Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Note of Working Group

Monday 30th November 2020

Annual Assurance Report on Corporate Performance Management Arrangements

The Intelligence and Policy Manager presented the report of the Director of Resources and Housing. The report sets out key internal controls and processes in place in relation to corporate performance management. The report followed the cycle of internal control which provided a useful tool to review the effectiveness of arrangements.

The Intelligence and Policy Manager advised the committee that although changes had been made to the allocation of staffing resource, with colleagues responsible for dealing with performance management for adults and children's services moving back into those directorates, communication has continued to enable close and collaborative working between the teams with respect to performance management.

The Best Council Plan was updated at the start of the year, and the key performance indicators refreshed at this time. It remains open however for the KPI's to be revised at any time during the year should this be necessary.

Performance information is regularly reported to directorate management teams and the Corporate Leadership Team. Executive Board received the annual performance report (looking back on the previous year's results) and Scrutiny Boards also receive performance reports on their portfolio areas.

Performance monitoring has shown that the Covid 19 pandemic impacted on the availability of information in relation to some of the council's KPI's; and has also started to show the impact on results for other KPIs.

In line with the council service and spending reviews the IPS team is currently undergoing a restructure. Although this will result in a smaller team, the review also represents an opportunity for increasing use of automation around performance results. The greater use of automation tools (such as Power BI) will aim to reduce the amount of manual intervention required.

Comparison work looking at other UK Core Cities strategic plans and performance monitoring arrangements has been undertaken and provided useful insight into the similarities and differences. With respect to organisational objectives, it is noted that similar areas are covered but that the way they are described varies. Leeds' objectives tend to be described in a straight forward way, whilst many other UK Core cities use more emotive terms (similar to those articulated in Leeds's ambitions).

It is noted that some core cities undertake annual city-wide surveys that specifically ask how people think the council is performing, whereas Leeds undertakes the budget survey and seeks feedback from the Citizen's Panel on other matters.

Members of the Committee asked questions and received responses as follows:

Q: Is it possible to undertake benchmarking on like for like data submitted to sponsoring government departments – for example DEFRA and DFE?

A: Leeds undertakes benchmarking on national standards such as ASCOF (Adults and Health) and Public Health Outcome Frameworks – where our results can be compared to regional and national ones. Where possible this information is benchmarked and included in the quarterly reporting. The UK Core city review showed the distinction between the English Authorities and peers in Scotland and Northern Ireland who (unlike in England) have a number of statutory indicators. These statutory indicators all have to be calculated in the same way e.g. staff sickness.

Q: Does the automation of performance monitoring allow trend analysis in addition to collecting and calculating performance indicators thus enabling automation of monitoring as well as collation of KPIs?

A: It is intended to achieve as much automated monitoring as possible with the new system. It will be the challenge to the service in the coming year and it is anticipated that much will be gained by sharing and learning from best practice in core cities moving forward.

Q: Members have observed an anecdotal increase in antisocial behaviour, domestic violence etc. within their wards. This seems a common phenomenon at this time. Does performance monitoring quantify and explain this?

A: Performance data in the above areas is collected, quality assured and reported to the right teams/boards to ensure that any areas where there are concerning trends are noted and addressed.

Q: Members raised a concern about the pressure on LCC staff at all levels arising both from the pandemic and also changes in council structure.

A: There's a wealth of work undertaken on staff wellbeing, including staff wellbeing surveys, information on INSITE and the mid-year wellbeing check ins between managers and staff.

Q: There is little mention of the public in our performance arrangements. Would it be possible to combine a suite of KPIs through the budget consultation survey which we undertake each year?

A: The Council undertakes a number of other surveys throughout the year in addition to the budget consultation. In addition colleagues in the council's communications team monitor public feedback received through the council's social media presence. Whilst an annual survey would be helpful there is a need to balance the high cost of undertaking this along with the resources required.

Members noted that social media can provide a misrepresentative view of public perception and suggested that piggy backing the Council's budget survey may provide a proportionate option to collect clearer data.

Q: Where performance indicators show that performance is not on track what action is taken?

A: Where poor performance is flagged up by indicators heading in the wrong direction reporting to DMTs and CLT seeks to articulate the action being taken to

address this. Performance results are also reported to Scrutiny Boards where follow up queries on action taken can be raised.

Q: Where the KPIs are reported as an average it would be helpful for this to be accompanied by the span of results to show where there are concerns in relation to performance. For example average KPIs in relation to smoking or life expectancy do not reveal low performance in specific wards where a span may reveal those concerns.

A: There is much granular information lying below the headline KPI results which is available if directorate or corporate leadership teams wish to drill down to see it. The annual performance report to Executive Board provides weblinks to the sources of this supporting information and is therefore in the public realm. It is noted that Scrutiny Boards receive detailed information as part of the routine reporting to them each year. Officers will take on board Members views in relation to the reporting of spans in addition to averages and consider how such information can be represented.

Members asked that the committee are provided information in relation to the span of performance information for the KPIs relating to smoking and life expectancy.

Members noted the example of KPIs in relation to new homes which are useful because there is further breakdown giving numbers of affordable homes, and details as to housing mix.

Q: Members sought assurance that the performance revealed by the staff surveys would be monitored.

A: Results for some of the key questions included in the staff survey are also KPIs as they are important in relation to the Council's Efficient, Enterprising and Healthy Best Council ambition.

Q: Can a KPI be included to give a measure of digital inclusion?

A: Digital inclusion is an important measure but historically it has been challenging to calculate given the need to encompass feedback from those who are not digitally aware. Further consideration will be given to this.

Q: Following up from the benchmarking which has taken place what can Leeds City Council learn from peer core cities?

A: There is much to learn from core cities – for example seeing good practice in the way results are presented and the need for balance between the amount of information reported and the need for that information to be accessible and clear (some other UK Core Cities information was buried in a lengthy documents which are less easy to digest. Similarly the review considered the frequency of reporting to make sure it is timely.

Q: Who revises the Council's KPIs and through what process?

A: KPIs are agreed with the service and directorate responsible for the performance area. Where necessary to revise a KPI in-year, for example because the nature of available information has changed, the revised indicator would also be notified to corporate leadership team together with reasons for the change.

Q: Please clarify the position with regard to monitoring of educational attainment.

A: All authorities will continue to monitor and calculate educational attainment information but that information was not available for the most recent routine report as a result of the pandemic – either because the information could not be obtained as a result of a delay in capturing / reporting, or because there were effective nil returns – for example in relation to SATS results as the tests did not take place; or school attendance as the schools were closed.

Q: Please can you confirm the link between performance monitoring and performance management for our directors.

A: Directors and their management teams (DMTs) have responsibility for overseeing performance against the Best Council Plan priorities relevant to their service areas, as well as some pure service KPIs. This feeds into appraisal conversations, throughout the organisation from the Chief Executive with directors and beyond so that there is a systematic approach to improving performance.

It is recommended by the working group that the Committee approves the recommendations set out in paragraph 6 of the report.