

SCRUTINY SCORECARD

EXPLANATORY NOTES

These notes relate to the June/July 2007 version of the scrutiny scorecard.

Categorisation

The categorisation of the indicators follows the standard which has now been adopted by the Council's new corporate performance management system under the Management Information System (MIS) component of the Business Transformation Partnership (BTP). This has replaced CorVU.

The five categories (perspectives) are:

- Customer/community impact
- People
- Resources
- Partnership
- Service development

Under each of these falls a number of "objectives", which are chosen by the scorecard owner. For the scrutiny scorecard, these objectives are as follows. Some of these are cross-cutting:

Customer/community impact

- Balanced work programme
- Involving local people
- Raising scrutiny's profile (cross-cutting)

People

- Enabling the flow of ideas between scrutiny and the executive
- Raising scrutiny's profile (cross-cutting)

Resources

- Providing a value for money services
- Demonstrating real impact on council policies and services

Partnership

- Involving partners
- Effectively analysing best practice information

Service development

- Effective scrutiny processes
- Engaging with members

Each objective is further divided into a number of coded performance indicators. The 2007/08 target for each is provided on the scorecard, but more information and context on each measure is provided below.

Detail on the scorecard

The standard scorecard contains a number of elements which should be explained before going into detail on the indicators themselves.

Perspectives – the perspectives listed are the standard set above.

Objective number – each objective measure has a reference.

Objective on the scorecard to add the measure to – the name of the particular objective.

Name of the measure – each measure has a name.

Refs (four columns) – there is space for reference information relating to BVPIs, LAAs, etc. As none of the scrutiny measures refer to these general scoring regimes these columns are blank.

Measure owner/data owner – in all instances this will be Lynne McAdam as Service Manager.

Frequency of reporting – again, this is left blank as all measures are reported on annually.

Polarity – this is a technical term referring to the “direction” of a measure. A measure with negative polarity is one where a lower score is better; one with positive polarity is one where a higher score is better.

Annual Target/Annual Variance – these columns relate to the target, and the point at which intervention will be triggered if the target is not met. The scorecard allows 3%, 5% and 10% variance from the target (so if a target is 60%, an acceptable figure will fall between 50% and 70%).

Detail on individual performance indicators

Customer/community impact

C1 & C2: Percentage spread of items on committee agendas - some authorities have chosen to adopt a PI to ascertain the number of agenda items which derive from the Forward Plan. The intention of such a PI is to ensure that the committee is carrying out work in a timely way, and that its work programme is integrated both with the council's corporate priorities and important upcoming decisions. The approach in Harrow's scorecard is similar. This will generally ensure that a satisfactory mix of items are considered by scrutiny.

C3: Percentage of issues considered deriving directly from the corporate service and performance improvement functions – the scrutiny function has to integrate itself within the council's corporate priorities, so as to have the maximum possible impact on issues that are important to the authority. This is a key way for the scrutiny function to “add value” to ongoing work. Measuring the percentage of reviews, panels and agenda items which derive directly from issues identified in such corporate documents ensures that scrutiny work is relevant to the improvement of the authority as a whole.

C4: Work programming process subjected to a value for money test under the Scrutiny Principles – the Scrutiny Principles, agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2005, aim to provide a robust framework for deciding topics for the work programme. This PI would assess the percentage of items which could be clearly justified by reference to the Scrutiny Principles, and to the value for money principles which they enshrine.

C5: Number of comments/queries received through scrutiny website in proportion to hits

- evidence from other authorities (see Bexley above) indicates that basing a PI exclusively on the number of hits received on a particular webpage might not give a truthful indication of the number of people visiting, let alone of the levels of community involvement the pages engender. Bexley suggested that number of comments received through the webpage (through a web form, for example) as a more accurate measure. However, this too has its flaws. The aim of this PI is to combine the two. A grossly mismatched ratio will indicate that many hits may be repeats or refreshes, or that we need to do more to encourage people to become actively involved through the web. This reflects the central role that the web is going to play in terms of scrutiny's communications.

C6: Percentage of key findings reflecting comments made by local people

- PIs exist in other frameworks (Lambeth, Tameside) relating to the involvement of local people. The CfPS have indicated the importance of such a measure, but what they can suggest is limited by the general nature of the PI exercise they have been conducting. What is most important is that residents feel that what they say really has an impact and makes a difference. A way to bring this about is to flag up those occasions where a comment made by a resident has, with appropriate evidential backing, been drafted as a review recommendation.

C8: Percentage of residents' panel with a "good" or "fairly good" knowledge of scrutiny

– this would be carried out through a survey of the residents' panel on an annual basis, which would provide a clear impression of local people's reactions to, and involvement in, the scrutiny process.

