

Performance Management Stage 1

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Audit 2008/09

August 2009



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Introduction and background

- 1 Since its last corporate assessment in 2005, Wirral Council has done much work to strengthen its approach to performance management. Key developments include:
 - the production of Wirral's sustainable community strategy;
 - a refresh of the Council's corporate plan; and
 - revisions to both the format and timetable of reports to elected members.
- 2 The Council recognises that there is scope for it to build on its performance management arrangements, so we have agreed to carry out a review to both examine progress and identify further opportunities for improvement. Whilst informing our other assessments at the Council (Use of Resources, Managing Performance and the wider Area Assessment), our review aims to:
 - provide a reality check on the Council's progress in embedding its current performance management framework to a consistent level across the organisation;
 - identify the key enablers of, and barriers to, the effective implementation of the Council's current performance management arrangements;
 - identify the main drivers in those areas where performance management arrangements are most effective; and
 - help the Council improve its performance management arrangements as it seeks to achieve its ambitions.
- 3 The review comprises a range of work which we have agreed with the Council will be carried out in two distinct stages:
 - Stage 1 - spring 2009:
 - a baseline questionnaire to obtain an initial picture of performance management arrangements and issues within departments across the Council; and
 - an online survey of a sample of managers selected by the Council in which respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with a series of statements concerning: corporate direction, contributing to a shared vision, embedding a culture of continuous improvement, improving services, improving performance management and improving people management.
 - Stage 2 - autumn 2009:
 - a series of focus groups with managers and elected members;
 - a review of key corporate and service documents used to improve performance; and
 - an action planning session focused on the issues which need to be addressed to enhance the existing performance management framework.

- 4 This report sets out the key findings from the first stage of our work. It has been prepared to provide the Council with interim feedback and highlight issues for further investigation. It does not set out any definitive conclusions about the Council's performance management arrangements or make any recommendations. These will be covered in a second and final report which we will make on completion of stage 2 of the review.

Stage 1 audit approach

- 5 We attended a joint meeting of the Council's corporate improvement and performance management groups in April to discuss the overall programme for the review, and to agree the detail of the surveys for stage 1.
- 6 Baseline questionnaires were then completed by the nominated performance leads for the following departments:
 - Corporate Services;
 - Finance;
 - Children and Young People;
 - Technical Services;
 - Adult Social Services; and
 - Law, HR and Asset Management.
- 7 For Regeneration, separate questionnaires were completed for the following service areas:
 - Re-housing Services;
 - Sport and Recreation;
 - Strategy and Implementation;
 - Housing Strategy Team;
 - Licensing;
 - Environmental Health;
 - Cultural Services;
 - Community Safety;
 - Supported and Special Needs Housing;
 - Community Services
 - Housing Market Renewal Initiative;
 - Libraries; and
 - Trading Standards.
- 8 Around the same time, the online survey was distributed by the Council to a sample of 705 staff comprising chief officers and senior, middle and first line managers. A total of 442 responses were received, giving an excellent response rate of just under 63 per cent.
- 9 In the next section of the report, we draw together the key findings from the two surveys to highlight potential issues for further consideration and investigation as part of stage 2 of the review. The key findings from the two surveys are then set out in the sections which follow.

- 10 The completed baseline questionnaires and overall analysis of the online survey have been made available to the Council as a separate data-pack. We have also developed a tool to help the Council undertake its own analysis of the online survey results if required.

Overall summary and areas for further investigation

- 11 Preliminary findings indicate that whilst the sustainable community strategy and corporate plan are generally recognised as strategic drivers, the sense of shared vision may not yet be felt by all staff within the organisation. This may suggest opportunities to improve the way in which key documents such as these are disseminated but, more so, how they are 'made real' to staff.
- 12 Key issues exchanges are clearly given high priority throughout the Council and provide an effective means of promoting ownership of corporate and partnership priorities. However the potential of this good level of staff contact may not yet be being realised. This is because the stage one findings suggest that the approach to business planning, particularly at service and team level, is not yet consistently strong. If this is the case, it will be more difficult for staff to appreciate the contribution they need to make to corporate and partnership priorities as well as their own performance against them.
- 13 All departments are working in a wide range of partnerships and delivering many national and regional imperatives. Some of the responses indicate that national and local priorities may not be completely aligned. If potential conflicts are not considered and resolved during business planning, departments could be left with a less clear view of their priorities for delivery or even a sense that they are working to competing priorities. This may account for the responses in the free text section of the online survey about the way in which resources are allocated at the Council.
- 14 Our preliminary findings suggest that the Council has a generally strong approach to people management but responses about longer term workforce planning were less positive. Workforce planning should form part of business planning but responses to the online survey indicate that arrangements to support this may not yet be consistently in place. There was also little clarity about the action being taken by the Council to make the workforce representative of the local community.
- 15 Arrangements for monitoring, managing and challenging service performance are clearly still being developed within all departments, but all are at very different stages. In this respect, specific areas for further consideration are the extent to which:
 - good practice is being shared both between and within departments;
 - information technology needs (systems and staff) to support performance management are being identified, considered and addressed at a corporate level; and
 - the extensive contact departments already have with other providers and with local people is being used to drive improvements in services through target and standard setting.
- 16 The role of elected members in challenging performance also offers potential for further investigation.

