

Notes of Employment, Learning & Skills Performance Group

Meeting 8th December 2009

Present:

Councillors: Edge (Chair), Austin, Loftus and Howard

Officers: Collins, Cockroft, Mackenzie, Villiers

Discussion with Rob Mackenzie

The majority of the meeting was taken up by a discussion with Rob Mackenzie – the Operational Director with overall responsibility for the corporate performance management and monitoring processes and procedures.

Members set out issues they had with the present arrangements and indicated the kind of features they would like to see in an improved system. These included:

Timing

The Members wished that the previous deadline for the finalisation of quarterly performance monitoring reports be restored i.e. quarterly monitoring reports to be available by the end of the month after the period end. It was noted that the most recent reporting scheduling was geared more to the timing of the next PPB meeting which meant that the quarterly performance information could be delayed by several weeks beyond the ‘end of the month after’ deadline. Individual Members figures wanting to scrutinise current performance information on the intranet, and PPB performance sub-groups such as the present Employment, Learning and Skills sub-group that might be established in future, are/would be obliged under the present system to examine relatively stale data.

It was recognised, however, that the production of complete monitoring reports containing fresh information was inhibited by factors such as reliance for some information on external organisations whose reporting timetables might be out of synch with the Council’s: also, the major time lags in some national (e.g. employment) data made the provision of fresh figures unrealistic in some instances. However, the availability of more timely and accessible proxy measures could be explored.

Target setting

Members want to be more active in appraising whether proposed targets are appropriate and felt that some kind of context would help.e.g. by showing previous years’ performance/trends and/or by including comparative data.

Focus

The group saw merit in exception reporting – perhaps a summary of highlights – and in concentrating on aspects of performance that the Council was in a position to influence. While the detailed performance data should continue to be available, officers could usefully support the scrutiny process by highlighting the areas where Members’ comments and recommendations could add most value.

Finance

Members felt there was scope to strengthen financial reporting and that a set of simple, understandable conventions, consistently applied and supported by fuller notes could help make scrutiny of financial performance more effective.

ACTION: Rob Mackenzie to consult with relevant staff to consider and pull together options arising from the above.

It was further proposed that some kind of briefing be arranged to share any revised performance reporting proposals with Members.

On a cautionary note, it was pointed out that, from past experience, not all Members were of like mind in terms of how they wanted performance information to be presented, and it could be a challenge to get a consensus on this.

Service Planning

The process and timetable for finalising plans and budgets for 2010/11 was outlined, including the formal stages for Member involvement and comment.

Date of Next meeting

Next meeting to be 4.30 17 February 2010. Quarterly service plan monitoring reports to be circulated by 12 Feb

