

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence

Date: 17 March 2016

Councillor Graham Hinchey,
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Dear Councillor Hinchey,

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 8 March 2016

On behalf of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee my sincere thanks for attending committee on 8 March 2016 to present the Council's Quarter 3 performance 2015/16 to Members. The Committee was delighted to welcome the Council's new Head of Performance and Partnerships, Joseph Reay, and has asked that I pass on their comments and observations raised during discussion at the Way Forward.

Generally the Committee is pleased that you consider the Council's performance is demonstrating progress in many areas; however we note that, despite some improvement, you consider there is further progress to be made. We have also noted for our future work programming that you specifically consider further progress is required in respect of asset management, and the presentation of information that would improve the illustration of trends in performance.

We were consequently pleased to hear that the new Head of Performance is currently developing refreshed proposals for performance reporting for Cabinet's consideration. Members urge you, in undertaking such a refresh, to encompass the performance information needs of all five scrutiny committees in discharging their monitoring roles.

In respect of the Star Chamber actions that address the results of each quarterly performance report, the Committee is concerned that the performance information provided does not enable Members to assess whether the action identified at the

previous quarter's Star Chamber has resolved the poor performance. They feel Star Chamber actions relate to current issues, and in the following quarterly report there is no way of checking that those Star Chamber actions have helped. Therefore the Committee feels there is an opportunity to improve the completeness of the information provided, close the feedback loop, and for current performance reports to include a performance statement and a mitigating action.

Members were pleased to hear the Leadership is confident that the Council has the resources to deliver savings this year. We acknowledge that delivering the savings will require different ways of working to deliver some services that are out of the Council's comfort zone. As such we take on board that the Council may need to buy in expertise to cover gaps in its knowledge created by different ways of working.

At the meeting we also considered the WAO Corporate Assessment Follow On and noted that the proposals for improving performance reporting refer to a need for consistency of reporting across Directorates. Members consider there is an opportunity to improve the internal sharing of strategic expertise across Directorates. We are pleased this occurs in areas such as tackling sickness absence, and were pleased you consider that to improve processes we need consistent performance information embedded into common practice. Committee will therefore be looking at these processes over the coming months.

Whilst we note the many positives you highlighted at the meeting (such as all middle managers trained to ensure the consistent application of policies; the social services overspend showing signs of slowing significantly; improved staff engagement; a number of recent awards; and the WAO report indicating good progress), Members feel it important to point out that staff and agency costs are running ahead of budget at Quarter 3 2015/16.

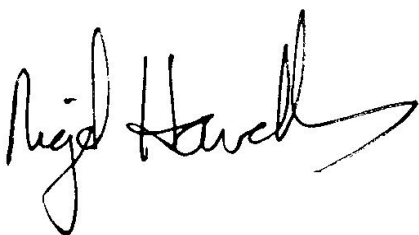
We are reassured that there has been good progress on non-operational property but feel progress in terms of the Council's operational property proposals have not been shared with the Committee for some time. Therefore we look forward to you reporting on this matter before the summer recess.

To re-cap, the Committee:

- agrees further progress is required in respect of asset management, and look forward to you reporting on this matter before the summer recess;
- will continue encouraging the presentation of information that would improve the illustration of trends in performance;
- urge you, in refreshing performance reporting arrangements, to encompass the performance information needs of all five scrutiny committees;
- feels that for completeness, performance reports could more effectively close the loop by including a performance statement and a mitigating action;
- considers there is an opportunity to improve the internal sharing of strategic expertise across Directorates;
- considers it important to point out that staff and agency costs are running ahead of budget at Quarter 3.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, we look forward to continuing improved lines of communication between the Committee and performance officers as they develop refreshed proposals for performance reporting. Thank you for your continued support for the internal challenge of Council performance.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee;
Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources;
Joseph Reay, Head of Performance & Partnerships;
Gareth Newell, Head of Cabinet Office;
Claire Deguara, Cabinet Support Office.