

SUBJECT: WHOLE AUTHORITY SELF EVALUATION

MEETING: INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER DECISION

DATE: 13th January, 2016

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: None affected

1. PURPOSE:

To seek individual cabinet member approval to change the frequency of the whole authority self -evaluation process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The whole authority self - evaluation process be undertaken on a bi annual basis instead of an annual basis, as initially agreed, with the next evaluation taking place in September 2016 and bi annually thereafter.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The council introduced a range of measures aimed at strengthening its performance management arrangements including performance clinics, Head of service challenge sessions and a corporate self – evaluation process designed to be undertaken on an annual basis.
- 3.2. The first self – evaluation took place in September 2014 and performance clinics and head of service challenge sessions have taken place throughout the year and all but two heads of service have been through the process.
- 3.3. A review of the processes was undertaken and the findings, as outlined in appendix A, were considered by the Senior Leadership Team. As a consequence it was agreed that the self –evaluation process be undertaken on a bi – annual basis instead of annually as first agreed.

4. REASONS:

The Leadership Team reviewed the process that have introduced to strengthen the organisation's performance management arrangements and given the resources required to undertake the corporate self- evaluation it was agreed that it should be undertaken on a bi-annual and not annual basis as first agreed.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

6. FUTURE WELL- BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications for future generations arising from the recommendation in this report.

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SUBJECT: REVIEW OF SELF-EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS

MEETING: SLT

DATE: 17 November 2015

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide SLT with a review of self-evaluation arrangements which the Council introduced to strengthen performance management arrangements including Performance clinics, Head of service Challenge sessions and a process for completing a whole authority corporate self - evaluation

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That SLT consider the feedback received, and approve the recommendations for the future role of Corporate Self-evaluation, Head of Service Challenge and Performance Clinics

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 This paper reviews the new Self-evaluation arrangements for value added and assesses the effectiveness of the new arrangements in supporting the council's performance management arrangements and ability to deliver continuous improvement.
- 3.2 A review of the Corporate Self-evaluation (Appendix 1) and Head of Service challenge and performance Clinics (Appendix 2) was initially undertaken separately and the full feedback is appended to the report.
- 3.3 As well as considering the future delivery of each process, given the similarity in issues raised following the review, it was clear there was a need to consider these Self-evaluation arrangements together as part of the review. This has led to the recommendations proposed that aim to ensure the effectiveness of the processes in supporting the council's performance management arrangements and ability to deliver continuous improvement.

4.0 AUTHORS

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Review of self-evaluation arrangements

In 2014, the Council introduced a numbers of processes designed to strengthen the council's performance management arrangements including Performance clinics, Head of service Challenge sessions and a process for completing whole authority corporate self - evaluation.

This paper seeks to review the new arrangements for value added and to assess the effectiveness of the new arrangements in terms of supporting the council's performance management arrangements and ability to deliver continuous improvement.

In September 2014 the council undertook its first corporate self-evaluation. The process involved a team of 5 officers, 4 internal and one independent senior officer from another authority over the course of a week. The process sought to answer a number of key questions and involved a desk top exercise, where key corporate documentation was reviewed and lines of enquiry determined. The lines of enquiry were then tested with various groups including: officers from across services, cabinet members, select committee members, members of the senior leadership team and external partners.

At the end of the process a report outlining the team's findings, in terms of strengths and areas for improvement was produced and this was presented to the senior leadership team and council leader. An action plan was produced in response to the findings and its implementation has been monitored by the senior leadership team.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the process a questionnaire was developed and circulated to the Self – evaluation team, senior leadership team and officers involved in supporting the process. Appendix 1 reflects the full feedback received via the questionnaire.

The Policy and Performance team have also completed an evaluation of the head of service challenges and performance clinics carried out up to December 2014, At that point 6 Head of Service Challenges had been undertaken and 2 Performance clinics, since then a further session for the Head of Tourism Leisure & Culture has been completed and feedback has not yet been incorporated.

