

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

Date: 6 October 2017



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Councillor Chris Weaver,  
Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance,  
Cardiff Council,  
County Hall,  
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Dear Councillor Weaver,

### **Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 4 October 2017**

Thank you for attending the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee this week, to facilitate pre-decision scrutiny of Cardiff's Statutory Improvement Report 2016/17. The Committee warmly welcomes your view that in future there is an opportunity for us to contribute to improvement planning and processes, particularly around target setting. Following the scrutiny Members agreed that I pass on the following comments and observations captured during the Way Forward.

The Committee's overarching view of the Improvement Report in its current form is that a retrospective self-assessment of our Improvement Objectives provides little reassurance for internal Scrutiny of the Council's improvement performance, and is of limited use in this format. We are therefore pleased that, in future, performance improvement reporting will change with the replacement of Improvement Objectives by the Well-being Goals introduced by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. In future, we would welcome sight of the report earlier, together with a summary assessment of where your concerns lie, how Directorates will address them, and how they will be monitored. We consider this would assist us in our critical analysis, and therefore be a more valuable internal challenge.

The Committee found the data in this Report confusing and of varying quality. Whilst we recognise that the Improvement Report 2016/17 is backwards looking, at this point in time we are seven months into 2017/18, and expect to see information coming forward on how the Council plans to improve in the future. As such, we are

reassured to hear that a lot of thought is currently going into reviewing Key Performance Indicators. As this Committee has previously commented, we consider the indicators could be improved with a greater emphasis on qualitative as well as quantitative measurement. The Committee would welcome an opportunity to contribute to the review, and has discussed how best to achieve this.

A recurring theme of this Committee's concerns is the robustness of target setting. In 2016/17 the targets set appear, in some cases, to be lower than the previous outturn. Members unanimously agreed that less than vigorous target setting renders the Report less meaningful. It has previously expressed concern that tougher stretch targets are required in some areas. We hear your conviction that the organisation has undertaken considerable work around target setting. Therefore we consider, for the purposes of meaningful scrutiny, there needs to be more context setting in improvement performance reporting, as to what exactly performance indicators mean, and the reasoning behind the level at which they are set. Members were advised there are explanations behind the targets, and more information would enable us to scrutinise whether or not the explanations are genuine, and therefore how accurate the self-assessment. As an aside, we consider this report would benefit from an appendix explaining any anomalies. Having discussed this matter in some depth, we very much welcome the Chief Executive's suggestion that the Committee becomes more involved in the target setting for the forthcoming Corporate Plan.

During this year's work programming discussions, the Committee established that performance monitoring and improvement could more usefully take place outside of formal Scrutiny meetings. We have therefore created a Performance Panel sub-group to provide a more informal opportunity to examine performance reports in more detail. As such, the Panel would welcome the Performance Teams expertise and co-operation in its task. This Panel would be the logical opportunity for more productive involvement around target setting and improvement scrutiny, always with the intention of escalating areas of concern to the more formal full Committee. For example, we would be looking to review indicators that are misunderstood, test new targets and develop a better understanding of the new reporting model for improvement.

*To recap, going forward the Committee is requesting:*

- Earlier sight of the Improvement Report;
- A summary assessment within the report of where concerns lie, how Directorates will address them, and how they will be monitored;
- An opportunity to contribute to the review of KPI's;
- An appendix explaining any anomalies;
- Greater involvement in the target setting for the forthcoming Corporate Plan;
- The Performance Team's expertise and support for its Performance Panel, to ensure productive scrutiny of target setting and improvement.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended PRAP Scrutiny Committee for consideration of the Statutory Improvement Report 2016/17. I look forward to your co-operation with the Committee's Performance Panel.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER  
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Paul Orders, Chief Executive  
Joseph Reay, Head of Performance and Partnerships  
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance  
Heather Warren, Cabinet Support Officer  
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager