

## **SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE PANEL.**

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,  
on 1st September 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

- Present: Councillors Kirsty Darwent (Chair), Andy Campbell, Peter Convery, Allan Dorans, Hugh Hunter, Mary Kilpatrick, and Brian McGinley.
- Apology: Councillor Nan McFarlane.
- Also present: Councillors Bill Grant, Bill McIntosh; Robin Reid and Margaret Toner, Portfolio Holders.
- Attending: L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment; V. Andrews, Executive Director - Resources, Governance and Organisation; D. Hutchison, Director of Educational Services; M. Baker, Head of Policy and Performance; K. Leinster, Head of Community Health and Care Services; K. O’Hagan, Head of Employee and Customer Services; D. Sherlock, Corporate Policy Manager; C. Cox, Planning Manager; C. Gardner, Senior Strategic Planning and Performance Officer; and A. Gibson, Committee Services Officer.

### **1. Declarations of Interest.**

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors’ Code of Conduct.

### **2. Minutes of previous meetings.**

The minutes of 2nd ([link attached](#)) and 8th (Special) ([link attached](#)) June 2015 (issued) were submitted and approved.

### **3. Action Log and Work Programme.**

There was submitted an update of the Action Log and Work Programme for this Panel (issued) ([link attached](#)).

**Decided:** with regard to:-

- (1) the Action Log, to note an update; and
- (2) the Work Programme, to note the current position.

#### 4. **Service Performance During 2014-15.**

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 21st August 2015 by the Head of Policy and Performance allowing the Panel to scrutinise the performance of the Council's Services over 2014-15, as reflected in the performance measure indicators of the Council's Service and Improvement Plans.

The Head of Policy and Performance indicated that the layout of the report had been amended from previous reports to this Panel and it was hoped that Members would find this an improvement.

Comments and observations from members of the Panel and responses from officers are set out below:-

##### **Policy and Performance:-**

SO6.3.01- Whilst recognising that 100% of reports to Panel met the Council's requirements for Equality Impact Assessments to be undertaken, it was suggested that services need to get better at looking at the impact that their actions have. The Head of Policy and Performance described that the EIA process was being refined and as part of this, the quality of the submitted EIA was going to be monitored. This information could be scrutinised at a future meeting in due course.

SO6.5.09- It was noted that since the Delivering Good Governance Survey was undertaken, progress was being made in terms of Members getting improved information about which services were performing well and those where improvement was needed, and that access to Covalent would further strengthen this.

SO6.8.03- Members asked for a comparison of the most recent reporting for the percentage of Council residents who felt that the Council was good at communicating services (from the Scottish Household Survey) compared to the Scottish average? This was shown to be 39% in 2013/14 compared to an average of 48%. The Panel noted that 2014/15 data would become available in December 2015 and hoped to see it showing an improvement.

SO6.8.05- It was queried whether the Council had 'become complacent' with development of its website, as evidenced by the downgrading of the most recent external assessment. The Head of Policy and Performance reported that actual quality of the website remained good, but had been impacted upon by connectivity issues, especially out of office hours, which had now been addressed. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation advised that this would be further addressed as part of the ICT Review currently being undertaken.

SO6.8.07- It was suggested that the Council should be aiming higher than its target of 55% of staff believing that the Council communicates effectively with them. The Head of Policy and Performance confirmed that team meetings and briefings were in place and that a range of work was in progress that would improve performance in this area.

### **Educational Services:-**

The Director of Educational Services advised that a lot of the data for the performance measures for 2014/15 would not be available from the national benchmarking tool, Insight, until February 2016, but would be reported to this Panel thereafter. There followed a discussion regarding the First Ministers speech on educational matters and the proposal of standardised attainment testing being introduced across all Scottish local authority schools that would allow comparisons to be made across the Scottish education system.

SO2.1.07– Following concern expressed by Members relating to the percentage of looked after children aged 2-3 accessing pre-school provision, the Director of Educational Services advised that procedures had now been streamlined and there was now an increased nursery provision in the right places across the authority, which should be reflected in improved reporting in future.

SO2.2.07- The levels of secondary school pupil exclusions were queried and the Director of Educational Services reported that the Council figures were low by national levels but that the situation would continue to be monitored.

SO6.4.02- Members questioned the increase in the average days per teacher lost through sickness. The Director of Educational Services reported that he was working closely with the Council's Human Resources Section to ensure the figures were calculated accurately since the move from them being calculated on a head count to full time equivalents and to provide a detailed analysis on a school by school basis.

