

Performance Management and Data Quality Framework

What is Performance Management?

Performance Management is about taking action in response to actual performance to make outcomes better than they would otherwise be. Inherent within this is the need to know and understand both the intended outcomes and current performance levels.

Performance Management happens at all levels of the organisation and involves elected Councillors as well as individual employees (see roles and responsibilities at Appendix A).

Our performance cycle

Effective Performance Management is based on a continual process, or cycle, which has the following key elements:

1. Agree or reaffirm a set of outcomes and **PLAN** what needs to be done to achieve those aims
2. Work to **DELIVER** what is in the Plan!
3. **MONITOR** our progress and performance
4. **REVIEW** and **REPORT** what has gone well or what could have gone better



The National Performance Management Framework

Following the general election in May 2011, the coalition government introduced changes to the national framework; this included deletion of the National Indicator set, abolition of the Comprehensive Area Assessment regime, Local Area Agreements and Local Public Service Agreements and the removal of the Audit Commission's corporate inspection role. Additionally, the requirement to undertake an annual Place Survey was scrapped. Despite these changes, a large amount of data is still reported to national government, through the 'single data list'; although this tends to be factual raw data rather than analysed data.

These changes mean that how local authorities organise, deliver and performance manage their services is essentially up to them - with minimal reporting up to Government. There is, however, a clear expectation that local councils are accountable to local residents and service users. Instead of organising performance management around meeting Government requirements, it is up to councils to performance manage their services in a way that is suitable and appropriate to their own local circumstances. This framework explains how Huntingdonshire District Council has decided to manage, report and scrutinise performance.

The Performance Cycle – Our Plans and How We Deliver

The Council shares common ambitions with its partners and has a vision to improve the quality of life, deliver economic growth and provide value for money services for the people of Huntingdonshire.

The Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan outlines the Council's strategic priorities and objectives. It also sets out how the Council wants to use its own resources, including any planned efficiency improvements and service priorities. The two year plan is refreshed every year.

The Corporate Plan sets out what the Council aims to achieve in addition to our core statutory services and is aligned with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The MTFS explains how the Council will manage its resources and budgets over a five year period and how resources will be used to deliver services and meet the Council's objectives. Key service priorities are considered each year as part of the budget setting process.

Sitting beneath the Corporate Plan are Service Plans which cover all services. Service Plans contain key objectives that each service will work on over the coming year. The Plans also outline how the objectives will be delivered and the resources that this will involve.

The Council's staff appraisal system results in specific targets being set for employees on an annual basis. Individual objectives and targets should relate to key activities set out in Service Plans, and, in appropriate cases, key actions listed in the Corporate Plan.

The Performance Cycle – How We Monitor, Review and Report

The delivery of all key projects, initiatives and action plans are monitored regularly. Cabinet Members monitor project and service performance through regular meetings with relevant Corporate Directors and Heads of Service.

The Senior Management Team receives quarterly reports on progress made against the key actions in the Corporate Plan and information and analysis on achievement against a suite of agreed corporate performance indicators. Quarterly reports are published on the Council's intranet and website and are formally presented to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel, which uses them to hold Cabinet Members accountable for their portfolios.

Heads of Service monitor their own operational performance information, including budget monitoring, service performance and progress on key projects, reporting to their Corporate Director. Managers monitor staff performance and carry out formal staff appraisals at least twice each year, checking that agreed target areas are on track for achievement.

The Corporate Team ensure that managers at all levels receive appropriate training on the scheme and monitor adherence. The Council's key strategies and projects are reviewed periodically. An overview is maintained by Corporate Directors and progress on key projects is reported through the quarterly corporate monitoring process.

Acting on performance information

Opportunities for improvement are identified by Councillors and senior managers through a range of processes. Cabinet can request managers to provide information on performance issues and call for further work to be undertaken to address specific concerns, if applicable. The relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel can also request that information about performance be provided and explained.

The Corporate Team and Finance Team check that financial and performance decisions are aligned and that resources are focussed on supporting the key priorities. They will work with managers and Councillors to resolve any conflicts that arise. Their role is also to share learning and good practice and ensure that value for money considerations are central to decision making.

Opportunities for improvement may be identified through research into best practice at other authorities, as well as by reviewing our own processes and how they can be improved. There are a number of opportunities to share learning and good practice with other local authorities and organisations through networks and attendance at events. Peer review

processes – where another council or an improvement group is invited to challenge areas of performance and suggest changes – are also used where it is appropriate. A Corporate Peer Challenge in 2016 identified opportunities for improvement now included in an action plan.

Customers, service users and other stakeholders provide an important source of performance information through feedback mechanisms, focus groups, surveys and complaints. Information is collected, monitored and can be used to improve services. The Council has a corporate approach to dealing with complaints and monitoring that data.

