

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 14 NOVEMBER 2006

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL PUBLIC PERFORMANCE REPORTING STRATEGY

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises the Committee on the proposed way forward for the further development of the Council's Public Performance Reporting Strategy as part of the ongoing review of Public Performance Reporting within the Council. This report also advises the Committee on how this will support the implementation of the Public Performance Reporting element of the Improvement Agenda arising from the Council's Best Value and Community Planning Audit.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A report on the updated position of the Scottish Executive in relation to the proposed further Regulations on Public Performance Reporting was considered by the 19 September 2006 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 2.2 Committee will recall that it noted the June 2006 announcement by the Scottish Executive, stating that a decision has been taken not to introduce further Statutory Regulations on Public Performance Reporting at that time, but that local authorities are, however, encouraged to continue to consider how best to report their performance to their communities, and are in particular advised to consult with the still pertinent Best Value Guidance on 'Measures to Support Public Performance Reporting'.
- 2.3 It will be recalled that as a result of the Scottish Executive's announcement, it was agreed that further progress could now be made on the continuing development of the Council's Public Performance Reporting Strategy in line with Scottish Executive guidance and it was agreed that this Committee would receive a more detailed report on the continuing development of the Council's Public Performance Reporting Strategy at the next meeting.
- 2.4 Members will also be aware that the special meeting of the Council on 20 September 2006 agreed to accept in full, the findings of the Accounts Commission following the conclusion of the Best Value and Community Planning Audit. The Council also agreed to adopt the Improvement Agenda resulting from the Audit and remitted Officers to return to the Council with a detailed implementation plan, which would subsequently be submitted to the Commission.
- 2.5 The Audit Report indicates that the Council produces well-presented and readable performance reports, but like many councils, it needs to be more balanced in what it reports to the public. As such, Public Performance Reporting, in particular the need to further improve this throughout the Council in line with statutory guidance, forms part of the Council's Improvement Agenda which has resulted from the Audit.
- 2.6 This report details the proposed process for taking forward the further development of the Public Performance Reporting Strategy over the coming months in line with

both our ongoing review of this area and the Council's Improvement Agenda arising from the Best Value and Community Planning Audit.

3. ONGOING REVIEW OF PUBLIC PERFORMANCE REPORTING

3.1 Committee has previously been advised that work is already ongoing in relation to the further development of the Council's Public Performance Reporting arrangements, in particular through the standing Officer Working Group on Public Performance Reporting which secures input from each Council Department. Additionally, an early opportunity was taken to respond to specific issues highlighted within the Council's Best Value and Community Planning Audit report. A number of positive developments have resulted from this work, including:-

- the 19 September 2006 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee agreed that the 2006 Public Performance Report would be produced as a stand alone document, providing more space, and thus allowing for the publication of additional information of interest and value to the public
- it was also agreed that the report would be distributed at the beginning of November 2006 with Headlines magazine to every household in East Ayrshire, thereby reducing distribution costs
- in addition, as a result of research into Best Practice in relation to other Scottish local authorities, national public sector organisations and consumer reports, and in consultation with the Officer Working Group on Public Performance Reporting, this year's Public Performance Report has been re-formatted as a brighter and more 'consumer friendly' report
- more coverage of service standards and performance has been included
- more about areas of performance that need to improve, and more trends and comparative information have also been included
- customer satisfaction information and performance against customer first commitments is highlighted
- the issues arising from EFQM assessments and best value service review exercises are also highlighted

3.2 It is anticipated that this new look, extended Public Performance Report will further stimulate public interest and comment, as well as forming part of the basis of our future consultation programme on the development of the Council's wider Public Performance Reporting Strategy.

4. THE PROPOSED WAY FORWARD FOR DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

4.1 As Committee has been advised, in the absence of further regulatory obligations, councils are specifically directed to the Scottish Executive's Best Value Guidance on 'Measures to Support Public Performance Reporting' when considering the best way to report their performance to their communities.

