

SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 4th February 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Kirsty Darwent (Chair), Peter Convery, Allan Dorans, Hugh Hunter, Mary Kilpatrick and Nan McFarlane.

Apologies: Councillors Andy Campbell and Brian McGinley.

Also present: Councillors Bill Grant, John McDowall, Bill McIntosh, Robin Reid and Margaret Toner, Portfolio Holders.

Attending: D. Hutchison, Director of Educational Services; M. Baker, Head of Policy and Performance; R. Riddiough, Head of Legal and Democratic Services; T. Baulk, Head of Finance and ICT; 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 meeting.

The minutes of 11th November 2014 (issued) ([link attached](#)) were submitted and approved.

3. Work Programme and Action Plan.

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

Decided:

(1) to note

(a) the contents of the Action Log and Work Programme, subject to a minor typographical error in the Action Log; and

(b) that a Briefing note by the Head of Employee and Customer Services regarding Customer Services had been issued to all Elected Members in December 2014 which explained the reasons for the high turnover of staff in this area; and

(2) to agree that an update on the Corporate Parenting Board from the Director of Educational Services which had been raised at the last meeting of this Panel, be added to the Action Log.

4. **Continuation of Service and Improvement Plans – Six Month Performance Update to 30th September 2014.**

Reference was made to the Minutes of 11th November 2014 when it had been agreed to continue the scrutiny of the SIPs relating to Finance and ICT, Legal and Democratic Services and Policy and Performance to the next meeting of this Panel ([link attached](#)).

The Panel scrutinised the performance as detailed in the remaining three of the twelve appendices to the report.

Their comments and observations are set out below:-

Appendix 7 – Finance and ICT.

Overview –

The Head of Finance and ICT advised that the latest performance data for Finance and ICT showed improving trends and that Service Reviews were underway and progressing well.

Performance Measures -

SO3.1. 08.1, 08.2 & 09 – Processing of benefits claims – The Panel noted the significant improvement across these measures during Q3 of 2014/15. It was explained that the main focus in this area was to retain staff and to ensure that the improvements were sustainable.

Sub-actions –

SP3105.01 – Revenues and Benefits Manager to implement capacity grid functionality - The Panel noted that this was now complete.

SP6712.01 - Implementation of Oracle R12 upgrade – The Panel queried the support that was available for this within the Council. It was explained that a new appointment had just been made that would bring technical expertise to support the Council's Oracle applications.

SP6713.01 – Chief accounting Officer to prepare a medium term financial strategy - The Panel noted that this was now complete.

SP6718.01 – Revenue and Benefits Manager to implement direct deduction functionality with IT and external software provider - It was explained that this was now fully operational.

SP6716.01 – Chief Accounting Officer to implement changes to improve payment performance – The Panel were advised that the aim was to get times down to 20 days but that this would be challenging.

Appendix 9 – Legal and Democratic Services.

Performance measures -

SO6.9.02 – Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests responded to within twenty days of receipt - The Panel noted that recent performance had not been on target and asked about the new Information and Governance team and training requirements.

It was explained that the Team was now operating well and that a Briefing Note would be sent to Members regarding proposals for training staff in the wider Council area; if there were any proposals to have this included in induction training for new Council staff and an indication of the cases that had not been dealt with in the allocated time and the number of cases that had been reported to the Ombudsman.

Sub-actions –

SP6903.01 - Deliver the European Parliament Election - The Panel noted that the Accounts had now been finalised.

Appendix 11 – Policy and Performance.

Sub-actions –

CP6501.03 – Develop SMART action plan to take the roll out of HGIOC forward - It was explained that the fourth planning session would take place on 13th March 2015 and that an update report would be presented to the next meeting of this Panel.

SP6805.02 – Introduce a client service satisfaction survey to measure feedback – The Panel queried the due date shown against this action. It was noted that this had now been linked to the service review of Public Affairs and the coverage of the survey had been broadened. Both would be delivered by 30th April 2015.

The Panel asked the extent to which staff were asked for their views? The approach to the recently launched employee survey was outlined. This involved a shorter survey with follow up group discussions, the aim being to maximise response rates and improve feedback, with each Head of Service being charged with driving this forward.

The Panel emphasised the importance of the survey being conducted as inclusively as possible and ensuring the views of the workforce are respected. They looked forward to a report back on the findings of the employee survey and the actions being taken in response to those findings.

Decided: to agree that the Panel had no concerns on the above three SIPs which had been scrutinised at the meeting today that it wished to draw to the attention of the Leadership Panel.

5. **Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2013/14.**

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 28th January 2015 by the Head of Policy and Performance providing an update on the publication of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data for 2013-14 and requesting that the Panel should consider where further scrutiny of this information might be helpful to drive improvement.

The Panel scrutinised the information and their comments and observations are set out below:-

Ayrshire Roads Alliance -

Concern was expressed by the Panel regarding this Council's ranking with regard to roads maintenance and it was noted that although an investment of £10m was being made to improve this Council's roads, around £43m was required to resolve the problems with the roads infrastructure in South Ayrshire.

It was noted that the information reported was for 2013/14, prior to the Ayrshire Roads Alliance being responsible for this Council's roads network and as information on the work of the Ayrshire Roads Alliance would be reported to the Partnerships Panel, the Chair of this Panel would liaise with the Chair of the Partnerships Panel regarding its concerns.