Feedback from staff can also be useful in identifying opportunities to improve services and performance. Feedback comes from team meetings, staff consultations, staff appraisals and exit interviews.

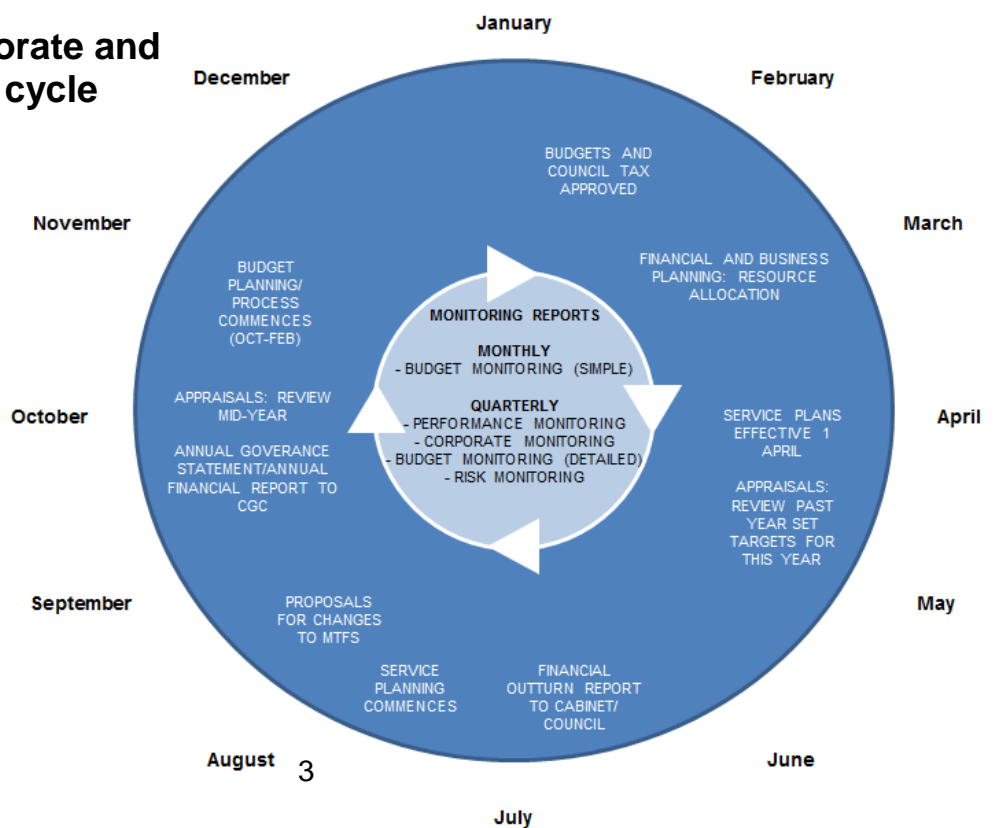
Corporate Governance

We are responsible for ensuring that our business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. We also have a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which our functions are exercised. In meeting this overall responsibility, we are also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. On an annual basis, a review must take place of the effectiveness of the systems of internal control and an Annual Governance Statement must be produced. We assess how well we are complying with our Code of Corporate Governance and give an opinion on whether the corporate governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively.

The Internal Audit team carry out the monitoring and assessment required to prepare the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the Executive Leader and Managing Director.

The annual corporate and budget planning cycle



Data Quality Framework

All performance information is underpinned by good data quality and our arrangements to ensure good data quality are set out in this section. The Council aims to ensure that across all service areas, there is a consistently high standard of data production and use.

All staff involved in the collection, collation and reporting of performance data have a responsibility to ensure it can be relied upon. Services need to ensure they have sound procedures in place and provide adequate training and guidance for staff.

What is good Data Quality?

The Council recognises the importance of data quality as we need reliable, accurate and timely performance information with which to manage services, inform users and account for our performance. We are committed to ensuring that we maintain the highest standards of data quality and as a result get our performance information “right first time”. This will enable us to have the right information at the right time at the right cost.

There are six key characteristics that can be used to describe how the quality of data can be determined. These can help the Council and its partners to assess the calibre of information it handles and, where necessary, take action to address weaknesses in the data.

Accurate

Data should be of a level of accuracy suitable for its intended purposes. Data should ideally only be captured once. Where compromises have to be made on accuracy, the resulting limitations of the data should be made clear to users.

Valid

Data should be recorded and used in compliance with all relevant requirements, including the correct application of any rules or definitions. This will ensure consistency.

Reliable

All data should be the product of stable and consistent data collection processes whether using manual or computer-based systems. Data should represent current positions.

Timely

Data capture should take place as quickly as possible following an event or activity and made available for the intended use promptly. Data must be made available frequently enough to support information needs and influence the service/management decisions.

Relevant

Data should be relevant to the purposes for which it is intended to be used. This necessitates periodic review of requirements to ensure information reflects changing needs.