People

PE1: Percentage of officers considering scrutiny's input into policy to have been

"useful" or "very useful" - post-review surveys have been carried out with officers to assess how useful they found the process, and this PI integrates this process within a performance framework. Officer involvement and collaboration is critical to the successful conduct of reviews, and it is odd that this does not seem to be reflected (at least not in sufficient importance) in the frameworks analysed above

PE2: Prompt circulation and discussion of draft reviews and recommendations with officers prior to publication

– it is vital that recommendations made in in-depth reviews are realistic and sustainable. Many authorities have taken the approach not to directly consult with officers in advance of publication, and certainly not to alter components of the report as a result of any comments which they might make. However, Harrow's approach emphasises service improvement, which is impossible without continuing dialogue with officers. This PI will ensure that officers and members think – especially at the end of the review – about the importance of recommending realistic, value-for-money actions, and that the recommendations that do result are robust, supporting by evidence and likely to be implemented.

PE3: Percentage of officers considering that the opportunity to input into the work programme has been "useful"

– scrutiny has undertaken surveys of officers in previous years. Other authorities (Tameside, Bexley etc) have also undertaken officer reviews and have used this as an opportunity to measure officer satisfaction. Officer satisfaction with reviews is a good way to measure both the effectiveness of the recommendations and the extent to which evidence provided by officers during the course of a review was considered by members.

PE4: Percentage of officers "satisfied" with scrutiny process overall - ensuring officer satisfaction with the scrutiny process is central to ensuring that the outcomes of reviews can be

effective. The officer survey is a high-end document dealing with responses to scrutiny in general, rather than in respect of specific reviews.

PE5: Percentage of recommendations approved by cabinet – this is a common indicator in a large number of other authorities. Combined with other PIs, it provides a clear indication of the value that scrutiny is adding to the organisation's improvement programme. It should be viewed in the context of the success of implementation of the recommendations in question.

PE6: Provision of information on reviews (generally and specifically) available on intranet – the intranet/internet is being developed as a resource for officers and members of the public to acquire information on scrutiny, and scrutiny reviews. Ensuring that all information is made available, with regular updates, will mean that the effectiveness and usefulness of the intranet in particular as a resource can be maximised. Making as much information as possible available on the intranet will ensure that officers working in other services will be kept fully up to date with reviews in which they are taking part – historical information will also be present to act as a policy support function to services which have already been scrutinised.

Resources

R1: Delivery of scrutiny work programme within budget – this is a general PI relating to financial accounting, ensuring that at the end of the year the work programme has been delivered within the previously agreed budget. Of course, this will have to be reported separately under the council's corporate budget arrangements, but its inclusion as a PI means that it would be reported to members, and ensures that the framework itself is more holistic.

R2: Delivery of in-depth reviews within resources - many PI frameworks emphasise the importance of sensible financial accounting, to ensure that reviews constitute "value for money" (in process terms). It is also important to ensure that the review is delivered as defined in the scope. This means that budgets have to be allocated for each review, and estimated costs have to be agreed, as part of the scope. It also means that scopes themselves have to be effectively project managed. The collection of data on this PI would involve an evaluation of the management of the project when it had been completed, with co-operation from the council's Programme Management Office.

R3: Completion of performance management framework as required - in order to work cohesively a PI framework should be regularly updated and assessments made on each PI as required.

R4: Percentage of appropriate reviews successfully monitored on a 6 monthly / annual basis – notwithstanding the development of a number of new ways of working for scrutiny, ongoing monitoring will continue to be crucial for certain projects. As such, this PI is suggested to meet this criterion. It also has implications for the successful drafting of the work programme. The scope of the review would indicate whether it was an appropriate review for regular monitoring.

R5: Proportion of reviews demonstrating significant positive impact on service reviewed – "significant positive impact" would be assessed by the sub-committee concerned when the recommendations of the review were themselves reviewed six months or one year after the end of a project. With the help of a definition of "measures of success" for each recommendation, the relative success of the entire review could be fairly easily sketched out at this point. A review would have had a "significant positive impact" if a substantial proportion – say 70% - of its recommendations had, by that point, been implemented successfully.

Partnership

PS1: Percentage of findings reflecting evidence received from partners - there needs to be a way to ensure that evidence provided by the council's partners is being taken into account when developing recommendations. The easiest way to do this seems to be to identify the percentage of findings based (fully or partially) on evidence they provide to review groups.