Time table of completed processes	
Head of Service Challenge	Performance Clinic
Head of Commercial & People Development – July 2014	Housing – Homelessness Performance Clinic August 2014
Head of Community Led Delivery - September 2014	Head of Service – Legal Performance Clinic November 2014
CYP Head of Service Resources -September 2014	
CYP Head of Service Standards - September 2014	
Head of Waste & Street Services – October 2014	
Head of Highways & Flood Management –	

November 2014	
Head of Tourism Leisure & Culture – February 2015 (Feedback not currently included)	

Participants in the process who were challenged and also, those doing the challenging were invited to provide their feedback to the evaluation. Two main questions were asked:

1. What went well that we can learn from as we take this approach forward
2. What didn't work well that needs to be improved on

Responses received have been collated into a SWOT analysis and actions have been proposed to improve the process within the SWOT. This is provided in Appendix 2.

Overview of Findings

As a broad summary, the most significant positives and most significant negatives are:

Corporate Self-evaluation:

Most significant positives:

Clear and robust findings based on the methodology agreed.

Most significant negatives:

The status of the process needs to be clarified as there was concern that the findings were not wholly accepted and fully followed up for implementation.

The investment of officer time is significant and the ability to support this process is a concern.

Head of service Challenge and Performance Clinic:

Most significant positives:

- Strengthened an understanding, scrutiny and accountability of service performance
- Facilitates the clear expectations of Heads of Service by the leaders of the Council
- Makes time available for services to evaluate their activity and to facilitate a two way challenge – heads of service and senior leaders

Most significant negatives:

- The follow through on sessions by senior leaders (the panels) in signing off and setting clear expectations on the delivery of actions from some sessions was not always consistent
- Communication about the purpose and expectation of this process has not always been clear and has potentially led to unwarranted concern and even negatively impacted service morale
- The time commitment needed to prepare for and undertake the challenge process poses a threat to the viability of the process in the long term

Conclusions

As well as considering the future delivery of each process, given the similarity in issues raised following the review, it was clear there was a need to consider the alignment of the Head of Service Challenges, performance clinics and Corporate Self-evaluation arrangements. This is in order to ensure ongoing effectiveness in terms of supporting and resourcing the council's performance management arrangements and ability to deliver continuous improvement.

Considering the feedback received, the recommendations are:

Corporate self-evaluation:

- The Corporate self-evaluation is completed Bi annually – next in September 2016

The Head of Service Challenge:

- Complete the final three scheduled for Adults Services, Children Services and Property Services.
- Hold follow up challenge sessions for all those completed in the first round
- Schedule future Heads of Service Challenge sessions on a risk basis informed by areas identified in the Corporate Self-evaluation findings to be completed in September 2016.

Performance Clinic:

- Performance clinics will continue on an exception basis as an intervention for a high risk or long standing performance issue that despite action being taken has not resolved the issue.

Process	Timeline
Remaining Head of Service Challenge sessions	September – December 2015
Follow up Head of Service Challenge Sessions (including any relevant Corporate Self-evaluation findings)	January – August 2016
Corporate Self Evaluation	September 2016
Future Head of Service Challenge sessions (informed by Corporate Self-evaluation 2016 findings)	October 2016 onwards

Corporate self-evaluation:

- The Corporate self-evaluation completed Bi annually – next in September 2016

It is considered that completing this bi-annually would give an appropriate balance between the time required in order to implement and see the impact of previous findings and ensuring findings remain update and relevant based on the latest available information.

It is proposed that the evaluation will be undertaken in a similar way, with learning from the first evaluation factored in. Also, the preparation of information and evidence to inform the Corporate Self-evaluation will be more structured and concise, albeit this will look to provide a wider and more detailed view across the whole organisation. This should allow the self-evaluation team to have a broad coverage and overview of the organisation, but being able to focus their activities appropriately. This should facilitate findings to be drawn on a range of issues covering: Performance (including Comparative information, finance and Human Resources), Policy and Needs, risks, leadership and management and Governance. Whilst this will be informed by previous evaluations, it will be a complete fresh “test” of the organisation.

