

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Council has a well-established performance management process, underpinned by the Planning and Performance Management Framework. The process of political scrutiny of performance and decision making is less well established.
- 1.2 This paper outlines the current situation with regard to scrutiny and identifies some key areas for development. This includes the additional performance review and scrutiny which will now be carried out by the strategic service committees and elected member training.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 1 PRS Committee notes the improvements being put in place to engage the new Strategic Committees in performance review and scrutiny, which complement the role of the PRS Committee.
- 2 PRS Committee notes that a progress report will be brought to the Committee at a future date.

3 DETAIL

- 3.1 The council has a well-developed performance management process, underpinned by the Planning and Performance Management Framework. Within the overall context of the Corporate Plan, service plans containing outcomes and success measures are agreed annually by the council as part of the budget setting process. Performance against these plans is reviewed quarterly by the Chief Executive at one to ones with Executive Directors that examine departmental scorecards. More frequent performance review meetings are held between Executive Directors and Heads of Service. The Departmental scorecards are combined to create a council scorecard, with the addition of performance by Strategic Finance.

- 3.2 There are a range of other performance scorecards which illustrate performance information on particular strategic or local plans such as the Customer Service Development scorecards, the Community Plan/SOA scorecard, area scorecards etc.
- 3.3 In 2012 the council established the Performance Review And Scrutiny Committee (PRSC), which is chaired independently. The PRSC meets quarterly and both reviews and scrutinises council performance with a structured agenda including quarterly and annual performance reporting on service performance, financial performance, improvement and particular areas of strategic interest such as attendance management. The PRSC also reviews and scrutinises performance by Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue service as part of the legislative framework introduced by the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.
- 3.4 The creation of the PRSC resulted in the removal of departmental and full council performance scorecard consideration by the wider body of elected members, which had previously been carried out by first the Executive and subsequently the Council. Scrutiny will now be enhanced with the Strategic Committees carrying out review and scrutiny of Departmental performance as reported in scorecards on a quarterly basis. Elected members continue to scrutinise area performance for their area at each of the four Area Committees on a quarterly basis. Review of the Area Scorecards also forms part of the Customer Services quarterly performance review between the Executive Director of Customer Services and the Chief Executive.
- 3.5 Scrutiny was identified as an area for attention by the Council in the recent Best Value follow up report.

'Scrutiny still needs to improve. In particular, the council needs the commitment and engagement of councillors in the work of the Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee for these to make an effective contribution to the council's governance and accountability arrangements. Current activity, including the implementation of new committees, training for councillors, development days to plan forward work programmes for committees and redevelopment of the committee report template, all have the potential to contribute to wider improvements in scrutiny.'

Accounts Commission, Follow up Audit Argyll and Bute Council, July 2014

- 3.5 The PRSC has a very specific role in scrutiny, which will be explored in depth at the Committee development day on 26 August 2014, facilitated by CIPFA. This will set out a clear approach for the councillors who are members of PRSC.

- 3.6 The training material for the development day includes:
- details of the Argyll and Bute terms of reference for PRSC
 - reference to the Audit Scotland report
 - Argyll and Bute Planning and Performance Management Framework
 - Pyramid performance management system

3.7 In order to support access to performance information, members of the PRSC are provided with facilitated support on the council's performance management system 'Pyramid' immediately before each PRSC meeting. This enables members to ask specific questions about areas of the scorecard and be supported to access information in the system. It also provides them with an opportunity to refresh their knowledge of how the Pyramid system works and enhance their skills. One to one sessions on the system are always made available to elected members on request by the Improvement and Organisational Development (IOD) team and this facility is regularly used by some councillors. A section of the agenda on the PRSC development day further covers the council's performance management system as highlighted above.

3.8 **Strategic Committees**

Strategic service Committees have recently been established by the Council as part of the Political Management Arrangements review. The Chief Executive directed that departmental scorecards should now be presented to these committees to enable wider member scrutiny of performance information. The first review of scorecards will look at FQ1 2014/15 performance.

3.8 The review of scorecards presents an opportunity to widen the training for elected members on performance scrutiny and also on the performance management system. Each development day for the new committees has included a short section (15 minutes) on performance management, performance measures and scrutiny. Feedback from these sessions will inform further training requirements, which will be programmed as part of the overall elected member training programme, and ongoing improvements to information presentation and analysis. Working with other committees was also a feature of the development days and is an important feature of scrutiny improvement, through understanding roles, remits and responsibilities..

3.9 **Area Committees**

Area Committees provide the opportunity for all members not on the PRSC or strategic committees to participate in performance scrutiny for their area. Quarterly scorecards have been developed with member input and are

regularly reviewed. This often generates significant discussion on performance and there are high levels of engagement at many Area Committee meetings. Further training for this wider group of members should be considered in the same way as for those on the strategic committees as above. Training sessions can be incorporated into Area Committee meetings as with the strategic committees.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Improving scrutiny by elected members is an important area of work for the Council. The ongoing approach to improving this through close working and communication between the PRSC, Audit Committee and Strategic Committees will be supported by officers to ensure improved outcomes. Training and development will continue to be provided as required.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1	Policy	None
5.2	Financial	None
5.3	HR	None
5.4	Legal	The council has a duty to deliver best value
5.5	Equal Opportunities	None
5.6	Risk	There is a risk that if adequate support is not given to elected members to enable them to fulfil their scrutiny role, the council will not be delivering best value.
5.7	Customer Service	None

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director – Customer Services

For further information contact:

Jane Fowler, Head of Improvement and HR, 01546 604466