SO2.3.01 and 02 With regard to the performance measures relating to the gap between the average tariff score of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils and the middle 60% of pupils and the gap between the average tariff score of looked after pupils and all pupils, it was explained what was meant by an average tariff score. It was suggested that a case study would be prepared to explain this better and it was agreed that once the data for 2014/15 was available in February 2016, the Panel should scrutinise this matter in more depth.

SO2.3.03- The performance of looked after children achieving 5 plus awards at SCQF Level 3 or above by the end of S4 was questioned. The Director of Educational Services advised that more stringent targets were required and there was a need to close the gap and stretch the more able students. It was agreed that once the data for 2014/15 was available in February 2016, more meaningful discussion regarding these matters could be undertaken at a Members Seminar thereafter.

General Issue - A Member of the Panel enquired if a performance measure could be created to measure children who left school with no qualifications but had "soft skills"? The Director of Educational Services advised that it would be a challenge to set such a measure, but pointed to the measures covering the Award of Ambition for primary 7 pupils and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme for secondary pupils as already reflecting the acquisition of "soft skills".

SO6.1.08- The figures for the proportion of school accommodation in a satisfactory condition were queried at 58%? The Director of Educational Services advised these figures captured the proportion of schools in the top two categories and that there was a programme of works to address the issues across the remaining schools.

General - Issue - A Member of the Panel enquired how the role of the Careers Service was reflected within the scrutiny process? The Director of Educational Services advised a more co-ordinated approach was now being taken, with a range of agencies working together. It was noted that Skills Development Scotland, who are responsible for the Careers Service, are due to be inspected in January 2016. However, as they are an external organisation, this report would not come before Members. The Director, however, did advise that they might well be amenable to giving a presentation to Members, and that he would explore this further.

### **Communities:-**

SO1.3.16- The drop in numbers of young people achieving accreditation through youth work was queried. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that there had been a change in timing of the portfolio assessments and that she would provide the Panel with further details.

SO4.2 29- An explanation of why the number of number of young people involved in diversionary activities had fallen was requested. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that this had been a result of having to respond to other demands and a short period of a vacancy.

SO4.2.19- A Member of the Panel suggested that the rate of domestic abuse incidents reported to police per 10,000 population seemed high. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that she would provide Members with a Briefing Note detailing the work being done by the Multi Agency Partnership to tackle domestic abuse

### **Enterprise, Development and Leisure:-**

SO1.2.12- Concern was expressed regarding the down-turn in the percentage of development proposals supported by pre-application advice. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that there had recently been a significant upturn in planning applications being received but that there had been new staff recruited recently to the Planning Service which would improve this Outcome. Councillor Grant, Portfolio Holder advised the Panel that the Planning Service were keen to engage in pre-application advice with applicants.

SO1.4.05- Members of the Panel expressed concern regarding the vacant retail units as percentage of total retail units in Maybole. There was discussion regarding the support of the town centre in Maybole and the current position over the construction of the by-pass.

### **Housing and Facilities:-**

SO5.2.01 and 02 The failure to achieve the targets for the number of new houses and new affordable houses within South Ayrshire was queried. The Executive Director- Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment confirmed that there had been unfortunate delays in this respect, with completions at Lochside being rescheduled into 2015/16.

SO6.1.13- The reduction on the cleaning and janitation customer satisfaction survey results to 73% was questioned. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised of the explanation previously given when the reduced targets within the Service and Improvement Plan were approved, these relating to achieving 20% savings in the cleaning budgets and the associated upheaval and change whilst these were implemented.

SO5.3 02, SO5.3 05, SO5.3 09-

The significant improvement achieved by the service in delivering the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and in the turn-around and re-let times for void housing was noted.

### **Neighbourhood Services:-**

General Issue- Noted that a number of the measures were not reported, as they related to data that was not available until October or December 2015.

### **Employee and Customer Services:-**

SO1.3.03- It was queried as to whether the target for the percentage of young people leaving the Council's Employability programmes and going on to a positive destination would be raised? The Executive Director- Resources, Governance and Organisation reported that the Service track young people who progress from the Employability Programmes and will continue to try to achieve as high a percentage of positive outcomes as possible. However it should be recognised that many of the young people who access employability programmes face multiple barriers, some over a long period of time which will make achieving a positive destination much more challenging and for some a much longer term goal.

SO6.4 04- It was queried whether the days lost through sickness were also available split by long term and short term sickness? The Executive Director - Resources, Governance and Organisation confirmed that these were available and would be sent to Members.