17 We are proposing to probe the following areas in more detail as part of our stage two work:

- understanding of strategic priorities and links to service/team plans;
- the approach to business planning within services and how this links to/is supported by corporate arrangements - partnership working/resolving conflicting priorities;
- planning for improvement - how engagement with other service providers and local people is being used in target and standard setting;
- workforce planning;
- how the information technology needs of service areas are being addressed to support continuous improvement; and
- Member engagement in challenging performance.

Appendix 1 – Online survey

Navigation

If at any point you would like to go back a page, please use the 'back' button at the foot of the page, not the 'back' button in the browser. Once you have completed the survey, please send us your response by CLICKING THE SUBMIT BUTTON

Queries

If you experience technical difficulties in accessing/using this survey, please contact the Audit Commission ICT Department helpdesk on 0844 798 7822; If you have a query or experience difficulty with the language or content of this survey, please contact Andrew Wells on 07976 757998, a-wells@audit-commission.gov.uk

Confidentiality

This survey is entirely confidential and respondents will not be identified. All results will be anonymised and will not be attributed to individuals

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Which type of manager are you?

Chief Officer	0.9%
Senior Management (ie member of the departmental management team)	10.4%
Middle Manager (ie you manage other managers)	34.1%
First Line Manager (ie you manage staff only)	54.4%

Within which department/service do you work?

Department of Corporate Services headed by Jim Wilkie	4.3%
Department of Law, HR and Asset Management headed by Bill Norman	5.2%
Department of Adult Social Services headed by John Webb	13.0%
Department of Children and Young People headed by Howard Cooper	17.5%
Department of Regeneration headed by Alan Stennard	25.1%
Department of Technical Services headed by David Green	10.3%
Department of Finance headed by Ian Coleman	24.4%

Department of Corporate Services headed by Jim Wilkie, please select your service area

Corporate Policy	26.3%
Strategic Development	47.4%
Tourism and Marketing	21.1%

Department of Law, HR and Asset Management headed by Bill Norman, please select your service area

Law	39.1%
Human Resources	39.1%
Asset Management	17.4%

Department of Adult Social Services headed by John Webb, please select your service area

Communities and Well Being	10.5%
Finance and Performance	19.3%
Reform Unit	5.3%
Care Services	31.6%
Integrated Commissioning	3.5%
Access and Assessment	29.8%

Department of Children and Young People headed by Howard Cooper, please select your service area

Participation and Inclusion	19.5%
Learning and Achievement	35.1%
Planning and Resources	29.9%
Children's Social Care	14.3%

Department of Regeneration headed by Alan Stennard, please select your service area

Culture	52.7%
Housing and Regeneration	31.8%
Regulation	15.5%

Department of Technical Services, headed by David Green, please select your service area

Streetscene and Waste	33.3%
Building Design and Development Control	44.4%
Support and Information Services	22.2%

Department of Finance headed by Ian Coleman, please select your service area

Benefits Revenue and Customer Services	41.1%
Financial Services	15.9%
IT Services	17.8%
Support Services	15.0%
Merseyside Pension Fund	7.5%
Change	1.9%

Appendix 1 – Online survey

Please select one box on each line to indicate by how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

Corporate direction

Wirral's 2009-2012 Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision and strategic objectives together with how these will be delivered						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
There are clear Council-wide strategic objectives, aims and improvement priorities which set out an overall direction for the Council	37.7%	54.2%	5.0%	1.8%	0.5%	0.5%
The Council will be able to measure how successful we have been at achieving our strategic objectives, aims and priorities	24.8%	56.9%	14.7%	1.8%	0.2%	1.1%
There are clear departmental and corporate targets for performance	34.3%	51.0%	9.7%	3.6%	0.7%	0.2%
I know how successful we are in achieving strategic objectives, aims and priorities	21.7%	47.6%	20.5%	7.9%	0.7%	0.9%
The Council targets its resources to deliver corporate priorities and objectives	14.9%	50.6%	19.4%	10.8%	1.6%	1.6%
I understand how the work I do contributes to delivering the Council's vision and strategic objectives	41.5%	49.2%	6.1%	2.0%	0.5%	0.2%
Comments		7.2%				

Contributing to a shared vision

Wirral's sustainable community strategy - Wirral 2025: More Equal, More Prosperous - sets out a shared vision for Wirral. One of the ways in which we are delivering this vision is through Wirral's local area agreement						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
I understand how the Council's strategic objectives will help to deliver Wirral's sustainable community strategy and local area agreement	18.1%	53.3%	18.1%	6.5%	0.5%	3.2%

