

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**

**19<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

### **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**MRS K. JONES**

#### **Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected: ALL**

**An evaluation of the quality of service report cards and the use of service report cards within the scrutiny process**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To present to Members the findings of the above review.

#### **Executive Summary**

2. To evaluate the quality and effectiveness of service report cards, the Corporate Strategy Team has undertaken a review of 30 service report cards that were reported to Scrutiny Committees during 2015/2016 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 - 10th December 2015).
3. Some of the key issues identified included:
  - A great deal of progress has been made with 48% of services (43 of 89) presenting their service report cards to relevant scrutiny committees during 2015/2016;
  - 67% of service report cards were not up to date at the time of reporting and many did not include information within the four specified quadrants which when included provide an holistic view of service performance (Service Performance, Financial information, Employee and Customer information);

- 33% (10 out of 30) of service report cards included all required corporate measures;
- 47% (14 out of 30) of services used the suggested corporate format when reporting their service report card;
- 23% (7 out of 30) of service report cards made a clear connection between priorities, actions and measures. Although 57% (17) of service report cards made some links. 20% (6) did not have a clear connection between priorities, actions and measures;
- 37 % ( 11 out of 30) of service report cards provided an adequate account of progress against service priorities;
- The findings of this internal review, the proposal for improvement made by the Wales Audit Office and feedback from Scrutiny Members has informed the development of new guidance for 2016-2017, which will improve the quality and consistency of service report cards;
- Following a request by Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the Wales Audit Office will be providing training to Members during June 2016 on the scrutiny of service report cards.

## **Background**

4. Following a self-evaluation of the Council's approach to performance management, the Council's corporate performance management framework was revised in 2014 to ensure there is a "golden thread" of accountability running through our organisation linking strategic activities to operational activities (a copy of the framework is attached at Appendix 1). The revised framework was approved by Policy & Resources Cabinet Board on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014 which will ensure the better use of resources through:
  - Strengthening accountability at Chief Officer / Head of Service / Accountable Manager level;
  - Enabling the clearer identification of the "golden threads" between strategic and operational levels;
  - Embedding performance management in services;

- Strengthening scrutiny of performance.
5. Over the last two years, a great deal of progress has been made in the implementation of the revised framework including the introduction of business plans at head of service level and the development of service report cards at business unit level.
  6. During the summer of 2015, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertook a follow up review to the proposals for improvement from their Corporate Assessment undertaken in 2014. The WAO review sought to answer the question; “Has the Council made progress in implementing its new performance management arrangements”?
  7. The WAO made a number of proposals for improvement relating to the Council’s business planning and service report card arrangements.
  8. In relation to service report cards the WAO proposed the need to:  
  
“Further refine the report cards, including strengthening the narrative evaluation and the link between priorities and actions”.
  9. To inform the improvement work required to address the above proposal and to evaluate the quality of service report cards and the use of report cards within the scrutiny process, the Corporate Strategy Team have undertaken an evaluation of the 30 service report cards that were reported to Scrutiny Committees during 2015/2016 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 - 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

## **Key Findings**

10. A great deal of progress has been made since the introduction of the requirement for the production of service report cards with 48% of services (43 of 89) presenting their service report cards to relevant scrutiny committees during 2015/2016. The key findings from the review of 30 of the service report cards are:
  - Some service areas are not entirely clear on the purpose and performance information requirements of the service report card. For example, 67% were not up to date at the time of reporting and many did not include information within the four specified quadrants which when included provide an holistic view of service performance (Service Performance, Financial information, Employee and

Customer information);

- 33% (10 out of 30) of service report cards included all required corporate measures;
- 47% (14 out of 30) of services used the suggested corporate format when reporting their service report card;
- 23% (7 out of 30) of service report cards made a clear connection between priorities, actions and measures. Although 57% (17) of service report cards made some links. 20% (6) did not have a clear connection between priorities, actions and measures;
- 37 % ( 11 out of 30) of service report cards provided an adequate account of progress against service priorities.

### **Member Consultation**

11. Prior to this review, Members of Scrutiny Committees had already commented on the consistency, format and usefulness of Service Report Cards. In addition following a request from the Chair and Vice-Chair of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, all Scrutiny Committee Members were consulted via e-mail on the effectiveness of the service report card arrangements.
12. Members' responses acknowledged service report cards have been useful, have improved over time and have assisted Members to better scrutinise individual departments. The responses also highlighted the need for service report cards to focus on relevant information only, more consistency and for presentations to be concise drawing out significant points of interest only.

### **Improvement Work**

13. To address both the findings of the internal review and the proposal for improvement made by the Wales Audit Office, detailed guidance has been developed to improve the quality and consistency of service report cards.
14. The guidance provides managers with detail on the performance information requirements of the report card, information on the mandatory corporate measures which are to be included and how to make a clear connection between service priorities, actions and

measures. Members of the Corporate Strategy Team will be available to provide additional targeted support to those managers who require it.

15. Following a request by Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the Wales Audit Office will be providing training to Members during June 2016 on the scrutiny of service report cards.

### **Financial Impact**

16. The inclusion of financial information on the service report card will support the identification of any impacts on service delivery / performance as a result of reductions in financial resources or risk of non-achievement of identified savings.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

17. This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. However, well-developed Service Report Cards will help Members identify any equality considerations when scrutinising service delivery and performance.

### **Workforce Impacts**

18. The inclusion of sickness data, staff engagement information and unplanned departures data on the service report card will provide an indication of any workforce issues that require addressing at the service level.

### **Legal Impacts**

19. To support the discharge of the duty placed on the Council, as contained within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions'.

## **Risk Management**

20. Service report cards are one of the key strands of the Corporate Performance Management Framework. Failure to have robust performance management arrangements in place could result in poor performance going undetected. There is also the risk if we do not refine and strengthen the service report card process, the Wales Audit Office could issue a statutory recommendation on the Council during their annual audit.

## **Consultation**

21. No requirement to consult.

## **Recommendations**

22. It is recommended for Members to note the key findings of the review and the development of detailed guidance to improve the quality of service report cards.

## **Reasons for Proposed Decision**

23. Matter for information. No decision required.

## **Implementation of Decision**

24. Matter for information. No decision required.

## **Appendices**

25. Appendix 1- Corporate Performance Management Framework

## **List of Background Papers**

26. Corporate Performance Management Framework –Policy & Resources Cabinet Board – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014

[Wales Audit Office \(WAO\) Review of Performance Management Arrangements - Policy & Resources Cabinet Board - 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016](#)

## **Officer Contact**

27. Karen Jones, Head of Corporate Strategy & Democratic Services  
Telephone: 01639 763284. E-Mail: [k.jones3@npt.gov.uk](mailto:k.jones3@npt.gov.uk)
28. Caryn Furlow, Corporate Policy, Performance & Partnership Manager  
Telephone: 01639 763242. E-mail: [c.furlow@npt.gov.uk](mailto:c.furlow@npt.gov.uk)
29. Shaun Davies, Performance Management Officer  
Telephone: 01639 763172. E-Mail: [a.s.davies@npt.gov.uk](mailto:a.s.davies@npt.gov.uk)

### Corporate Performance Management Framework

