23 there were seven Appointed Members.

SPT is at the heart of the region's transport planning, operations, and project delivery; working to develop an integrated network now and for the future. We provide subsidised contracted local bus services, are instrumental in the delivery and growth of community transport and provide demand responsive services (MyBus) in areas not served by the commercial market and in rural communities where public transport would otherwise be unavailable. We deliver on street bus shelters and stops, transport information and are a key influence in the design of the bus network.

SPT organises the biggest school run in Scotland ensuring around 35,000 pupils get to and from school every day. We control and operate Buchanan, East Kilbride, Hamilton, Greenock, Partick, and Govan bus stations with over 1 million bus service departures from our stations this year.

SPT also own and operate the Subway in Glasgow the world's third oldest underground system and a vital part of the west of Scotland's transport network.

On behalf of operators, SPT is also responsible for the operation and administration of the region's ZoneCard an integrated multi-modal ticketing scheme, with customers making 2.5 million essential journeys using ZoneCards.

Delivery of major, once-in-a-generation projects like Clyde Metro, will rely heavily upon the integration of new transport modes such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), light rail and metro rail with active travel, bus, heavy rail, and Subway for its success. Indeed, the Clyde Metro therefore presents a unique opportunity for transformational change to our region's transport network, which will require collaboration with many other organisations central to the planning and delivery of transport, including constituent councils, Transport Scotland, Clydeplan and public transport operators.

## 5 Working with communities

As set out above, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport is the Regional Transport Partnership for the west of Scotland covering twelve council areas and a population of 2.14 million people.

SPT's Partnership Board is made up of twenty elected members representing twelve constituent councils.

In addition, SPT regularly works with the following stakeholders to design, enhance, and deliver services to our communities in the west of Scotland:

- Transport Scotland, Regional Transport Partnerships, NHS and Universities and Colleges;
- Community Planning Partnerships, where public bodies come together to improve outcomes in their local area, to promote investment in local bus services, park & ride, road safety investment, bus infrastructure improvements, new rail stations and MyBus services;
- Community Transport Groups;
- Active travel organisations;
- Community Councils;
- Third sector / voluntary sector;
- Equality groups;
- Specialist groups and professional /industry organisations e.g. Confederation of Passenger Transport, Urban Transport Group, Transport Focus, Bus Users Scotland.

## 6 Sustainability

Financial Sustainability means being able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

SPT's Long-term Financial Strategy (LTFS) provides financial forecasts projected forward over a 10-year period, split into short, medium, and longer-term forecasts. These forecasts are reviewed and updated, where appropriate, on an annual basis.

SPT is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of our operations and ensure our property portfolio and transport services are resilient to the effects of climate change. An update report on SPT Climate Change and Carbon Management was presented to and approved by the Partnership at its meeting of 23 June 2023. This report set out SPT's long-term vision, objectives, commitments, and key targets to determine emission reduction pathways for different parts of the business. This provides the framework to fulfil our responsibilities as a public body in Scotland, end our direct contributions to carbon emissions as soon as possible, and future proof our transport network against the impacts of extreme weather and rising temperatures.

## 7 Fairness and equality

The Partnership's Standing Orders, Committee Terms of Reference, Scheme of Delegated Functions and Financial Regulations outline the roles and responsibilities and monitoring arrangements in place. These principles are supported by codes of conduct for members and employees with policies, guidance, and conditions of service.

A bi-annual Equality and Diversity report is presented to the Personnel committee. This report outlines the statutory duties of SPT and presents data on protected characteristics. All committee/Partnership reports consider equalities consequences.

### **4. Partnership action**

The Partnership is asked to note the contents of this report, the Best Value assurance framework in place and assessment of the Partnership's Best Value arrangements.

### **5. Consequences**

Policy consequences	<i>As detailed in the report.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>In accordance with the Local government in Scotland Act 2003.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None.</i>

Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences      *None.*

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