Complete

Data requirements should be clearly specified based on the information needs of the organisation and data collection processes.

Why is Data Quality important in performance monitoring?

Information Security – British Standard (ISO 27001) states that information should be suitable for purpose, kept confidential, have high integrity and be suitably available.

The quality of our data is crucial for assessments of the Council's effectiveness, as are the policies and strategies for ensuring data quality.

The Council recognises the need to achieve a balance between the resources required to set and meet data quality standards and the relative benefits that follow. We will take this into account in developing our approach to monitoring and review. It will be necessary to focus resources on data that the Council regards as critical to its overall objectives.

Data Quality Principles

There are a number of principles that underpin good data quality as follows:

Understanding:

- Everyone recognises the need for good data quality and how they can contribute.

Definitions: everyone knows which Performance Indicators (PI's) are produced from the information they input and how they are defined.

- Statutory PIs have nationally set definitions. It is important that every detail of the definition is applied. This ensures that data is recorded consistently, allowing for comparison over time and national benchmarking. For example, data which is on the 'single data list' or specified in the Local Government Transparency Code.
- Where we set local PIs, we need to ensure that we have established a clear definition and that there are systems available to collect and report the data in an agreed format.
- There may be some similar indicators (some national and some local) measuring the same thing in slightly different ways. It is important to ensure that separate figures are calculated and reported systematically for each definition.
- Every PI should have a named Officer responsible for collecting and reporting the information. This helps ensure consistency in the application of definitions and use of systems for providing the data. Each named Officer should ensure they are kept up-to-date of any changes in definition that may occur from time to time. A data quality template for every PI should be kept up to date by the named Officer.

Input:

- The aim should be 100% accuracy, 100% of the time.
- It is important that employees have clear guidelines and procedures for using systems and are adequately trained to ensure that information is being entered consistently and correctly.
- Controls should also be in place to avoid double-counting. These should be designed according to the nature of the system, in particular where more than one person inputs data. A likely control will be an absolutely clear division of responsibility setting out who is responsible for what data entry.
- The systems must also record all relevant information.

Verification:

- Data requirements should be designed along the principle of 'getting it right first time' in order to avoid waste in time and money spent on cleansing data, interfacing between different information systems, matching and consolidating data from multiple databases and maintaining outdated systems.
- In complex systems, even where there are strong controls over input, errors can creep in. Where it is needed, a verification procedure should exist close to the point of data input. The frequency of verification checks will need to be aligned with the frequency of data reporting.

Responsibility:

- Each performance indicator, whether national or local, should have an assigned employee who takes responsibility of the systems to support this PI as well as reporting this information to the required standards.
- Employees with responsibility should document the procedures that need to be undertaken to produce this information.
- Employees with responsibility should work closely with ICT in procuring and managing systems used to record, store or calculate PI data to ensure a robust control environment.
- These procedures should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.
- Arrangements should be made to provide this information to another employee in the absence of the assigned employee, to enable them to follow the same procedures.
- All employees will be encouraged to report any data quality issues to their line manager.

Output:

- Performance indicators should be extracted regularly and efficiently and communicated quickly.
- Any output produced should have an auditable trail i.e. evidence to support the data output.

Presentation:

- Performance indicators should be presented, with conclusive evidence, in such a way as to give an easily understood and accurate picture of our performance to management, Members, staff and the public.

Awareness

- Data quality is the responsibility of every employee entering, extracting or analysing data from any of the Council's information systems. Every relevant employee should be aware of his or her responsibilities with regard to data quality. The commitment to data quality will be communicated clearly throughout the Council via Heads of Service and managers to reinforce this message.
- Certain employees will have overall responsibility for data quality on a service specific system but this does not exempt others from the responsibility to ensure that data is accurate and up-to-date.
- Responsibility for data quality will be reflected in job descriptions and the appraisal process as appropriate, given the level of involvement employees have in the process.
- There is a collective responsibility for data quality, but it is necessary to be clear about what actions and responsibilities are allocated to specific individuals and teams in order to implement this strategy.

Standards and Procedures

The Council is committed to collecting and processing data according to national and locally defined standards. Standards and procedures are necessary to ensure that:

- Data collection is consistent throughout the organisation and in accordance with national definitions as laid down in the statutory performance indicator guidance where appropriate.
- Information can be meaningfully compared/collated both across the organisation and nationally.

- Where we are setting local PIs we need to ensure that we have established a clear definition and that there are documented procedures available to collect and report the data in an agreed format including responsible officer, who verifies data is correct, targets and frequency of collection. A measure template will be completed for all PIs.

Partners

Some important information is provided by or shared with partner organisations and other external agencies e.g. NHS, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Cambridgeshire County Council. It is the intention to work constructively with these organisations to provide assurance of the data quality. Any doubts about data quality should be addressed with the appropriate organisation.