Children's Services –

The Panel felt it unacceptable that these figures were not yet available for 2013/14. They requested that their concerns be expressed to SOLACE, to ascertain what could be done to ensure that such information is provided within a more realistic timescale.

Community Care –

SO3.2.05 LGBF Percentage of adults satisfied with social care or social work services - The Panel noted the rise in satisfaction from 2012/13 to 2013/14 and questioned the reliability of the data provided. The Director of Educational Services advised that these figures were from the Scottish Household Survey and that the Council's own surveys of actual service users, rather than those of the general public, show much higher levels of satisfaction.

Educational Services -

SO1.3.04 LGBF UNI Percentage of school leavers going into positive and sustained destinations - The Panel were delighted to see a three year improving trend.

SO2.3.05 LGBF Percentage of pupils in 20% most deprived areas getting 5+ awards at level 6 - The Panel welcomed the figures for this and noted that they were above the Scottish average. The Director of Educational Services advised that schools were put into 'families' so that head teachers can learn from one another and work together to help raise attainment. The Panel further noted that a Parental Involvement Strategy was being developed.

SO6.5.04 LGBF Percentage of Adults satisfied with local schools - The Panel noted the figures for this were again based on the Scottish Household Survey and not specifically the views of parents using our schools. The need to triangulate was suggested, looking at performance in terms of attainment, the views of those using the schools and broader public perception measures such as this.

Employee and Customer Services -

SO6.4.04 LGBF Average days per employee lost through sickness for all Council employees - The Panel were encouraged with the improving sickness levels for this Council over the first six months to 30th September 2014 and expressed interest in getting more information on the role of managers in influencing this. It was reported that more detailed information was being provided to the Audit and Governance Panel on absence between groups of staff and it was agreed that this should also be made available to this Panel.

Enterprise, Development and Leisure -

SO1.5.01 LGBF Cost per museum visit – The Panel noted with concern the difference in cost of a museum visit in South Ayrshire compared with the Scottish average. After the Panel heard from Councillor Bill Grant, Portfolio Holder, the Panel agreed that information be provided to Members as to why there had been such a high increase in the rent for Rozelle House and Galleries and would the increase be recurring in future years.

SO1.5.03 LGBF Cost per library visit - Concern was expressed that the cost per library visit had decreased for Scotland but increased for South Ayrshire. Councillor Bill Grant, Portfolio Holder advised of the change in opening hours and the efficiency savings that were being made across the country. The accuracy of the data for this performance measure was questioned.

SO4.5.05 LGBF Cost per attendance at sports facilities – The Panel advised of its concern in relation to the way this performance measure was configured and that the explanation of the performance against the measure did not explain the position adequately. The Chair advised that she would speak to the Co-ordinator (Sports and Leisure) regarding the Panel's concerns of this Performance Measure to ensure they were taken on board when the Service and Improvement Plan containing this measure was next reported.

Finance and ICT –

SO6.7.09 LGBF Percentage of Invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days - It was agreed that a briefing note be provided to Members on what procedures are available to fast track a payment should a complaint be made that an invoice has not been paid.

SO6.7.13 LGBF Cost of collecting Council Tax per dwelling - It was agreed that the Panel be advised of the meaning of “claimant grant error subsidy” as indicated on the explanation paragraph.

Housing and Facilities -

SO5.3 07 LGBF Percentage of rent due lost through properties being empty during the last year – Noted the improved performance and the fact that 1% rent loss makes a £300,000 difference to the HRA.

SO5.3 10 LGBF Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs – Noted that this was a new way of reporting and that the Panel would look to how the new processes outlined against this measure impact on future reporting.

Neighbourhood Services -

SO5.4 02 LGBF Street Cleanliness Index - Percentage Clean & SO5.4 03 LGBF Cost of street cleaning per 1,000 population – The Panel raised concerns over the performance against these measures and what the Index actually represents.

The Panel were advised that work is to be undertaken in relation to a number of the LGBF measures within 'family groups' to explore what can be learnt from them, what refinements are required and what best practice and improvement can be introduced within the services that they relate to. A commitment was made by the Head of Policy and Performance to bring a report to a future Panel meeting outlining the outcome of these and related discussions to show the difference that benchmarking is making within South Ayrshire Council.

SO5.5.01 LGBF Percentage of total household waste that is recycled each calendar year – The Panel noted the significant shortfall against the target for this measure and discussed the impact of food recycling. It was recognised that this was an aspect requiring improvement and agreed that this should be revisited when the refresh of the Service and Improvement Plan comes before the Panel.

Property and Risk –

SO6.1.01 LGBF Proportion of internal floor area of operational buildings in satisfactory condition - Concern was expressed over performance against this measure and the potential impact of any further under spend of the Central Repairs Account. A briefing was requested on CRA expenditure in the current year, including detail of expenditure on properties that were no longer operational.

Decided: having reviewed the data as presented in [Appendix 1](#) in relation to the eleven service areas of the Council, to note the above issues that had been raised

6. Consideration of Scrutiny Reviews.

The Chair of the Panel advised that, due to the number of Service Reviews being undertaken by the Council at present, it would not be an appropriate use of Officers' time at this moment to be involved with Scrutiny Reviews.

Decided: to agree that the consideration of Scrutiny Reviews not be undertaken at present but be raised again at the meeting of this Panel scheduled to take place on 1st September 2015.

The meeting ended at 12 noon.