

Report

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Report to:	Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum
Date of Meeting:	18 May 2010
Report by:	Chief Executive

Subject:	Empower update
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an update on Empower pilot work, and developments relating to Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF)

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to note the following:-

- (1) that satisfactory progress has been made on three pilots and an outline for Council wide assessment prepared
- (2) that arrangements for the next phase of training are in place
- (3) that planned developments for PSIF (via Quality Scotland and Improvement Service) have been advised, and that South Lanarkshire Council will contribute to discussions as appropriate
- (4) that arrangements for the continued roll out of Empower will be managed within Resources, and that the Corporate Improvement Advisory Board (CIAB) will monitor progress

3. Background

- 3.1. In November 2009 the Executive Committee approved the roll out of Empower. This was to commence with three pilot Resource assessments to gain experience in the use of the tool and also to determine the optimum level for taking forward across the Council over a three year programme.
- 3.2. As well as individual Resource/Service assessments, there was also the commitment to undertake a Council wide assessment.
- 3.3. The Council took the decision to brand the software tool 'Empower'. However, it is important to note that this is based on the PSIF model which is controlled by Quality Scotland and the Improvement Service. Work is currently underway by the Improvement Service (PSIF Operational Board) to take forward a Development Plan to introduce a number of important changes.
- 3.4. This report summarises progress information on pilot assessments as well as key PSIF development activity.

- 3.5. When considering progress made by pilots and how this will inform the way forward, it is important to remember that new BV2 arrangements, including the Shared Risk Assessment process, place significant emphasis on councils being able to demonstrate being self aware. Consequently, the Council must ensure it can respond to this by whatever means appropriate. Empower provides a starting point, but requires commitment and refinement to be most effective.

4. Pilot Assessments

- 4.1. All three pilot assessments have now been completed. These were each quite different and provided an insight into rollout options available, and what may be considered good or bad practice.
- 4.2. Both Risk and Audit (Finance and IT Resources) and Administration Services (Corporate Resources) aimed to complete the assessment over three days, with three and two groups respectively. The groups were each allocated a number of the 129 statements and asked to respond to these with evidence, justification and areas for improvement. These results were then to be discussed and consensus reached by service group.
- 4.3. From the outset both services found the language, repetition and volume of questions challenging. Managing the time spent on each statement and on consensus was also difficult, ie trying to commit sufficient time to ensure a quality result, without becoming drawn into too lengthy a debate. Concern over these issues has already been picked up by the Improvement Service and is on the Development Plan for review. Consideration is expected to be given to simplified/more relevant language and potentially to a reduced and tailored question set which better reflects needs of public bodies.
- 4.4. Both services found the use of the software tool an effective way to record information, and the reports produced (Word or Excel) could be easily adapted to provide a tailored product.
- 4.5. Completion of both assessments included scoring based on RADAR (Results, Approach, Deployment, Assessment and Review) principles being applied to each question and summarised into an overall score. Whilst scoring is only absolutely necessary when applying for an external EFQM award, it gives an immediate indication of where the service is placed in terms of the key elements of the model. It should be noted that a score of 700 is world class, and a good score is expected to be in the range of 300-400.
- 4.6. In order to ensure completion within the three day timescale the workplan for Risk and Audit was revised at the end of day one. In days two and three, groups worked by taking a single sub-criteria, comprising of few questions at a time, and immediately thereafter moving to consensus. Consensus was reached by all three groups moving to review and reach consensus on one other group's work. This was considered a reasonable compromise to enable the assessment to be completed within the allocated time without compromising on quality. Had this approach been taken from the outset there was the potential for the assessment to be completed within 2 – 2 ½ days.

- 4.7. Risk and Audit elected to rank improvements High, Medium, or Low, which fed through to the improvement action plan and enabled it to be prioritised and realistic timescales applied.
- 4.8. Administration Services originally scheduled three days in February to complete the assessment. This was reduced to only two days to allow an upgrade on selected SLC PCs/Laptops to Internet Explorer 7, to ensure more stable use of the e-tool. The procedure for the assessment was for each group to complete allocated sub criteria and for everyone to come together to reach consensus. During the two days, two groups (each of 4/5) responded to two thirds of the 129 statements and reached consensus on four. Much more time was being taken to reach consensus than had been allocated. The groups found some of the language of the statements unclear and difficult to understand. It was also felt that there was a lot of duplication in statements, and that the assessment coverage was too large, since it included consideration of five distinct areas of service.
- 4.9. One set of statements and prioritisation of the draft improvement plan was completed by two officers in advance of day three. The third day's training was arranged for 25 March with two groups (three officers) completing the outstanding questions. The groups then completed a consensus session on the improvement plan, agreeing the actions and prioritisation. The improvement plan is currently being reviewed and refined for inclusion within service plans.
- 4.10. Within Social Work Resources the last HMle inspection on 'How well do we protect children and meet their needs' took place in 2008, and resulted in a positive report overall. Areas for improvement included elements of leadership and direction. A further inspection is scheduled for August/September 2010. Preparation for this is already underway, and whilst the self evaluation will be based primarily on the HMle PIM model, the opportunity was taken to complete the Leadership element using Empower. This was completed in an afternoon and also considered evidence, justification and areas for improvement. The web enabled version of the e-tool was not available at that time, but information was input at a later time. There was no scoring applied in this instance. This approach confirmed that the tool is also suitable for use in targeted areas.

