

MINUTE of MEETING of the PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within CONFERENCE ROOM 3, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 9 OCTOBER 2017.

Present – Councillors Stuart Borrowman (Chair), Andrew McGuire, Charles Kennedy, Dave King

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The committee confirmed the Minute of its meeting held on 9 October 2017 as a correct record. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. PLANNING SERVICES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing an overview of Planning Services and performance. Appendix 1 to the report provided a summary of the work and performance indicators covering five key themes.

The report advised that the principal purpose of Planning Services was to carry out the statutory planning and building standards functions of the council and to ensure that sufficient education capacity existed for predicted levels of demand in nurseries and schools.

Planning Services consisted of the following teams:-

- Building Standards
- Development Management
- Development Planning and Environmental
- Technical Support Services

The service had a total complement of staff of 39.2 FTE and annual net revenue budget of £591,890. In addition the service had an income generation target of £1,783,010 annually.

The service actively engaged with a number of partners, key amongst those were the Scottish Government, SESplan, other key Government agencies including the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

The report went on to list the main activities the service provided in

2016/17. It was advised that the main activities of the service in the current financial year would be broadly similar to those in 2016/17, however in addition the service would:-

- Actively engage in the Scottish Government Review of the Planning Service in Scotland.
- Respond to any changes to procedures following the Edinburgh Schools inquiry and the Grenfell incident in London.
- Work actively to secure the benefits of the City Region Deal in parliament to support delivery of development in Winchburgh, Calderwood and other key sites in West Lothian.

The Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration explained that Planning Services performance was regularly measured through a suite of performance indicators in line with the council's performance management framework, using the covalent system.

Planning Services performance indicators were representative of a range of activities delivered by the service and included statutory, public performance reporting and management indicators, including measures of customer and staff perception.

Performance was also regularly reviewed within the service at management team, performance reviews with the service managers and the Head of Service, individual team meetings and monitored via 1-2-1 meetings with employees where appropriate.

The report went on to advise that in January 2017 the service completed a WLAM assessment. The overall score for the service improved from 400 in the 2011/13 cycle to 493 in 2014/17.

The service approach to performance management continued to mature and the service was able to present a good spread of indicators across the major domains at the Review Panel in March 2017. Overall feedback was positive and recognised the progress made.

The report also explained that the service submitted two performance frameworks to the Scottish Government on an annual basis, covering Building Standards and Planning. Both frameworks received positive comments from the Scottish Government.

It was noted that the Scottish Government re-appointed all Local Authorities as sole verifiers of building warrant applications and completion certificate submissions and that West Lothian was re-appointed for six years.

The report recommended that the committee:-

1. Note the contents of the report;
2. Provide feedback on service performance; and

### 3. Identify any recommendations for performance improvement

There then followed a number of questions in relation to various subjects including building warrants, decrease in enforcement numbers, complaints, and improvements that could be made to provide better customer feedback.

The committee was interested to know whether there was scope for West Lothian Planning Service to issue building warrants on behalf of other Local Authorities and were advised that while that position existed it was not implemented.

The Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration explained that the decrease in outstanding enforcement actions from 700 to 200 was due to a service review and more robust management. It was able then to focus on legacy cases, following which some were resolved, removed or dealt with in other ways. While the committee welcomed the decrease it was concerned at the scale of this decrease and requested the Head of Service to provide further detailed information.

While it was advised that the reasons for complaints related to delays, lack of communication, tone of discussions the committee requested a detailed sample of complaints to better understand the issues and how these could be resolved. The committee also recommended that the service continue to consider improvements that would provide better customer relations.

The committee agreed that a further update report on outcome and impact measures be brought back to a future meeting of the Performance Committee.

#### Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To provide additional information in relation to the decrease in enforcement actions.
3. To provide additional information in relation to complaints.
4. To report back to a future meeting of the Performance Committee.

### 4. SELF-ASSESSMENT 2017-20

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive providing findings of a review of the approach to self-assessment and improvement planning.

The report advised that self-assessment was an important part of the council's Improvement Strategy, encouraging innovation from within and positively engaging employees in service planning and improvement.

Self-assessment also contributed to the council's Best Value Framework ensuring that rigorous challenge of performance and continuous improvement was embedded at all levels of the organisation. Regular, programmed self-assessment was also an integral part of improvement planning and preparation for external inspection.

Following completion in 2016/17 of the three year programme of assessment the report set out findings from a review of the approach to self-assessment and detailed how the next corporate self-assessment programme would change.

The report went on to advise that self-assessment was an improvement process that required systematic and regular review of a service or organisation's activities and results against a standard model of business excellence. Used effectively it could drive performance improvement and provide the organisation with detailed management information of the relative strengths and capacity for delivering or improving performance in strategic outcomes.

The council had two programmes of self-assessment, one for services and a process for schools.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the council was one of the earliest adopters of self-assessment in Scottish local government. The approach taken was recognised in the sector as best practice and variations of the framework developed by the council, the West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM).

WLAM was used to assess the quality and cost effectiveness of council services provided to the community. It was based on European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model and provided a consistent structure around which performance and improvement in council services could be supported.

Over a three-year cycle every service would complete at least one assessment and attend the Review Panel that would assess the performance of the service, the level risk presented and future scrutiny. Services would also report to the Performance Committee on the outcome and findings from the WLAM process.

