

PERFORMANCE AND REVIEW SCRUTINY FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams and in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 29 September 2020

Chair:

Councillor John Ross

Councillors Present:

Councillor Alex Allison, Councillor Maureen Chalmers, Councillor Gerry Convery, Councillor Peter Craig, Councillor Joe Fagan, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Jared Wark

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Robert Brown, Councillor Maureen Devlin

Attending:

Chief Executive's Service

C Sneddon, Chief Executive

Community and Enterprise Resources

S Clelland, Head of Fleet and Environmental Services; P Elliott, Head of Planning and Economic Development; I Guild, Grounds Manager; G Mackay, Head of Roads and Transportation Services; G Simpson, Development Adviser

Education Resources

D Dickson, Education Operations Manager

Finance and Corporate Resources

P Manning, Executive Director; T Little, Head of Communications and Strategy; S McLeod, Administration Officer; N Reid, Improvement and Community Planning Manager

Housing and Technical Resources

L Hayes, Performance and Support Adviser

Social Work Resources

M Kane, Service Development Services Manager

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum held on 18 February 2020 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Forum decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3 Council Plan 'Connect' 2017 to 2022 – Quarter 4 Progress Report 2019/2020

A report dated 31 August 2020 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the progress of 'Connect', the Council Plan 2017 to 2022, at the Quarter 4 Stage of 2019/2020.

'Connect' detailed the Council's vision, values, ambitions and objectives to be delivered in the 5 year period of the Plan. Progress made on key objectives was summarised in the report. Of the 140 measures nominated for reporting against the Plan:-

- ◆ 112 had met their timescale or target as per expectations

- ◆ 8 had minor slippage against timescale or minor shortfall against target
- ◆ 5 had major slippage against timescale or major shortfall against target
- ◆ 15 were contextual or would be reported on at a later stage

The 'Connect' Performance Report for Quarter 4, 2019/2020, covering the period to the end of March 2020, was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

To aid scrutiny, a further analysis had been introduced, with any measures that had changed status between Quarters 2 and 4 being highlighted and an explanation provided for the change of status. Of the 140 measures, 24 (17%) had changed status between Quarters 2 and 4. A summary of those measures was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

The latter part of the period covered by this report included the first stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and reference to the impact of the virus and the Council's response was made throughout the Quarter 4 Progress Report 2019/2020.

There had been an inevitable impact on some areas of the Council's performance, however, as this report covered the period to 31 March 2020, the impact was not as great as might be expected in future progress reports.

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 18 June 2019 (Paragraph 3)]

4 Self-Assessment and Improvement Activity Annual Update 2019/2020

A report dated 13 August 2020 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the self-assessment improvement activity taking place across the Council as at 31 March 2020, including programmes of structured self-evaluation activity such as surveys, workshops, data and procedure analysis, questionnaires and engagement.

Self-assessment and the improvements arising from self-assessment were key elements of Best Value. The Council had adopted Empower as its corporate self-evaluation methodology and had embedded the approach in all services that did not already benefit from structured self-assessment activity.

Details of all self-assessment activity for the year ended 31 March 2020 was provided in Appendix 1 to the report. Annual update reports for previous years had been reviewed to follow up any incomplete actions and a progress update was provided at Appendix 2 to the report.

Empower was a flexible framework and continued to be adapted and refined to meet the needs of the Council. The Council-wide Empower programme had been developed to provide a more proportionate and risk-based programme of self-assessments and this approach drew from a variety of sources, including the National Scrutiny Plan, planned inspections, performance monitoring, interval service reviews and other relevant information to target self-assessment where it might be most beneficial.

The Council had been forced to suspend or reduce a number of services and had redirected resources to deliver vital new services and supports for individuals, communities and businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, accordingly, self-assessment and improvement activity in 2020/2021 would be aligned with the COVID-19 response and Recovery Plan.

The Forum decided: that the self-assessment and improvement activity taking place across the Council as at 31 March 2020 be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 18 June 2019 (Paragraph 4)]

5 Annual Performance Spotlights 2019/2020

A report dated 15 August 2020 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the Annual Performance Spotlights for 2019/2020.