5. Findings from pilot assessments

- 5.1. All three pilots helped provide an increased level of self awareness and the development of a prioritised improvement action plan. This will assist the Council and individual Resources respond to future Shared Risk Assessments and the wider requirements of BV2. The focus of scrutiny work will include judgements on 'direction and pace of change' and 'capacity to improve'. Effective self evaluation/assessment at an early stage will assist the Council in preparing to respond to these judgements.
- 5.2. Officers were asked to complete evaluation feedback forms. Comments returned included:

What went well?

- working in small groups (3-4 maximum)
- openness of discussion
- swapping question sets to retain interest
- focussed timing

What could be better?

- lots of evidence identified, but also lot of overlap across statements
- language of question set does not aid understanding

5.3. Key lessons learned include:

- the time commitment required for effective completion of assessments should not be underestimated. Roll out will be over a three year period and a long term view of commitment and benefits must be considered
- from the process followed for Risk and Audit it is recommended to aim for completion of an assessment over two to three consecutive days using either two or three groups of four people, with each group having a facilitator
- all pilots confirmed that time must be rigorously managed
- it is important to select employees with appropriate levels of knowledge of the service and confidence to contribute to discussions as well as someone with good keyboard skills
- the e-tool can be used as a whole or selectively (eg Leadership and direction) where this reflects the need to focus on particular elements
- refine use of tool as necessary, following developments at PSIF Operational Board level

6. CMT/Heads of Service Council wide assessment

6.1. Following on from approval in principle by CMT to hold a joint assessment session with Heads of Service to carry out a Council wide assessment, the format and content is now being developed by the Corporate Improvement Unit.

6.2. This assessment will be based on a reduced question set, using a selection of 50 questions from Empower, supplemented with a number of specific questions relating to BV2. It is proposed to fully facilitate this internally.

6.3. Once agreed, the resultant action plan will be incorporated into the Resource planning process via Connect and Improve and will be monitored as part of the Council's normal performance management arrangements.

7. PSIF development

7.1. The PSIF Operational Board has identified two key development objectives for 2010-2011.

The first of these is to review the PSIF Framework and includes:

- consider creating a reduced PSIF Framework
- review to reflect challenging financial environment and need for unit costing
- review to reflect outcomes approach (and link to SOA)
- review to reflect focus on sustainability and asset management

The second is to improve the effectiveness of training and support arrangements and includes:

- develop additional support/guidance/training materials for facilitation skills

8. External scrutiny bodies

8.1. Whilst there is commitment by inspectors/regulators at a national level to recognise PSIF, this has still to be fully integrated at a local level. Therefore, until that progresses further, the roll out within the SLC to Education and Social Work Resources will be selective. In terms of BV2 and annual SRA work this simply means that auditors will rely more heavily on inspectorate assessment tools – eg

How Good is our School and Social Work Performance Improvement Model, instead of Empower.

9. SLC - next steps

- 9.1. All three pilot Resources will report detailed findings to respective Management Teams and include delivery of Improvement Actions, as appropriate, within 2010 Resource/Service Plans.
- 9.2. The Corporate Improvement Unit will also take the opportunity to review Improvement Actions coming from all assessments to identify if there are any common themes which may require to be addressed at a corporate level.
- 9.3. The Executive Committee gave agreement to training of two employees within each Resource to facilitate assessments. More recently, it has also been agreed with Corporate Resources that two trainers will undertake the EFQM/PSIF training, which will provide a corporate resource to assist carrying out assessments. Arrangements for this next tranche of training are now in place.
- 9.4. Over the next few weeks Finance and IT Resources and Corporate Resources Management Teams will agree the roll out covering the next three years. This is in line with the timescale agreed with Executive Committee for these Resources to complete by 2011/12. Other Resources will commence after training is completed.
- 9.5. The table below relates to the Empower implementation schedule previously agreed by Executive Committee on 18 November 2009. The Forum is asked to note the schedule in conjunction with the training referred to at paragraph 9.3 above.

Completion date	Resource							
	Council level	Corporate	Finance and IT	Education	Social Work	Housing and Technical	Enterprise	Community
Phase 1 (pilots) March 2010	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Phase 2 2011/12		✓	✓		✓			
Phase 2 2012/13				✓		✓	✓	✓

10. Employee Implications

- 10.1. Employee implications are noted above in terms of training and time commitment.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1. Financial implications relate to cost of additional Corporate Resources' trainers undertaking PSIF/EFQM training. This will amount to approximately £2,200 for both trainers.

12. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 12.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore, no impact assessment is required.

Archibald Strang
Chief Executive

5 May 2010

Link(s) to Council Improvement Themes/Objectives

- Performance Management and Improvement

Previous References

- Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum (5 December 2009) Self Assessment

List of Background Papers

- None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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