

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 9 JUNE 2005

REVIEW OF EFQM PATHWAY

Report by Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise the Corporate Governance Committee of the outcome of the first review of the Council's use of Quality Scotland's Pathway software for EFQM assessments.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Corporate Strategy Group, at its meeting on 2 September 2003, approved the use of the Pathway software to facilitate EFQM assessments within the Council. The software was installed on the Council's Intranet server and was available for use by departments in February 2004.
- 2.2 As agreed within the Council's revised Best Value arrangements as approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 19 February 2004, all Service Units were scheduled to carry out a first assessment using the Pathway software by 31 March 2005. It was the intention that our use of Pathway would be reviewed at the end of its first full year in operation.
- 2.3 The Best Value Transitional Audit undertaken by the Council's external auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers, also identified that, "once the Pathway tool is fully implemented, the Council will need to undertake a post-implementation review of this Best Value mechanism to ensure that it is continuing to meet the Council's needs and expectations." This review effectively completes the Auditor's action plan point in this regard.
- 2.4 In reviewing the use of Pathway – one year on, departments have been fully involved through the EFQM Implementation Group and all have contributed to and agreed the conclusions coming from the review.

3. PROGRESS

- 3.1 Executive Directors have confirmed that all first year assessments have been carried out or will have been carried out by 31 July 2005. This is a significant achievement for the Council and means that all aspects of the services provided to our communities have been assessed and improvements introduced.

- 3.2** The two aspects highlighted at the outset in moving forward with the new Pathway Software were employee training and Information Technology infrastructure.
- 3.3** Before the EFQM Pathway assessments commenced, a review of the availability of employees with previous EFQM training was carried out. Most departments had retained a number of employees who had already been trained as EFQM assessors or as evidence gatherers. The exception was Social Work, where no trained staff remained in post. To address this issue, the Best Value and Performance Section facilitated training by Quality Scotland providing an introduction to EFQM and Pathway to a number of employees within Social Work. This was carried out at no cost to the Council, as part of the Council's subscription to Quality Scotland.
- 3.4** In relation to IT, given that East Ayrshire Council was one of the first organisations to implement the web-based version of Pathway, as would be expected, a number of minor teething difficulties were experienced with the software. Quality Scotland has been very helpful, working with our own IT Service to resolve any issues identified. An updated version of the software is now being used and this upgrade has provided improved functionality and has overcome the minor teething problems experienced.

4. REVIEW – KEY ASPECTS

4.1 Pathway Software

All who have participated in the process are agreed that the new EFQM Pathway software is easy to use and that no special IT skills are required to enable employees to participate in an assessment. From our experience of using the software across the Council, it is clear that the Pathway product enables Service Units to produce a meaningful action plan for service improvement in a relatively short timescale, whilst enabling participation at all levels. The software also enables participants to record the evidence that exists to back up the grading given to any question; this feature is useful from an audit perspective.

As part of ongoing development, Quality Scotland has recently upgraded the Pathway software and this is now available to departments.

It was also agreed that there was a need for some written guidance to advise departments how and where they should store their completed assessments on the server; this matter is being dealt with.

4.2 Question sets

Pathway software contains question sets based on the version of the EFQM model which is primarily aimed at businesses, although its application has been widely extended into other sectors. The question

sets within the software, however, can be customised to suit the specific circumstances of the organisation using it. Departments were specifically asked to assess the appropriateness of the question sets as they moved through the process, as it was felt that the suitability of the questions was key to the success of the whole process. At the most recent review meeting, departments expressed a unanimous view that the model as currently configured was appropriate and there was no need to change the question sets at this point in time. It was, however, agreed that this issue would be kept under review.

The text within the grading panels was also raised in the review process and it was agreed that some work should be done to clarify definitions for the grading structure to further assist individuals carrying out assessments.

4.3 Training

The EFQM Implementation Group did not see a need for any further training at this time. Again it was agreed to keep this matter under review.

4.4 Process

The composition of teams participating in EFQM assessments has varied across departments. It was agreed that this was a matter for Service Managers to determine and that, at this stage, there was no preferred model. Indeed, the flexibility to tailor the composition of assessment teams is a significant strength of the Pathway Process.

4.5 Education Service

Discussions with the Education Service have confirmed that while a number of assessment tools are used across the Service, namely “How Good is our School”; “The Child at the Centre”; and “How good is our Community Learning and Development”; the main assessment tool for the overall education function within local authorities, “Quality Management in Education”, is based on the EFQM model. Mapping exercises have been carried out to demonstrate the links between the various models and EFQM and confirmation has been received that these are in line with the Council’s Best Value arrangements. Those elements of the Education Service not included within these service-specific processes are involved fully in the Pathway Process.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** Departments, through their involvement in the EFQM Implementation Group, are satisfied that the EFQM Pathway software continues to meet the Council's need for a tool to deliver continuous improvement as part of the Council’s approach to Best Value. It has been agreed to recommend that the Council continue to use the Pathway software for

annual EFQM assessments and that a further review should be carried out at the end of the second year of use.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Governance Committee:-

- (i) note the excellent progress being made with EFQM assessments
- (ii) agree the continued use of the Pathway software on an annual basis for each of the Council's Service Units
- (iii) remit the Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support to prepare a guidance note on the storage of completed assessments and to review the text content of the grading panels on the software
- (iv) agree to ongoing monitoring of the use of the Pathway product to ensure that it continues to meet the Council's needs; and
- (v) otherwise note the contents of this report.

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Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support

19 May 2005

List of Background Papers

None

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: John Clayton, Head of Corporate Development and Communication (576165)