

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

Date: 23 November 2016

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Dear Councillor Bale,

**Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 15 November 2016
Quarter 2 Performance 2016/17**

Further to your attendance at Committee for Quarter 2 Performance 2016/17, thank you for standing in for Councillor Hinchey to enable the Committee's Scrutiny on 15 November 2016. Members asked that I thank you for your co-operation and pass on the following comments and observations in relation to the refreshed reporting of Quarter 2 performance 2016/17, captured during their discussion at the Way Forward.

The Committee wishes to acknowledge that the Council is still in the process of refreshing its performance management reporting arrangements. We are generally very happy with the extension of the balanced scorecard approach to each Directorate. However Members are still unclear which Performance Indicators are proving challenging and which are improving performance. We would therefore like to see a corporate summary of highs and lows during the quarter, highlighting clearly where current performance concerns are for the Council. The Head of Performance kindly indicated this would not be an issue, and as an example we note specific quarter 2 improvements in processing planning applications, and street cleanliness.

The Committee recognises that the Council has made considerable progress in reducing sickness absence over the last four years, but Members are concerned about the quarter 2 sickness absence projections given that in every Directorate projections outstrip targets. Whilst we note your view that this is a result of stretching targets, and we accept that good work to address matters is underway, we wish to take up your offer of providing greater detail in respect of the Education-non-school service. We are not entirely convinced with the explanation that the increase in sickness absence within Leisure services is a consequence of the transfer of Leisure services staff, and the suggestion that the Council's contractor, GLL, consider such a spike the norm at this point in time.

Members are concerned as to whether 2015/16 unachieved savings have been written off, or are to be included in the Council's savings proposals for 2017/18. We note your explanation that £1m unachieved savings from 2015/16 would not be written off unless accepted by Council as a part of the proposals for the 2017/18 budget. We note also that there will be significant detail on the current position attached to the month 6 2016/17 Cabinet report next month. We also acknowledge that savings are sometimes technically and practically unachievable, such as the proposed increased charge for credit card payments prevented by changes in banking regulations.

The Committee considers that the budget setting process was brought forward 3 months this year, and as such it is confusing as to why there is a 30% shortfall on projected savings at quarter 2 2016/17. We note your suggestion that bringing the process forward will impact on next year (2017/18) rather than this year (2016/17); that there are now more steps in the challenge process, and more challenge of detailed Directorate plans. Members remain concerned that Directorates will fail to deliver savings and would be interested in more detail of how a decision is taken to write off savings. We note however that projected savings are often delayed rather than non deliverable, if so then the two explanations should mean that in 12 months time we can expect to be in a better position in terms of deliverability of savings.

Some Members feel the title 'Council Overview Scorecard' is misleading. We note that the KPI's used in the performance report measure performance against the Council's Improvement Objectives alone, and not improvement against performance of Council services in general. We note these are the indicators of strategic interest rather than the entire set used but feel whilst it provides a strategic overview it is not an all encompassing view and this should be clearer.

The Committee wishes to re-iterate it feels the public should have access to an overarching council wide view of the performance of services. We understand you are still developing the final reporting process, and are pleased you are still committed to using infographics for the public. We feel it is important to enable the public to access a level of performance data that facilitates an assessment of where the Council is at.

Finally we would remind you that other scrutiny committees focus on day to day performance and as you continue your refresh of performance arrangements we re-iterate some are keen to have a bespoke report that enables very focussed monitoring of frontline services.

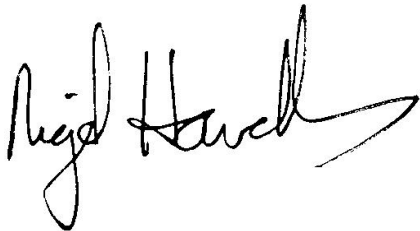
To re-cap, the Committee:

- As part of the quarterly performance report would like to see a corporate summary of highs and lows during the quarter, highlighting clearly where current performance concerns are for the Council.

- Wishes to take up your offer of providing greater sickness absence detail in respect of the Education-non-school service.
- Remains concerned that Directorates will fail to deliver savings and would be interested in more detail of how a decision is taken to write off savings
- Feels it is important to enable the public to access a level of performance data that facilitates an assessment of where the Council is at.
- Re-iterates some Scrutiny committees are keen to have a bespoke report that enables very focussed monitoring of frontline services.

Once again my sincere thanks for attending Committee. The Members remain committed to playing an effective part in the Council's improvement journey, which we are able to achieve with your open approach to internal challenge as part of the decision making process.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Howells', with a stylized flourish at the end.

COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee;
Councillor Graham Hinchey, Cabinet Member Corporate Services & Performance;
Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources;
Davina Fiore, Director of Governance & Legal Services;
Joseph Reay, Head of Performance & Partnerships;
Clare DeGuara, Cabinet Business Manager;
Naomi Evans, PA to Leader.