

Information Briefing

Report from: Councillor Brigid Jones – Deputy Leader

Date: 27th February 2020

Report to: Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny

BCC Performance Framework - Update

1. CONTEXT

Reflecting the work that has taken place since Summer 2018, the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel noted in their final report to the Secretary of State in April this year that, whilst there is still much to do, the Council's performance management is more outcome-focused; that we are placing our performance into appropriate context through benchmarking; and that this is stimulating constructive discussions amongst Senior Officers and Members as to how the Council's improvement journey can most effectively be progressed. Since April we have continued to refine our performance management practices by undertaking a refresh of both the Council Plan and its underpinning performance framework and these were both approved by Cabinet in July. In addition to this refresh we are reporting results of the Residents' Survey alongside performance for greater transparency and have introduced a process through which changes to the performance framework can be made in-year so that the framework can evolve and improve at a faster rate than an annual review would permit. The process works whereby potential changes are agreed through CLT, Corporate Clearance and then submitted to Cabinet for approval. The first such case occurred in October, where Cabinet agreed a replacement indicator for Adults with Learning Disabilities in Paid Employment.

The latest Cabinet Report, which was presented to Cabinet at the February meeting and is included in Appendix 1, demonstrates the distance travelled so far in relation to our performance reporting. Whilst improvements have been made, there is further distance to travel and this paper sets out the current activities and next steps in progressing our performance improvement work.

2. CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Ongoing improvements in performance management practices primarily relate to two specific areas: target setting and use of performance information in management practices. These two areas are closely linked and require the Council to set targets and embed practices that drive the Council towards its goals whilst adding value to service delivery by providing managers with useful information that helps them to manage their business areas. The central performance team has commenced engagement with service areas to progress target setting. This includes workshops with individual service areas to provide challenge and support in target setting for 2020-21.

With regard to embedding performance into management practices, work is ongoing to develop strategic business plans for each Directorate that comprise key outcomes, initiatives, financial implications and performance indicators. These plans are due to be completed in preparation for the

new Financial Year and will be used as a tool for services in delivering their agreed outcomes and for monitoring progress. The Directorate Business Planning Template which is being populated by each Directorate is attached in Appendix 2.

In order to further strengthen the links between performance reporting and management practices we are undertaking a service redesign within Business Improvement and Change and the proposed model provides dedicated business partnering for Directorate Management Teams in relation to policy, strategic planning and change.

These improvements are all taking place in the context of the Council's wider improvement journey, which now includes the Non-Executive Advisors and Strategic Programme Board as the new format for reporting into the Secretary of State.

3. NEXT STEPS

To enable greater use of performance information in strategic and operational decision making we are working to overhaul our technological capabilities. Specifically, we are currently developing a pilot use case through the Council's Insight Programme for a more automated and interactive approach to performance reporting – this will enable greater assurance (on issues like data quality) for Members and result in more officer time being made available for analysis and interpretation of performance information, rather than collation and presentation. Programme milestones will be shared in due course with a view to demonstrating improvements during 2020.

Many of the factors affecting the Council's performance are systemic and longer term, and work is required to understand underlying drivers and how these can be influenced. The current monitoring arrangements are for performance to be reported monthly to the Council's Leadership Team, with the focus on any changes since the preceding month. We are exploring the potential for an alternative model which combines the use of technology as described above with a quarterly reporting cycle. This would allow for a more in-depth analysis of issues and a greater evidence base to inform CLT actions for resolving performance issues. Key elements of this refreshed approach include:

- combining performance information with customer insight and other intelligence and research
- continuing to develop a more a localised view of performance across the City
- greater visibility of performance indicators in terms numbers reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis and benchmarking to provide appropriate context
- develop an outcomes framework to analyse the root causes of the underlying issues affecting performance

The views of Scrutiny on such an approach would be welcomed at this stage in informing the development of a new approach.

APPENDICES

1. Appendix 1 – February 2020 Performance Report to Cabinet
2. Appendix 2 – Directorate Business Planning Template

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