SO6.4 01- The target of only 90% for the proportion of employees having a Performance Development Review completed was queried. The Executive Director - Resources, Governance and Organisation explained that this could never be 100% because of employees being unavailable due to sickness and because of staff turnover. However, line managers were responsible for undertaking such reviews and the performance in doing this across the organisation is a standing item at meetings of the Corporate Management Team.

SO6.7.02- The percentage of Customer Services calls answered within 2 minutes during 2014/15 was queried. The Executive Director- Resources, Governance and Organisation reported that technical issues had impacted on this together with a huge increase in the number of people using the Service.

SO6.7.04- The credibility of the figure of 99% of Customer Service Centre users who, when surveyed, reported that they were satisfied with the service they received, was challenged. The Head of Employee and Customer Services advised that this figure reflected the findings of a Customer Satisfaction Survey, completed by 380 customers over a 2-week period. She also advised that the service would continue to identify alternative means of gathering, assessing and reporting customer feedback.

### **Finance and ICT:**

SO6.7.09- The target of only 93% in 2014/15 for the percentage of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days was queried. It was clarified that all invoices were captured in the Council's calculation of this measure, and not just a sample, and the Executive Director- Resources, Governance and Organisation advised that the target for future years would be reviewed.

### **Legal and Democratic Services:-**

General Issue- The lack of targets across a number of the measures was queried. The Executive Director - Resources Governance and Organisation advised that the targets needed to be meaningful and would be developed over time.

SO1.5.13- A timescale for the opening of the Scottish Local Family History Centre at Ayr Town Hall was requested. The Executive Director - Resources Governance and Organisation reported that it was a joint venture between the Registration and Archive Services and that staffing issues over the last year had delayed it. A joint premises solution was required to fully support this service.

SO6.2.02- It was queried what the value of Council spend actively influenced by a procurement professional meant. The Executive Director - Resources, Governance and Organisation advised that this related to contracts being established by or under the direct guidance and support of the central procurement team, although services were then responsible for orders and spend under these contracts.

### **Property and Risk:-**

SO6.1 06.03- The fact that the percentage of council buildings in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people had not improved significantly over recent years was queried. The Executive Director - Resources, Governance and Organisation advised that she believed there were improvement targets within the recently agreed Service and Improvement Plan, it being subsequently confirmed that these envisage disabled access reaching 80% by 2017/18.

### **Children's Services:-**

**General Issue-** It was noted that because of the reporting timescales required by the Scottish Government relating to the service, performance information for 2014/15 would not be available until October 2015, at which point the Panel will be updated accordingly.

### **Community Care:**

**General Issue-** It was noted that there were some really positive performances being reported, particularly in relation to the outcomes that people are satisfied with involvement in their care, that it took account of what was important to them and that they feel able to look after themselves.

**SO3.3.01-** An explanation as to how the significant increase in the number of Carers Assessments completed had been achieved was requested. The Head of Community Health and Care Services reported that there had been a drive to improve this and that there were ongoing discussions with the Carer Centres to ascertain if they were able to conduct more assessments

**SO3.4.02-** The percentages of adults and older people in receipt of Community Care Services feeling safe was queried and it was explained that this was not purely a measure of people's feelings in their own homes, but also in the wider environment.

**Decided:** Having considered the performance reported by all 12 services, the Panel agreed that there were no concerns that they wished to draw to the attention of the Leadership Panel.

## **5. Planning Performance Framework 2014-15.**

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 11th August 2015 by the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment setting the Council planning performance against the National Planning Performance Framework for 2014/15.

The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised

- (1) that there had recently been a slight reduction in processing times of planning applications by this Council but were still above the Scottish average;
- (2) that this was mainly due to staffing issues within the Planning Service.

The Panel discussed the issue of the Scottish Government introducing a "penalty clause" in 2016/17 which would enable the Scottish Government to reclaim planning fees from Planning Authorities where the Planning Performance framework failed to demonstrate adequate performance.

There was also further discussion relating to processing agreements, the validation of applications, collaboration with other authorities and timescales for planning applications to be considered.

**Decided:** to agree that the Planning Performance Framework Annual Report 2014/15, attached as Appendix 1 of the report, form this Council's submission to the Scottish Ministers.

6. **Employee Engagement Survey.**

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 24th August 2015 by the Head of Employee and Customer Services providing an update on actions taken to date following the 2014/15 Employee Engagement Survey.

It was noted that a response rate of 47% to the Survey was a very positive outcome..

**Decided:** to note the contents of the report.

The meeting ended at 12.45 p.m.