4.2 In particular, the Scottish Executive has advised that there are a number of key issues which must be considered in the development of a wider strategic approach to Public Performance Reporting. Local authorities are encouraged to:-

- provide Public Performance Reporting in a manner which engages stakeholders in the improvement process and which gives an honest and balanced picture of performance
- learn who their stakeholders are and how much performance information they want to be given
- publish performance information in ways which will engage stakeholders
- time the publication of reports to suit stakeholder preferences as well as their own
- develop performance measures which are appropriate for Public Performance Reporting.

4.3 Councils are further advised that their approach needs to go beyond the simple publication of information specified in primary legislation and regulations, giving consideration to amongst other things, effective consultation, explaining the factors which influence performance outcomes to stakeholders and managing their diversity of interests.

4.4 In taking forward the further development of the Council's Public Performance Reporting Strategy, whilst ensuring that the above mentioned factors are given due consideration, it is proposed that as an initial step, Officers should continue with their ongoing review of Best Practice in Public Performance Reporting in terms of other Scottish local authorities, national and International Public Sector Organisations and Consumer advice and research. This work would continue to be reported through the Council's Corporate Management Team on an ongoing basis.

4.5 It is also proposed that a comprehensive mapping exercise should be carried out which would establish the current scope and objective of Public Performance Reporting at a Corporate, Departmental and Service Level throughout the Council.

4.6 It is further proposed that a Draft Strategy should be produced which will outline the Council's high level commitments to Public Performance Reporting and which will form the basis of further, wider consultation. This will be produced in consultation with members of the Officers Working Group on Public Performance Reporting and in accordance with the Scottish Executive's Best Value Guidance on Measures to Support Public Performance Reporting as well as the relevant comments contained within the Best Value and Community Planning Audit report.

4.7 It would be the intention that consultation with stakeholders would form a significant element of the further development of the Council's Public Performance Reporting Strategy.

4.8 It is proposed that the Draft Strategy, and in particular the means by which this might be fully implemented, should form the basis of this consultation which would involve Council Departments, Elected Members, Community Planning Partners, East Ayrshire residents and other relevant stakeholders. In relation to consultation with East Ayrshire residents, consideration will be given to utilising the existing Residents' Panel.

4.9 It would be the intention that these actions and the subsequent review thereof would enable the Council to implement fully a Public Performance Reporting Strategy which would fulfil the Council's obligations in respect of both the Scottish

Executive Statutory Guidance as well as the recommendations arising from the Best Value and Community Planning Audit Report and Improvement Agenda.

- 4.10 Whilst it is considered good practice to continually review Public Performance Reporting Arrangements, it is anticipated that the Council's Strategy on Public Performance Reporting will be finalised by September 2007.

5. POLICY, LEGAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The various arrangements the Council has in place in relation to Public Performance Reporting will ensure that the Council continues to meet the requirements of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 and supporting statutory Best Value Guidance on Measures to Support Public Performance Reporting.
- 5.2 Through developing and implementing the Public Performance Reporting Strategy the Council will be taking the further action required to fulfil the statutory Best Value Guidance on Measures to Support Public Performance Reporting and will allow us to respond appropriately to the recommendations relating to Public Performance Reporting contained within the Best Value and Community Planning Audit report.
- 5.3 The 2006 Public Performance Report is structured around the key themes of the Community Plan and provides a summary of third year performance against the Plan.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposed review of Public Performance Reporting within the Council can be met through the current budget. Any wider potential financial implications arising from the implementation of the Strategy once agreed by Committee, will be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to:-
- (i) remit officers in consultation with the standing officer Working Group on Public Performance Reporting to take forward the further development of the Council's Public Performance Reporting Strategy;
 - (ii) remit officers to provide ongoing update reports to the CMT;
 - (iii) agree to receive further reports on the continuing development of the Council's Public Performance Reporting Strategy at a future date; and
 - (iv) otherwise note the terms of this report.

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support
26 October 2006

Background Papers

1. Letter dated 20 June 2006 from Scottish Executive pertaining to Accountability of Local Authorities (Publication of Information about Finance and Performance) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2005
2. Scottish Executive's Best Value Guidance on measures to Support Public Performance Reporting

Any person wishing to inspect the above background papers or seeking further information on this report should contact John Clayton, Head of Corporate Development and Communication (Tel: 01563 576165) or Martin O'Rourke, Best Value and Performance Manager (Tel: 01563 576223)

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Head of Corporate Development and Communication