

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 20 SEPTEMBER 2005

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL PUBLIC PERFORMANCE REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of statutory guidance issued by the Scottish Executive relating to measures to support Public Performance Reporting and to provide an update on the continuing development of the Council's framework and arrangements for the reporting of performance and related information to the people of East Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Public Performance Reporting has been a key feature of the national Best Value Regime for the last six years or so. With the introduction of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 a statutory duty to secure Best Value was placed on councils. Public Performance Reporting is an important element of the requirements of the Act and the Scottish Executive indicated its intention to finalise statutory guidance and regulations which would set out its expectations for the reporting of performance and related information to the public.
- 2.2 A report on the Scottish Executive's draft guidance and regulations issued under Section 13 of the Act specifically covering the 'duty to make arrangements for the reporting to the public on the outcome of the performance of its functions' was considered by the 27 November 2003 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 2.3 The Committee agreed to submit comments on the draft guidance to the Executive and also agreed that a further report setting out a proposed East Ayrshire Council Public Performance Reporting Strategy be brought to a future meeting of the Committee at the appropriate time.
- 2.5 It was the Council's intention to return to Committee once the proposed regulations had been finalised by the Executive. The Executive has now published its statutory guidance on Public Performance Reporting, however, the proposed regulations which will describe the specific information which the Council will require to make public have not yet been finalised.
- 2.6 In the absence of the finalised regulations, it is not possible to move forward fully with the development of a new Public Performance Reporting Strategy. Instead, this report seeks to update the Committee on how the Council will meet its obligations under the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 in relation to Public Performance Reporting in the current year. Additionally, the report sets out steps being taken in preparation for the finalisation of the anticipated statutory regulations by the Scottish Executive.

3. PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2005

3.1 This Council has always recognised the importance of ensuring that local people can make informed and meaningful judgements about the public services they use. The following provides an indication of the various ways in which information on the performance of Council services is conveyed to the public:-

- devolved decision making to Local Committees;
- liaison with Community Councils;
- liaison with Consultative Forums;
- decentralised consideration of planning applications;
- information contained in Headlines, the Council's residents magazine;
- staff information provided through JCC meetings and the staff magazine, Eastwords;
- publication of details of Members' expenses and interests;
- publication of the performance of the Council's services across the range of statutory performance indicators; and
- public consultation on significant issues.

3.2 These arrangements have become integrated into the normal practice of the Council and provide a consistent and robust means by which the Council meets its responsibilities in relation to reporting on its performance.

3.3 Committee will be aware that the Council has also produced an annual Public Performance Report over the last 3 years. It is proposed that a Public Performance Report again be prepared in the current year, covering 2004/05. As in previous years, it is proposed that the Public Performance Report, 2005 be included in the Council's residents' magazine, Headlines, and distributed to every household in East Ayrshire. This provides the opportunity to seek the views of all residents on service quality and performance and also on future priorities. It is proposed that the Public Performance Report, 2005 be structured in terms of the 6 key themes of the Community Plan and will include summary second year performance information as reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 31 May 2005, for:-

- Promoting Community Learning
- Improving Opportunities
- Improving Community Safety
- Improving Health
- Eliminating Poverty
- Improving the Environment.

3.4 The Public Performance Report will also provide summarised information on the financial performance of the Council. It is intended that this information will be produced in line with the recently agreed CIPFA/LASAAC model for abbreviated accounts and will provide an explanation of the main sources of Council funding and the application of these in providing Council services during the year. It is anticipated that this format of presentation will satisfy the requirements of the expected regulations currently being finalised by the Scottish Executive.

3.5 The Headlines magazine is scheduled to be distributed to all households during November 2005. In addition to this, the Public Performance Report, 2005 will be available on the Council's website before the end of October/early November 2005.

4. REVIEW OF THE EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL PUBLIC PERFORMANCE REPORTING STRATEGY

4.1 Notwithstanding the continuing uncertainty in relation to the precise requirements to be included within the statutory regulations, the Executive's statutory guidance on Public Performance Reporting has been agreed by the Best Value Task Force and Ministers and has been issued to all councils.

4.2 The Guidance aims to assist local authorities in carrying out this general duty and it is intended to ensure that councils consider local stakeholders' interests in and demands for information about performance outcomes.

4.3 Whilst the Council's Public Performance Reporting Strategy will require to accommodate the requirements of the statutory regulations once finalised, progress can be made now in reviewing and updating our current arrangements and further developing the Council's approach to Public Performance Reporting against the statutory guidance.

4.4 To facilitate this review, an Officer working Group, with representation from each department of the Council, has been established and good progress is being made. As a consequence, it is anticipated that we will be well placed to revise our arrangements once the requirements of the statutory regulations are finalised and issued.

4.5 The Executive has yet to finalise the regulations, however, some indication of the potential requirements have been received in the form of circulars from the Executive and during recent discussions at officer level with representatives of the Executive.

4.6 It is anticipated that the regulations will require local authorities to make a statement specifying when and by what means they plan to make available to the public, information about their service and financial performance in the forthcoming year.

4.7 The Officer Working Group is currently working towards the provision of such a statement for the forthcoming year and it is suggested that the availability of this statement be highlighted within the 2005 Public Performance Report and made available on the Council's website at the same time as the Public Performance Report 2005.

4.8 At its meeting on 31 August 2005, the Council's Corporate Management Team approved the proposals set out in this report, noting the arrangements that have been made to convene a short term Officer Working Group to draft the 2005 Public Performance Report.

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 specific requirements of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 and supporting

statutory guidance on Public Performance Reporting and be well placed to meet the requirements of the anticipated regulations on Public Performance Reporting.

- 5.2 The 2005 Public Performance Report will be structured around the key themes of the Community Plan and will provide a summary of second year performance against the Plan.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The cost of producing the Public Performance Report, 2005 can be met from within existing budgets.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to:-

- (i) note the various ways in which the Council currently fulfils its responsibilities in reporting on its performance;
- (ii) remit officers, in consultation with the Committee Chair, to prepare and include the Public Performance Report, 2005 within the November 2005 Headlines Magazine;
- (iii) note the progress made in reviewing the Council's Public Performance Reporting arrangements and in developing the Public Performance Reporting Strategy;
- (iv) note the intention to publish a statement specifying when and by what means the Council plans to make available to the public, information about our service and financial performance in the forthcoming year;
- (v) agree to receive a further report on the outcome of the current review process following finalisation and issue of the anticipated regulations on Public Performance Reporting by the Executive; and
- (vii) otherwise note the terms of this report.

Elizabeth Morton

Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

8 September 2005

Background Papers

Scottish Executive's Draft Guidance and Regulations covering the duty for councils 'to make arrangements for the reporting to the public on the outcome of the performance of its functions'

Scottish Executive's Best Value Guidance on measures to Support Public Performance Reporting

CIPFA/LASAAC Model for Abbreviated Local Authority Accounts

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

