

NOTES OF THE ELS PERFORMANCE GROUP MEETING

17th February 2010

Present:

Councillors: Sue Edge, Dave Austin and Harry Howard

Officers: Mike Foy and Alex Villiers

Apologies: Cllr. David Findon

The working party considered the notes of its last meeting and the draft quarterly performance monitoring reports for 1) Culture and Leisure, and 2) Economic Regeneration.

Purpose and style of quarterly performance monitoring reports (QPMRs)

Initial discussion centred round the need for a clear purpose and preferred format for presenting performance information. While the Performance Group (the 'Group') appreciated that Members would always want to be able to access the kind of detail available the current style of service plan quarterly monitoring reports, they queried whether this ought to be the priority or principle form of information made available for scrutiny by Members. In the Group's view:

- Key developments did not all seem to be very 'key'
- Monitoring reports tended to present a record of what had been going on rather than providing an insight into what developments meant both for the services concerned and their impact on outcomes for local people
- The way financial information was presented was perceived as not being very clear or user friendly.

The Group's picture of success in respect of improved quarterly performance reporting would include:

- Reports, like the PPBs themselves, geared to and organised around Halton's Strategic Priorities, rather Council Departments
- Reports that are more strategic, focussing on what is truly 'key': key developments, key emerging issues and opportunities, key performance indicators, key exceptions and variances, key risks and resource implications
- Reports that, by concentrating on what is key, would be considerably shorter and easier to digest than the present monitoring reports
- Reports that emphasise what the facts mean, their implications and any opportunities or choices they open up, rather than just recording what has happened
- Key performance information provided with a context (e.g. trend information or comparative data) that indicates whether Halton's performance is good, bad or indifferent
- Report where the language used was clear and concise, and, where acronyms were essential, the full version of what they stood for would be spelt out the first time they occurred in a report
- Reports that improve understanding and open the door for scrutiny Members to add value by making well-informed and useful recommendations.

Action: Members of the Performance Group

Once PIs, objectives and targets for 2010/11 service plans have been agreed by Council, the Group should get together with relevant Operational Directors (ODs) and Mike Foy to determine what they regard as 'key' and would like to see included in an ELS pilot, Priority-based, performance report.

Action: Mike Foy was asked if he could then develop a report along the lines described above using the comparatively uncomplicated (i.e. spanning information within the remits of only two HBC Departments) ELS Priority/PPB. This would be a kind of 'guinea-pig' or trial run to test the concept on a small scale to see if it could better meet Members' needs in 2010/11.

Availability of information and timing of reports

It came up in discussion that some information currently in QPMRs could seem well out of date. This could be down to a number of different factors. Sometimes information was only collected at quite long intervals e.g. information from surveys that are only undertaken every two years. In addition, partners' reporting cycles were not always well synchronised with that of HBC so it could be months behind by the time it appeared in QPMRs on PPB timetables. In some instances there could also be scope to streamline the process for exchanging information with key partners.

Members asked that HBC officers be proactive in trying to ensure HBC received timely information from partners for performance monitoring purposes and that steps be taken to improve and accelerate the provision of information where this was proving problematic.

Action: Mike Foy to identify any significant problem areas and initiate steps to improve the provision of timely performance information by key partners.

Tracking of PPB recommendations and implementation

Members of the Group were concerned that it was not always evident what had happened with recommendations emerging from the PPB e.g. what had been decided and whether action had been taken.

Action: Alex Villiers to explore scope for strengthening the processes for tracking PPB recommendations and reporting back progress.

PPB presentations by partner organisations

It was felt that PPBs did not always get the maximum mileage from visits to their meetings by representatives of key partner and other organisations. It was suggested that there would be benefit in interested Members of the PPB having an informal (non-Party political) pre-meeting at which they could formulate some key questions in advance and consider points they wanted to discuss with the visiting speaker(s). This should help to focus the debate at PPB and make for shorter meetings..

Action: Sue Edge to discuss the idea of such holding such pre-meetings where relevant, with the PPB Chair.