The Practical Guides Series

This is the third in a series of 6 Practical Guides for Scrutiny

The other Guides are :-

Guide 1:   **A Practical Guide to Scrutiny.**

Guide 2:   **Councillors' Guide to Scrutiny.**

Guide 4:   **A Guide for Members of the Public on Scrutiny.**

Guide 5:   **A Guide for Witnesses attending Scrutiny Committees.**

Guide 6:   **A Guide for Officers attending Scrutiny Committees.**

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Scrutiny Website:
http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/our_council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny.aspx

Council website:
www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Vale of Glamorgan
Council

Members' Guide to
Effective Performance Management

VALE of GLAMORGAN
BRO MORGANNWG

What is Scrutiny?

Cabinet and Scrutiny functions were created as a result of the Local Government Act 2000.

The Cabinet makes most of the Council's decisions.

Scrutiny Committees consist of Councillors who are not members of the Council's main decision making group, namely the Cabinet. They can examine all functions and responsibilities of the Council, look at issues affecting the wider community and assist the Cabinet in improving and developing services.

Scrutiny enables Councillors to influence decisions that are taken by the Cabinet and to ensure that the views and needs of local people are taken into account.

What are the aims of Scrutiny?

- To help to improve the Council's performance.

- To help the Council to deliver services which are sensitive to local needs by involving local people

- To ensure that decision making is clear, transparent andaccountable

- To engae service users and the wider community in decision making

Corporate Plan and Service Plans contain targets which are aligned to performance indicators. The target setting guide sets out how we review and set our targets annually. We also include targets in Team Plans and Personal Development Reviews (PDR).

The quarterly performance reports are designed to provide a snapshot of each directorate's performance and an overview of each directorate's progress towards achieving service outcomes and objectives from the Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan and the Outcome Agreement with the Welsh Government. Each report provides an update on progress against actions and how our performance indicators have performed in relation to the targets.

Team Plans are monitored on a monthly basis through team meetings and the updates from these are fed to Departmental Management Team (DMT) meetings and used to inform any commentary/updates for the quarterly performance reports. Personal Development Reviews (PDRs)/ Team Development Reviews (TDRs) are undertaken annually and reviewed 6 monthly.

When and Where are Meetings of Scrutiny Committees held?

Meetings are usually held at the Civic Offices but can also be held in venues such as schools, libraries and community centres to help engage service users and members of the public.

Meetings are normally held every **four** weeks, the dates, venues and times of which are available on the Council's website:

http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/minutes,_agendas_and_reports/minutes,_agendas_and_reports.aspx

All meetings generally start at 6.00 p.m. unless otherwise advised.

Addressing Underperformance

Elected members have a key role in proactively addressing underperformance by **ensuring continuous improvement in all services.** Some questions to consider are:

- What decisions do officers need me/us to take?
- How will performance be improved?
- What can we learn from this?
- How will poor performance be addressed?
- Did the information I was given enable me to make decisions?
- Would a different way of presenting the information help?
- Are there any consequences from the planned actions?
- How will we ensure that particular issues do not re-occur?

When and How Often is Performance Information Presented to Scrutiny Committees?

Scrutiny Committees consider key performance information on a quarterly basis and at the end of the year the full suite of information is presented.

Performance monitoring enables us to identify whether we are achieving our intended Corporate Plan outcomes. Effective monitoring helps us to highlight good and poor performance and to take action where needed to put things right. We monitor our performance and achievement of outcomes via Service Plans, Team Plans and PDRS. Service Plans are monitored on a quarterly basis by Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and all Scrutiny Committees through a Quarterly Performance Report for each directorate.

Performance indicators provide a measure of areas of performance. Each year we set targets for the indicators and these form part of the Service Plans. We use targets to provide an indication of where we want to be and to help us to distinguish between good and poor performance.

Why is Scrutiny important?

- Holds decision makers to account.
- Challenges and improves performance
- Supports the achievement of value for money
- Challenges the ways things are done
- Influences decision makers with evidence based recommendations
- Brings in evidence and views of stakeholders, users and citizens
- Undertakes pre/post scrutiny of Cabinet performance.

Scrutiny Committees, as well as making suggestions for improvements, acknowledge good practice and performance

Scrutiny in the Vale of Glamorgan Council:

The Council has five Scrutiny Committees:-

- **Corporate Performance and Resources** deals with internal working of the Council and its finances

- **Environment and Regeneration** deals with Waste Management, Highway Maintenance, Planning (but not matters such as planning applications), Transportation and Economic Development

- **Homes and Safe Communities** deals with Council Housing and related maintenance, Private Sector Housing, Community Safety and Crime and Disorder (including Youth Offending Services) and Shared Regulatory Services functions

- **Learning and Culture** deals with all school matters (which includes School Improvement, Post-16 Education, Community Education, Youth Services), the Library Service and Training.

- **Healthy Living and Social Care** deals with Adult Services, such as Care Homes, Children and Young People Services (e.g. Adoption Service) and Healthy Living and Leisure

The Role of a Scrutiny Member

- Contribute to discussions on possible topics for scrutiny review

- Discuss and decide the clear remit for any reviews and how each will be undertaken

- Prepare for meetings and visits (read briefing papers, prepare questions for witnesses etc.)