The Council works constructively with its partners to deliver on its vision and shared priorities	22.8%	48.8%	20.5%	3.2%	0.9%	3.4%
I understand how the work I do contributes to delivering our vision and shared priorities	30.7%	50.3%	11.5%	5.0%	0.5%	1.6%
Comments	5.4%					

Managing service performance

Embedding a culture of continuous service improvement						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
The Council effectively challenges why services are provided	10.6%	49.7%	24.4%	9.5%	2.3%	2.9%
The Council effectively challenges how services are provided	13.5%	49.0%	20.8%	11.3%	1.8%	2.7%
The Council uses the results of consultation to improve the way services are delivered	11.5%	49.7%	23.5%	9.0%	2.5%	2.7%
The Council uses internal comparative data to improve the performance of its services	11.1%	50.3%	23.9%	6.5%	0.7%	6.8%
The Council uses external comparative data to improve the performance of its services	11.1%	46.5%	28.4%	4.3%	0.7%	8.1%
The Council uses the most appropriate provider of services to ensure continuous service improvement	8.1%	41.5%	30.2%	10.8%	1.4%	6.8%
The Council delivers customer-focussed services	19.4%	56.4%	14.9%	6.3%	1.1%	0.7%
Comments	7.4%					

Appendix 1 – Online survey

Improving services						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
There are clear objectives, standards and targets for my service	41.3%	46.3%	7.4%	3.6%	0.5%	0.5%
These objectives, standards and targets are focussed on customers' needs and expectations	33.9%	45.6%	12.0%	6.3%	0.7%	0.9%
Service targets are challenging yet achievable	22.6%	52.6%	15.8%	6.5%	0.7%	0.9%
There is a service/team plan which sets out how service objectives will be achieved	30.9%	49.0%	12.4%	4.7%	0.9%	1.6%
Resources have been prioritised to deliver service objectives	19.4%	45.1%	18.3%	12.4%	2.0%	1.6%
Equality impact assessments are completed for all services	16.5%	41.5%	24.2%	4.3%	0.7%	12.0%
Comments		7.0%				

Improving performance management						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
I was able to contribute to setting objectives, standards and targets for my service	35.7%	39.3%	11.1%	11.3%	2.0%	0.2%
I have personal objectives which are linked to service objectives, targets and standards	31.2%	48.3%	12.0%	6.5%	1.1%	0.5%
I receive appropriate training and development to help me achieve my personal objectives	28.0%	45.8%	14.0%	8.6%	2.7%	0.2%
I receive regular feedback on my own performance against objectives and targets	21.2%	43.1%	17.6%	14.2%	3.2%	0.2%
Relevant and accurate information is collected to assess service performance and the achievement of objectives	26.0%	46.5%	17.6%	6.1%	1.4%	2.0%

Service performance is reviewed systematically by drawing on this information	23.3%	46.0%	19.6%	6.3%	1.1%	3.2%
I know how successful we are in achieving service objectives, standards and targets	29.6%	46.5%	15.1%	5.9%	1.1%	1.1%
There is an effective response if standards or targets are not met	19.0%	43.6%	19.0%	11.3%	3.4%	2.3%
Elected members play an active role in reviewing performance	11.1%	30.7%	32.1%	10.2%	4.5%	10.8%
Performance information is used in setting service objectives, standards and targets	21.9%	47.4%	19.0%	4.5%	1.1%	5.4%
Comments	5.2%					

Improving People Management

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
I understand my role and responsibilities for managing employees in my service	52.1%	42.0%	2.7%	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%
The corporate HR strategy for managing people supports the Council in achieving its objectives	14.7%	46.3%	23.3%	7.2%	2.5%	3.6%
I am familiar with and understand the Council's HR policy frameworks, procedures and processes for managing people	22.8%	57.6%	11.5%	3.6%	0.5%	1.1%
Potential workforce planning issues are identified	12.2%	44.0%	27.3%	7.7%	0.7%	5.4%
Appropriate action is taken on workforce planning issues	10.2%	35.4%	31.8%	10.8%	1.6%	7.0%
The Council is taking action to develop leadership and managerial capacity	20.5%	42.4%	22.6%	7.7%	1.6%	2.5%
The Council is taking action to ensure the workforce reflects the profile of the local community	10.6%	36.6%	34.5%	4.5%	0.7%	9.9%

Appendix 1 – Online survey

The Council is taking action to ensure staff understand and apply best practice in equality when delivering services	28.0%	53.0%	12.4%	2.5%	0.0%	1.4%
The Council is monitoring the diversity of its workforce	28.2%	53.0%	11.3%	1.1%	0.2%	3.6%
Comments	6.5%					

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please send us your response by clicking on the submit button below.

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