Responsibility for data verification lies within the service receiving or sharing the information.

Reporting

Performance data required by government departments or due to legislative requirements normally has a timetable for publication. All performance information should be available in time for management assessment and action prior to submission and/or publication. It is important that performance information is subject to scrutiny and challenge before final reporting. This also applies to our quarterly reports which are considered and reviewed by our Senior Management Team prior to publication on Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet agendas.

Appendix A: Roles and responsibilities

Our approach relies on us all to take performance management seriously and ensure the Council makes its plans, policies and decisions based on good quality information. Roles and responsibilities are outlined below:

Council

Elected Members are ultimately accountable to the electorate for the overall performance of Council services.

Executive Leader of the Council

Has overall political accountability and is ultimately responsible for the Council's performance.

Cabinet

Is the executive body of the Council. Key actions within each Cabinet Member's portfolio are set out in the Corporate Plan and Service Plans, and the associated resources needed are within the annual budget setting and prioritisation process.

Portfolio Holders

Each Cabinet Member is given a portfolio of services and activities for which they take responsibility. Portfolio Holders are actively involved in reviewing performance in relation to their portfolio. The Executive Leader of the Council has portfolio responsibility for the Council's performance management and data quality arrangements. However, performance management is an integral part of every Portfolio Holder's responsibilities.

Overview and Scrutiny Panels

The role of these bodies is set out in the Council's Constitution. The Panels identify areas of the Council's work that need to be scrutinised and challenge performance and service improvement initiatives. The relevant Panels receive reports such as the quarterly Integrated Performance Monitoring reports. Overview and Scrutiny Panels may choose to convene task and finish groups to investigate a specific performance issue.

Corporate Governance Committee

The Committee monitors the risk management and governance arrangements at the Council to help ensure the effective delivery of services and the achievement of objectives. This Committee, through the work of Internal Audit, ensures the Council has adequate controls in place. The Committee reviews, and should contribute to the development of, the Annual Governance Statement ahead of its presentation to Council via Cabinet.

Senior Management Team

Senior Management Team advise Members regarding the setting of strategic direction and performance improvement priorities. They set targets and standards for performance, and identify and manage strategic and performance issues and opportunities facing the Council. Senior Management Team receives regular information on performance from service managers and considers reports on key strategic performance issues, including achievement against the Corporate Plan.

Senior Management Team has responsibility for ensuring that services have effective data processes for monitoring performance indicators and ensuring that operational responsibilities for data quality have been delegated to individuals.

They also have responsibility for promoting the integration of performance management into the culture of the Council and for ensuring that performance information used in decision making is 'fit for purpose' and reliable.

Heads of Service

Heads of Service are responsible for the overall operational performance of their service and for the contribution that their service makes to the strategic priorities and objectives within the Corporate Plan. They are responsible for contributing to the integration of performance management into their area and for ensuring the quality of all data collected and reported within their areas of responsibility.

Where performance targets are not achieved, Heads of Service are required to explain this and consider what remedial action is required; for corporately monitored performance indicators this is reported in the quarterly monitoring reports. Heads of Service are required to provide assurance on the effectiveness of controls in place to mitigate/reduce poor performance in their service and ensure the involvement of staff in setting relevant and appropriate targets through the annual Service Planning and appraisal process.

Corporate Team

This team supports performance management and data quality within the Council by co-ordinating the corporate approach to performance management and service planning. Support and guidance is provided to Corporate Directors, Heads of Service and service managers in delivering the performance management framework, and on elements such as performance indicators, monitoring of achievement against corporate priorities, benchmarking, research, service planning and service review requirements.

Support is also provided to the services in the creation of data processes that support monitoring, including advice and guidance regarding the collection and calculation of performance indicators and the maintenance of the performance section of the Council's intranet system.

Internal Audit

The team produces the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the Executive Leader and Managing Director, which is reported to the Cabinet and Council. In addition to dealing with the provision of audit services, this team provides guidance and information on risk management. If data quality issues are identified through the course of an audit, whether linked to performance indicator data or not, this will be raised in the audit report. Internal audit also provide an independent review of the corporate approach to performance management and data quality.

Managers / Supervisors / Team Leaders

All levels of staff with managerial responsibility are responsible for the operational performance of their team and for the two-way communication of corporate initiatives and performance issues. This group of staff are responsible for ensuring their staff have regular appraisals and reviewing the training and skills needed to carry out their jobs. They should also ensure that their staff have access to and are familiar with corporate and departmental policies and procedures on performance management and data quality.

Individual staff

All staff have a responsibility to manage their own performance. Each member of staff will be set specific targets as part of their appraisal every year, which staff members will be involved with agreeing. As well as identifying actions and targets for the current year, relevant training/personal development needs are identified through the appraisal process. Formal procedures exist to address continual and serious cases of under-performance.