The report further advised that the self-assessment approach in the council was regularly challenged through external validation and accreditation programmes in the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard, Investors in People (IIP) framework and EFQM Recognised for Excellence.

On completion of the three year programme of self-assessment in council services excluding schools, a review of the process and framework was completed to assess if the arrangements remained fit for purpose.

The council was found to have a rigorous approach to self-assessment in both the corporate and schools programmes. They were supporting improvement in performance and had increased the quality of

management information available in relation to progress in services and schools.

Self-assessment also supported the council's Best Value Framework and contributed towards maintenance of a number of external standards and accreditations such as CSE, IIP, Investors in Young People (IYYP) and EFQM Recognised for Excellence that enhanced the reputation as a high performing, high achieving organisation.

An improvement may be to increase the opportunities for shared learning across the two distinct programmes of self-assessment in the council. Both had been externally recognised as robust and challenging for the areas of assessment and had enough shared characteristics to allow for a greater level of co-operation.

It was advised that over the next year a new corporate plan, financial and attainment strategies would emerge that would influence the scale of change and ambitions in the council for future years.

The council was able to increase the level and quality of internal scrutiny against the national trend of moving towards a "checklist" self-assessment approach.

In evaluating the options some assumptions were made regarding the future of self-assessment activity in council services based on the support it provided the council in meeting the requirements of Best Value characteristics.

Across local government, councils generally used one of the following self-assessment tools:-

1. WLAM/Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF)
2. PSIF checklist
3. How Good is our Council
4. EFQM Excellence Model

An evaluation of the options for the self-assessment programme and the decision on each option considered was set out as follows:-

Option 1 – Adopt the new version of WLAM/PSIF

Decision - Not to adopt the new version of WLAM/PSIF.

Option 2 – Adopt the PSIF Checklist

Decision - Not to adopt the PSIF Checklist.

Option 3 – Adopt another framework

Decision - Not to adopt another framework

Option 4 – Adopt EFQM Excellence Model

### Decision - To adopt the EFQM Excellence Model

The Depute Chief Executive advised that the adoption of the EFQM Model would mean that the council had a rigorous framework for self-assessment and improvement in place for the next three years.

As the previous framework was based on EFQM, the council had the skills and knowledge already in place to support this process and importantly, past scores and outcomes were still relevant and comparable. The self-assessment process would remain the same and would retain the name, West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM).

The new three year programme would now be developed and initiated with Performance Committee receiving the first reports from services in early 2018.

The report recommended that the committee note:-

1. The evaluation of the self-assessment approach undertaken by the council to date; and
2. The proposed self-assessment approach for the period 2017/18 to 2019/20.

The committee then asked a number of questions in relation to the Performance Committee Workplan and the three-year programme and the Covalent Performance Management System.

It was agreed that the workplan would be included on every agenda which would inform members which service would be presenting at each of the Performance Committee meetings in advance. It was also noted that members would be provided with a copy of the three-year workplan of performance assessments for information.

It was agreed that further training for members would be provided on the Covalent Performance Management System to assist with understanding performance indicators reports which would lead to greater scrutiny of the service and its performance.

### Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To include a copy of the workplan on each agenda and to circulate a copy of the three-year assessment plan.
3. To provide members with additional training on the Covalent Performance Management System.

## 5. COMPLAINT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2017/18

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated)

by the Depute Chief Executive providing the council's quarterly analysis of closed complaints in Quarter 1: 2017/18.

The committee was advised that the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) developed and published a model Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) on 28 March 2012. The model CHP was to ensure a standardised approach in dealing with customer complaints across the local authority sector. All local authorities were required to adopt the model CHP by 31 March 2013.

Table one provided the council's Corporate Complaint Performance break down for Quarter 1: 2017/18 complaints by category over a 5 years. The table showed that the current service level of complaint performance varied across the council and was linked to the complexity and quantity of complaints received. Operational Services and Housing, Customer and Building Services (HCBS) were the main complaint generators.

Further information was provided on the main complaint categories which were as follows:

- Standard of Service
- Policy
- Waiting Time
- Poor Communication
- Employee Attitude

The Depute Chief Executive explained that appendix 1 contained the council wide performance against the SPSO defined measures covering the period Quarter 1: 2017/18

The Corporate Complaint Steering Board identified 4 high level indicators that provided a summary of complaint handling performance and detailed as follows:-

- Total complaints received
- Complaints closed within 5 working days
- Complaints closed within 20 working days
- Complaints partly upheld/upheld

Table 2 provided a summary of service performance against these 4 key indicators while table 3 provided 2016/17 and 2017/18 service upheld/part-upheld complaint performance.

Table 4 provided indicative ratios for the number of complaints against the specific customer groups for Education Services, Housing, Customer and Building Services and Operational Services.

In conclusion the report advised that there had been a reduction in the number of complaints received when compared to the equivalent quarter in 2016/17. The decrease was partly attributable to a 40% reduction in complaints received by Operational Services in Quarter 1: 2017/18. It was expected that this service would continue to show a reduction in closed complaints across 2017/18 from the levels of the previous year.

It was recommended that the Performance Committee :-

1. Note the corporate and service complaint performance against the standards outlined in the council's complaint handling procedure; and
2. Continue to monitor complaint performance and request additional information from services as required.

In an answer to questions in relation to responses to customer's complaints it was explained that each complaint is investigated thoroughly and if it is in relation to an individual member of staff, that member of staff will be spoken to and if the complaint is in relation to a process failure, the process will be reviewed.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.