

PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

19 JULY 2010

Chairman: * Councillor Sue Anderson

Councillors: * Tony Ferrari * Jerry Miles
* Barry Macleod-Cullinane * Sachin Shah

* Denotes Member present

1. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2010, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

4. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Macleod-Cullinane as Vice-Chairman of the Performance and Finance Sub-committee for the 2010/2011 Municipal Year.

5. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting.

RESOLVED ITEMS

6. Scrutiny and Performance

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance that set out the importance of the role of the Committee in undertaking performance and finance scrutiny. An officer reported that:

- the Sub-Committee was formed in 2007 to increase the profile of the role of performance management within the scrutiny process and to enable that information to drive the scrutiny work programme;
- performance management was a tool used by officers and councillors, as part of good management, to challenge existing practises and consider ways forward. The process included setting quality targets and how they should be measured as part of the performance management framework;
- the challenging economic climate and the abolition of the Comprehensive Area Assessment had highlighted the relevance of performance management, and the need for scrutiny to reflect these changes in the Sub-Committee's ways of working. It was felt that these changes would require greater transparency in the role of the Council and its partners in delivering services;
- service and financial performance data was scrutinised in a number of ways:
 - to inform the scrutiny work programme and decide how Members time was spent;
 - to focus on particular work areas;
 - to hold the executive to account for decisions made;
 - to benchmark performance and compare our services to other organisations;
 - to consider a range of indicators in order to make informed recommendations for the future.
- Improvements boards reviewed the performance of services within the Council. Scrutiny officers sought to align the outcomes of these improvement board meetings with the agenda setting process for the Sub-Committee.

Members and officers discussed a number of matters arising from the report:

- Councillors had opportunities other than meetings scheduled in the calendar to meet and discuss external pressures and any areas of concern they had;
- performance figures and the financial cost of providing services needed to be considered alongside each other. The challenge was to consider both aspects in order to have an informed debate. Officers would work with Members to strengthen the links between both areas in order for them to gain a deeper knowledge of the relationship between the two areas; consideration of value for money benchmarking data could possibly aid this process.

The officer invited Members contributions to the content of a member development programme that would be offered to all members of the Sub-Committee. In response, a Member asked officers to investigate whether the programme could be offered during August. In terms of the content of the programme, a Member requested that officers include guidance on what National Indicators meant, how they related to performance and finance matters and which indicators were likely to be dropped as a result of moves to identify local performance measures.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) a tailored member development session be developed and that officers investigate potential for this to take place in August rather than in the Autumn, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman;
- (3) arrangements be made, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, for bringing forward the date of the next meeting of the Sub-Committee to ensure that it coordinated with the performance and budget planning cycle.

7. INFORMATION REPORT - Managing Performance in Harrow

The Sub-Committee received a presentation of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance that set out the performance management framework and processes applied by Harrow Council and the national context. The Sub-Committee were advised about:

- the four stages of “plan, do, review, revise” in the cycle of performance management;
- the hierarchy of internal and external plans that fit together to deliver the Council’s Corporate Plan and Harrow Strategic Partnership’s Sustainable Community Strategy. The Council’s procedures for performance management including quarterly Improvement Boards,

the Corporate Balanced Scorecard and the Strategic Performance Report;

- the changing national and local performance management landscape following the abolition of C0mprehensive Area Assessments;
- the importance of good quality data in monitoring performance.

In response to questions raised by Members of the Sub-Committee, an officer confirmed that:

- the Corporate Balanced Scorecard addresses the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and was revised annually;
- objectives and performance indicators outlined on the scorecards cascade down to Corporate Directorate Scorecards and to measures at a departmental and team level;
- the five-point scale used in performance scorecards used a traffic light system from high green to high red, to report performance;
- although most performance indicators used the same scale it was possible to set different parameters where appropriate;
- Value for Money (VfM) analysis was available annually and provided comparisons with other Councils.

Officers agreed to investigate whether risk ratings could be applied to individual performance indicators.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 9.10 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR SUSAN ANDERSON
Chairman