The findings from the process will then be used to inform a future schedule of Head of Service Challenges that will allow a more detailed analysis, and challenge, of issues identified and actions to be implemented.

In this process a function or a service could be identified for a head of service challenge.

The Head of Service Challenge:

- Complete the final three scheduled for Adults Services, Children Services and Property Services.
- Hold follow up Head of Service Challenges for all those completed in the first round
- Schedule future Heads of Service Challenge sessions on a risk basis informed by areas identified in the Corporate Self-evaluation findings to be completed in September 2016.

The remaining three head of service challenges from the initial schedule will be completed by December 2015. It is important a follow up session for each Head of Service is held to understand how the outcomes and action from the session are implemented and the impact this has made. This will focus primarily on the actions identified, if any further important developments have been made these could be factored in, but this will not provide the fuller evaluation or analysis reports carried out for the initial challenge session.

The future Head of service challenge schedule will then be informed by the corporate self-evaluation to be held in September 2016, as set out above. In the event that any issues arise outside of the corporate self-evaluation process, for example from Audit work, the risk assessment or performance management arrangements, then if appropriate a Head of Service Challenge could be arranged or if more appropriate a performance clinic.

It is important to remember that the Councils performance management arrangements are in place to continually challenge, monitor and evaluate service performance.

Performance Clinic:

Performance clinics will continue on an exception basis as an intervention for high risk or long standing performance issues that despite action being taken has not resolved the issue. Therefore this may now act as a further part in the evaluation process if issues identified in the corporate self-evaluation and/or Head of Service challenge are not implemented and/or performance does not improve.

Appendix 1 - Corporate Self-evaluation feedback received via the questionnaire:-

1. Objectives of the process –

Positives -the outline brief was clear as were the aims and objectives of the process. The process was considered to be robust and comprehensive. The right information was available and support in finding further information or clarification was provided on request. The cross- section of interviewees was appropriate along with access to key live events to observe.

Concerns – the status of the process– although the process had been formally adopted by the council via a cabinet decision it was felt that the status of the findings and their acceptance by the leadership team was mixed and resulted in concern that the findings were not valid and therefore were dismissed.

2. Timescales of the process

The process involved a commitment to a full working week of activity. In reality the team needed to spend some time in preparation prior to the week commencing and the following weekend was used to finalise the feedback report so a commitment of 7days. The process was intensive but as a consequence didn't allow drift and team members remained focused on the task.

3. Was the make up of the self – evaluation team appropriate to delivering the aims and objectives ie 1 independent officer and 4 internal officers?.

The makeup of the team was considered appropriate with a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience. The input of an independent person was considered vital. The team were able to engage in robust and challenging debate but also collective agreement in findings, outcomes and recommendations.

4. What are the most important things to consider when choosing a team?

Appropriate blend of knowledge, skills and experience

Good communication, listening, intuitive, investigative and debating skills

Commitment to the task (starter/finishers)

Appropriate levels of understanding regarding the organisation, its structures and functions including the political dimension.

Equality in contribution – respect, understand and appreciate different strengths and weaknesses.

5. Was the combination of a desktop analysis, group work meeting observation plus one to one interviews appropriate?

Whilst the team considered the process intense they considered that the mix of desktop analysis to identify key lines of enquiry supported by group sessions was the best way to maximise the potential findings from the process.

From an organisation perspective the process involved significant officer time in arranging meetings providing documentation and facilitation of the week.

6. Do you consider the findings of the process to be robust?

Team members felt that their findings were robust and well evidenced and researched although they felt that their findings in some areas were not well received.

7. How often do you think that this process or a similar process should be undertaken?

Mixed views some annually some bi- annually interspersed with an in depth examination of a particular service or area where issues have been identified as an area requiring improvement.