- Ask probing questions rather than make statements when hearing evidence

- Participate as fully in scrutiny activities as time commitments allow (attending site visits, taking part in activities outside formal meetings such as focus groups or working parties).

- Make recommendations based on their deliberations and information received.

- Respect the privacy and confidence of individuals and organisations invited to attend

- Treat witnesses, officers and other Councillors with courtesy and consideration

- Take part in training and development activities as provided.

- How will we manage our resources to achieve these actions and support our service?

Elected members play a key role in ensuring that service plans are fit for purpose, with relevant objectives set in line with the Council's priorities which are underpinned by key performance measures and indicators. Some questions to consider when agreeing or reviewing service plans are:

- Do they reflect the needs of the community?

- Do the plans clearly set out priorities for the service and are they aloigned to the Corporate Plan outcomes and do they set out what needs to be achieved and when?

- Will the performance measures and indicators enable me to scrutinise service delivery and us meeting our desired Corporate Plan outcomes?

- Are the actions SMART?

Challenging Performance Information

Elected members have a key role in challenging performance information and contributing to the review process of how services can improve.

Some questions to consider:-

- Is the service area on track in meeting targets/objectives?

- Have I received enough information?

- Why has performance changed in a specific area?

- What are the implications of not meeting a particular target?

- How well are other Councils/services doing in this particular area?

- What is the public's view of the current situation?

- How do we compare with other organisations and partners?

To a greater or lesser extent, elected members will be involved in:

- setting and scrutinising the strategic direction, priorities and budget options for the council;
- challenging performance quarterly, through the review of key performance indicators and identifying and supporting areas for improvement;
- making specific recommendations regarding performance;
- scrutinising the executive's and officers use of performance management;
- developing the use of performance specialists;
- seeking assurance that adequate systems are in place to manage performance, risk and resources;
- undertaking reviews of services or cross-cutting areas of performance.

Service Planning

The purpose of service planning is:

- to agree clear expectations with elected members on how each service contributes to Council priorities, and how services will work with others to deliver these; with others
- to set the overall aims and objectives for services against which performance can be measured, and to develop a plan to achieve them, linked directly to the Council priorities; and
- to allow officers to look ahead, allocate resources, focus on key targets, and prepare for risks and opportunities

Service planning focuses on three key questions:

- Which wellbeing objective (as part of the Corporate Plan) does my service contribute to?
- What actions will we be taking this year to achieve these?

What is Performance Management?

Basically it is about what we do to improve and maintain good performance. It involves gathering accurate and reliable information about our performance and using this to understand and address performance issues.

Performance Management is based on a continual process which has the following key elements:

- Agree a set of **aims** and **objectives;**
- **Plan** what needs to be done to achieve those aims and objectives;
- Make sure we **do** what's in the Plan
- **Monitor** our progress and performance - can we improve?
- **Review** what has gone well or could could have been better;
- **Act** on the information and make any necessary changes; and
- **Report** progress and outcomes.

Why is Performance Management Important?

Simply put, it is good management practice. In the Vale, performance management is used by both officers and elected members as a tool to drive continuous improvement and increase efficiency in all service areas. The Council delivers a wide range of services to a wide range of customers and performance management is the way in which we ensure that we are doing the right things, at the right time and quality and for the right price. The emphasis of the Local Government Measure 2009 is on continuous improvement..

The Performance Management Framework

The Council's framework for performance management includes all those things that impact on our performance both internally and externally including:

- our priorities and what the public expect and should expect from us;
- the legislative framework in which the Welsh Government and UK Government requires us to operate;
- the resources that the Council has to deliver and manage its services;
- what our partners are doing;
- the time we have available to achieve what we set out to do and
- the annual cycle of planning and finance in which we operate.

The framework has clear and transparent linkages between each of these elements (**the golden thread**) and is embedded throughout the organisation.

Our Performance Managment Framework sets out the way in which we undertake performance management and how we measure performance across the Council. Referred to as 'The Golden Thread' as it liks all our key planning, monitoring and evaluation documents together.

The framework incorporates:

- Community Strategy and Corporate Plan
- Improvement planning
- Performance management system
- Service and team planning
- Member development
- ICT Startegy and Information Management Plan

- Staff development and appraisal
- Risk Management, Risk Strategy and Risk Register
- MTFP
- Customer Relations Strategy
- Corporate Asset Management
- HR Startegy and Workforce Plan

Performance Management or Performance Measurement?

Performance measurement is the collection, calculation and reporting of performance measures. A performance measure assesses the progress being made towards achieving an objective or goal.

Performance measurement alone achieves little; to be effective the Council must use performance measurement to assist improvement by ensuring it informs the decision making process. It uses what has been learned from the measurement process to identify what needs to be done or what needs to be done better. This leads to more effective strategic and operational management and delivers continuous improvement.

Elected Members Performance Management Role

Elected members' role in performance management is fundamentally about leadership – ensuring officers focus on priorities, and providing challenge and support to deliver improvement. For performance management to be effective, elected members should:

- be clear about what we are – and are not – trying to achieve;
- focus on key priorities, sometimes for a while, until delivery comes right
- offer firm leadership in pursuing issues;
- identify and ask the right questions.