At its meeting on 4 September 2018, the Forum had considered a report which set out plans to review the Annual Performance Report (APR) element of the Council's public performance reporting (PPR) approach. Consequently, a new approach had been developed which replaced the APR document with Annual Performance Spotlights (APS). The APS provided "bite sized" web content performance information for each objective contained in 'Connect', the Council Plan, together with the theme Delivering the Plan and Achieving Best Value. Each APS consisted of:-

- ◆ a case study
- ◆ a selection of infographics
- ◆ links to other related material

The infographics contained in the 2019/2020 APS were attached as Appendix 1 to the report. In response to points raised by the Accounts Commission in the Council's recent Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR), the 2019/2020 APS had been improved by:-

- ◆ including, for each infographic, trend information with a clear indication as to whether performance had improved and if the target, where applicable, had been met
- ◆ providing a link, directly below the infographic on the website, to supporting data, further reports or more detailed information

A suite of public performance reports, focusing on key areas of Council business, would continue to be prepared to complement the APS. The format of the APS would be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure the documents kept pace with public expectations and with Audit Scotland's requirements in respect of public performance reporting, continuous improvement and best value. The APS for 2019/2020 would become live on the Council's website in October 2020, significantly in advance of the statutory deadline of 31 March 2021.

The Forum decided: that the report and the content of the Annual Performance Spotlights 2019/2020 be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 17 September 2019 (Paragraph 4)]

6 Resource Plans and Council Plan 'Connect' Reporting 2020/2021

A report dated 25 June by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on the new format for Resource Plans and an overview of the proposed reporting against the Council Plan for 2020/2021.

In recent years, efforts had been made to reduce the number and improve the quality of performance measures included in Resource Plans, to enable clearer reporting and reduce the burden of reporting across the Council. Following further review, updated guidance and a revised Resource Plan template had been issued to Resources in June 2020. The new guidance had been produced to ensure that many of the key features of Resource Plans would be retained, whilst duplication and unnecessary information would be eliminated, resulting in Resource Plans that were shorter, sharper and more focused on key priorities and outcomes.

In order to achieve the appropriate focus on key areas of activity, Resources had been requested to undertake a horizon-scanning and situational awareness exercise which covered the following topics:-

- ◆ social change, legislation and policies
- ◆ areas for improvement
- ◆ other potential triggers for action

Following this exercise, Resources had selected a maximum of 10 key areas of focus for inclusion in Resource Plans for 2020/2021, as detailed in table 1 of the report.

For 2020/2021, a total of 230 measures had been identified within the Resource Plans, a decrease of 374 from the previous year. Of those measures, 89 had been identified for reporting progress of 'Connect', a decrease of 71 reported against 'Connect' in 2019/2020. A summary of the reduction in measures to be reported against the Resource Plans and 'Connect' was provided in table 2 of the report.

The guidance for Resource Planning and reporting would be further developed for the 2021/2022 Resource Plans to be approved by February 2021, at the budget-setting cycle for 2021/2022.

The Forum decided:

- (1) that the revised format for Resource Plans for 2020/2021 be noted;
- (2) that the key issues and areas of interest identified within the Resource Plans for 2020/2021, as detailed in table 1 of the report, be noted; and
- (3) that the number and spread of measures to be reported against Resource Plans and 'Connect' the Council Plan in 2020/2021, as detailed in table 2 of the report, be noted.

7 North Ayrshire Council and Moray Council Best Value Assurance Reports (BVARs) Published by the Accounts Commission

A report dated 8 September 2020 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted on Best Value Assurance Reports (BVARs) that had been published by the Accounts Commission since the previous meeting of the Forum.

The report provided details of the key themes and recommendations included in the BVARs in relation to the following councils:-

- ◆ North Ayrshire Council – published on 20 June 2020
- ◆ Moray Council – published on 27 August 2020

The Forum decided: that the report be noted.

8 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.