8. Do you consider the findings justified the inputs?

Generally agreement that the findings justified the input.

9. What do you consider were the main limitations of the process?

Limitation of time and ability to follow lines of enquiry in sufficient detail to make specific recommendations for improvement as opposed to high level recs.

10. What improvements could be made to the process to make it more effective?

Having suitable staff internally, with the right combination of skills, knowledge and experience to maximise the process. In addition the availability of an external person willing to give up a week of their time to commit to the process. The external contribution was seen as vital to the success of the process and also the requirement for them to be a senior officer with significant experience of working in the corporate centre with experience of this type of review process was also considered vital.

11. Other Comments

The team really enjoyed the experience and learnt a lot and felt it was well organised and in a masochistic fashion FUN!

Appendix 2 – Head of Service Challenge & Performance Clinic SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
The process provided a real opportunity for the ‘context’ of the current performance to be fully understood. It increases openness, responsibility and accountability	In some cases, the challenge may not have got to the heart of the issue
Provided a greater level of scrutiny on the service and provides strong evidence across three dimensions of outcomes, performance and leadership that have not been picked up previously to the same level of interrogation.	A lot of information to digest going into the sessions
Increases the level of understanding of senior leaders and cabinet members of the service and ensures equal focus on services across the Council	Follow through from senior leaders to develop and sign off actions in a timely manner was not consistent
Gave managers an opportunity to give their perceptions and views on how they feel they are supported and on their expectations for support	Some services should not be seen in isolation –as they are linked and inter-dependent.
Provides scrutiny from different perspectives on performance and helps to ensure alignment with political priorities.	Greater financial input needed given the importance of finance to everything
The process facilitated services to evaluate their activity and look objectively at whether the service is focusing on the right thing taking into account leadership views and priorities.	Expectations of the process not clearly communicated to allow for effective preparation
The process structure and support provided allowed sufficient time to maximise the value of the process.	Actions assigned to members or Chief Officers should be followed up where they directly impact on the Head of Service delivery actions.
Actions	Actions
None suggested	To provide a succinct overview to the panel of the information and suggested key issues.
	Ensure a finance representative is always available to attend and strengthen the level of input from finance in the performance pack.
	Improve the speed and clarity of actions out of the challenge and ensure clear timescales and expectations for delivery and monitoring / reviewing actions are agreed and applied
Opportunities	Threats
As part of the challenge process it could include a site visit to see the service in operation	Notice of the performance clinic perceived to be negative and demoralising
A performance team 360° feedback on the Head of Service from a selection of staff in the service.	External person / contribution to the performance clinic added limited value and this could undermine the level of transparency in the process
The self-evaluation for the challenge session could be further aligned with the service planning process to reduce duplication/overlap	The need to ensure there is strengthened scrutiny of performance as normal activity in DMT to help mitigate the need for clinics and ensure accountability for performance on an ongoing basis.
Communicate more widely on the outcomes / output of the sessions and what happens next	Some specific personal performance assessment and development of individuals which is more suited to a one to one environment with the direct line manager
Deeper interrogative assessment from Finance officer/s in the research and also in the challenge sessions	The process is time consuming for participants, regular panel members and the Policy & Performance team
Actions	Actions:

<p>Align the corporate self-evaluation template used for the challenge session with the service planning process – this has been done for 2015 service planning</p>	<p>Improve the communication & message of the purpose of a performance clinic – possibly including a review of how it is branded</p>
<p>Assess a range of options for communicating the outcomes of the sessions more widely</p>	<p>Ensure personal development issues are picked up on an ongoing basis through check in check out and 1:1 assessments to try to mitigate any personal development issues arising at performance clinics / head of service challenges</p>
	<p>Ensure robust performance monitoring and challenge through DMTs to help mitigate the need for performance clinics and any negatively impacting Challenge actions.</p>
	<p>Review the level of information that will be needed in advance of these processes to ensure time is utilised efficiently and effectively.</p>