ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Committee
DATE	28th April 2016
DIRECTOR	Richard Ellis Director of Corporate Governance
TITLE OF REPORT	Public Performance Reporting action plan
REPORT NUMBER	
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1.   PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the Committee with an action plan to address the issues identified by Audit Scotland's assessment of the Council's Public Performance Reporting (PPR) requirement (CG/15/111, Sept. 2015)

2.   RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:
(a) note the content of this report
(b) approve the recommendations, associated timescales and progress reporting commitments contained within the action plan,

3.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications specifically arising from this report.

4.   OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications specifically arising from this report.

5.   BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

a) The Council's framework around performance management is currently being reviewed. Public performance reporting is a key element of that framework and this report and attached action plan aim to provide support.

National Requirements and Arrangements

b) The Local Government Act 1992 gives the Accounts Commission the power to direct local authorities to publish information relating to service activity, to enable benchmarking and to secure best value. This is supported by annual Directions, with the 2015 Direction setting out a more streamlined and flexible
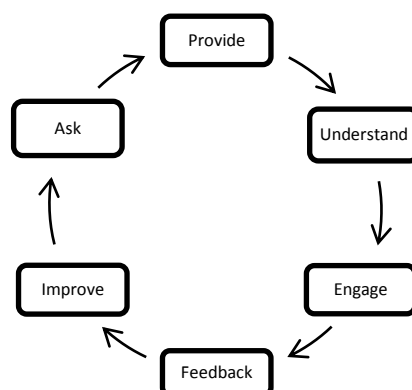
set of performance information for the 2016/17 financial year, for which ACC is required to collect and report in public.

c) In addition, the Local Government Benchmarking Framework provides a common approach across all 32 Scottish local authorities to benchmarking, which is grounded in reporting standard information on the services councils provide to local communities and, importantly, using that information to improve services.

d) The Accounts Commission have aligned SPI and PPR activity within a new approach to auditing Best Value. The overall aim is to better reflect the impact that councils are making on their communities and how they are contributing to improved outcomes for local people. There is a clear direction that ACC's approach to PPR needs to be comprehensive and reflect our local improvement priorities; simply complying with the LGBF is not enough to satisfy our PPR obligations. In addition, the Commission requires evidence that ACC is using benchmarking information to improve performance.

Aberdeen City Council Arrangements

Across the Council's Services, information is regularly shared, through a variety of media, with our stakeholders. The most recent assessments from Audit Scotland show, however, that a new approach is needed to ensure that this our PPR is both comprehensive and tailored to the needs of our stakeholders.

e) The review of the Corporate Performance Management Framework will, amongst other things, improve the alignment of performance information with the Council's priorities and plans, as well as ensuring a consistent approach to reporting performance information into our management and committee structures. This report and action plan aim to support this by addressing how this performance information is communicated publicly. This action plan aims to provide short, medium and long term tasks designed to improve the "end product" arising from performance information and its collation and use for PPR.

f) ACC needs to be able to provide effective PPR to enable public understanding of how services are planned, delivered and improved. It is essential to get the right information to the right people at the right time; identifying stakeholders and tailoring information to their needs.

g) A lack of understanding of public services and how they are delivered can be seen (partially) from the receipt of requests for information under the terms of the Freedom of Information legislation. These potentially indicate a lack of understanding of the way in which the Council operates, makes decisions, determines financial spend and performs. Responses from ACC to these requests are a reactive way of providing the required explanatory information. This demonstrates that improved performance reporting is required, to enhance public understanding.

h) There is a continual cycle of demand, provision and engagement which links what stakeholders ask ACC for (FOI requests), the information ACC provides on its services (PPR) and what stakeholders then understand and use the information for (engagement and feedback):

i) As ACC *provides* more meaningful, contextual and timely information, the greater the *understanding* of our stakeholders. They will then be more inclined to *engage* with ACC and provide the desired and required *feedback* in order to continually *improve* services. As ACC improves, so the desire to *ask* for more will increase and ACC will continue to proactively *provide* information as a result.

j) Proactive publication of information about ACC's services, decision-making and financial spend would enable ACC to be more open, transparent and accountable, meeting the premise of the FOISA legislation, the recommendations from the Best Value report and the themes within the Scottish Government's Digital Public Services Strategy[i].

k) An action plan (attached at Appendix A) for PPR has been developed in line with the Best Value PPR Toolkit. The toolkit has three main strands:
- The extent to which an organisation's culture and practices promote effective and stakeholder-focused public performance reporting
- The extent to which an organisation can demonstrate that it has arrangements in place to meet statutory requirements and support effective public performance reporting
- The extent to which public performance reports provide good quality information for effective public accountability

l) The proposed action plan in Appendix A indicates the recommended actions to be taken by ACC in the short, medium and long term to better fulfil these PPR responsibilities.

Interdependencies

m) There are a number of interdependencies between the PPR action plan and other major projects:

Digital Platform and Strategy

The procurement and implementation of a new digital platform will go hand in hand with the capabilities of a new CMS and website and with the ability to improve public performance reporting. Improved integration capabilities for customers and staff will be facilitated through the partnership of the systems. Regardless of the platform supplier(s) chosen, the key to successful implementation will be working together to ensure seamless integration.

Content Management System (CMS) and website

The main 'tool' for PPR is the ACC website and improvements in both areas are dependent upon each other.

An improved website and supporting technical capabilities would enable ACC to proactively provide more contextual, narrative and visual information to support an improved PPR programme. Proactive publication of information about ACC's services, decision-making and financial spend would enable ACC to be more open, transparent and accountable,

Master Data management
The revised approach to PPR will support MDM by ensuring effective use of existing information databases and resources, avoiding the addition of yet another system. It will also enable an effective point of access for users to ACC performance information that is tailored to the individual using clear, up to date and accurate information.

Information Governance
The Information Governance workstream will ensure there is an integrated approach to the way in which data and content are managed. Participation in the workstream representing the public engagement elements (including PPR) will ensure consistent and joined up delivery.

6.   IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience –
Greater proactive publication of information about what ACC does and how well (or not) it is doing through improved performance reporting will enable more effective engagement with our stakeholders, through better understanding of ACC activities.

Members of the public have a right to receive information on the performance of the Council's services and core functions. The recommend actions to improve the methods of reporting and the provision of context and narrative as complementary explanation to that reporting will aid understanding of that information.

Improving Staff Experience –
Improved engagement with stakeholders will enable staff to use the feedback received to build effective direction, plans and services for the future.

Improving our use of Resources –
Improved PPR will allow ACC to make more effective use of information resources currently available in a limited manner and under-utilised.

Corporate –
This report and action plans support the aims of Smarter Aberdeen, specifically Smarter Governance, enabling citizens to participate in decision making through greater understanding of council activity and performance.

The report and action plan also support the SOA, directly in relation to the digital city aims and indirectly by enabling the measurement of performance against all SOA outcomes.

Both are intended to support and complement the review of the Corporate Performance Management Framework.

Public –
Improved PPR will ensure all stakeholders have the ability to receive and understand clear information on the performance of the Council's services and core functions.   The adding of context, narrative – a story – around performance indicators will add value to the core information. Increased use of graphics will provide the public with a choice of access between visual and text-based information.

7.   MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The Council remains at risk of failing to meet Audit Scotland recommendations in our Public Performance arrangements, which will continue to lead to poor public perceptions of our activities and future unfavourable assessment. The action plan and associated timescales have been designed to mitigate this risk

8.   BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

9.   REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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