PS2: Percentage of meetings attended by co-optees at which they were required - reflecting co-optees' roles on committees by measuring their engagement with individual reviews, as a counterpart to this requirement for members (at S3 below)

PS3: Percentage of partners "satisfied" with scrutiny process - this would be assessed as a result of an end-of-review survey and would provide some accurate ongoing quantitative data for benchmarking use.

PS4: Ratio of external to internal witnesses participating in relevant reviews - scrutiny should face outwards. PIs based on internal processes (which are easier to measure) but mean that drivers to improve performance are all internal. This is a particular issue with many of the PI frameworks given above as examples. Although (like many of the other indicators listed here) it is hardly an exact science or an arbiter of quality, it may be that the ratio of external to internal witnesses should be able to provide an indication about the amount of best practice information being gathered as well as the ability of scrutiny to work with others in developing recommendations. This PI does make an implicit assumption that external witnesses are always "good"; while in many cases they will be, circumstances dictate that from time to time witnesses may not be able to provide evidence focussed to their particular area of review, or the witness him/herself may be of a low quality. These issues would, however, be picked up in the final report (see section 8 below).

PS5: Percentage of recommendations based on analysis of "best practice" evidence - scrutiny is able to provide significant assistance in terms of policy development – there are a number of examples of this having happened at Harrow (and indeed all in-depth reviews carried out since the scrutiny function was established here demonstrate this). The CfPS recommendations, being general, could not reflect this, although there is some mention of best practice in other frameworks. This needs to be made explicit, however; scrutiny needs to demonstrate that it offers a valuable consultative policy role for service departments, part of which involves looking widely at a policy area, seeking out and presenting best practice and performing benchmarking exercises.

PS6: Percentage of review recommendations relating to partnership working, where appropriate - taking a quantitative base from review recommendations would be relatively effective. One of scrutiny's strengths is its ability to bring together various different stakeholders and suggest ways in which the different people can work together. Much has been made of the breaking down of internal silos, but equally work needs to be done to ensure that the largest silo – the council itself – is able to engage fully and effectively in partnership with Harrow's residents. Scrutiny occupies a unique and potentially high profile role in this which could be developed, and a PI reflecting the importance of making continued recommendations on partnership working would be useful (although obviously an appropriate target would have to be ascertained). A target of 60% is suggested. This may seem high, but the aim is that it should reflect the importance of partnership working, and the important role that scrutiny can play in suggested to services areas where joined-up thinking can improve the authority's performance.

It will be the case that certain reviews will not involve partnership working (for example, internal reviews). Members can make a decision on whether a review will meet the criteria for this PI at the time the scope is being developed.

Service development

S1: Reviews reporting at agreed times - some frameworks attempt to list as PIs the efficiency of reporting measures (for example, timely references to CMT, Committee, Cabinet) as quantitative indications that the review's outcomes are effective. This is simplistic, but analysis of those administrative processes which underlie the delivery of timely outcomes is crucial to ensure that a review's recommendations are relevant.

S2: Review group agendas made available five days in advance of meeting - Some PI frameworks (see above) have sought to limit the difference between formally constituted and "informal", review group, meetings by imposing certain standards on such meetings similar to those which regulate formal meetings in the LGA 2000. Previous work in Harrow has also supported this conclusion. Furthermore, the interests of transparency suggest (cf South Ribble DC) that a reliable method be adopted for the public to be informed about these meetings. This measure can be linked in with PIs under "working with Harrow's residents", below.

S3: Timely production of Harrow Scrutiny newsletter - it is important that members be kept informed of developments across the whole scrutiny function, and that scrutiny has a method to champion its successes and share its experiences amongst a wider audience. This target was suggested as part of the ongoing development of scrutiny communications.

S4: All pertinent information made available on scrutiny website - it is important that the public be kept informed, in a timely manner, of the progress of reviews currently undertaken. Because in-depth reviews are not necessarily a subject of the CfPS framework, they are not considered there – however, the scrutiny function should make efforts to engage with the public through media like the web, since it provides an excellent opportunity to make both information and documents freely and widely available.

S5: Review group meetings attended by councillors at which they were required - again, like PS2 above, this would be an attempt to formalise review group meetings. This PI is one suggested by South Ribble DC and can assist in member development. Its use will indicate both how engaged Members are with the scrutiny process, and low scores would be a springboard for a more detailed analysis relating to member development and project planning.

S6: Percentage of councillors "happy" with the operation of the scrutiny process – this would identify potential areas for improvement and development with the assistance of members, and would be carried out through the standard end-of-review evaluation.

More information on the development of the scorecard and the best practice evidence used can be obtained from Ed Hammond on 020 8420 9205.