

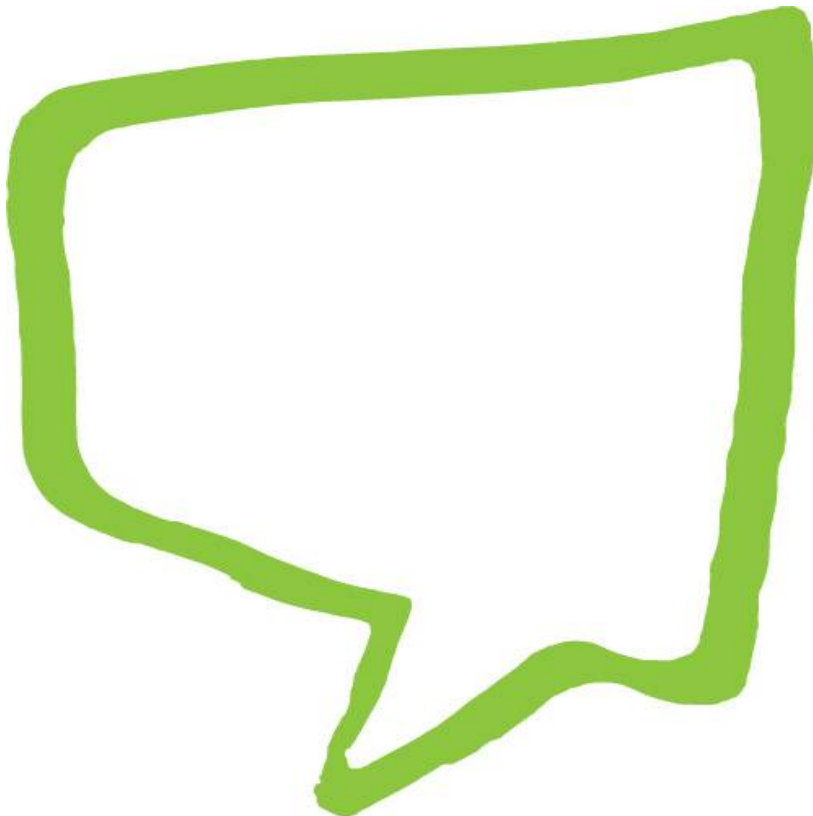
Performance Management

Follow up

Brent London Borough Council

Audit 2009/10

March 2010



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Introduction and background

Introduction

- 1 The Audit Commission carried out a performance management review in 2008. This looked at several areas of performance management and included a follow up of an earlier review of partnership working. This high-level review follows up on the recommendations made in the report on performance management and assesses what progress has been made in completing them.

Background.

- 2 The performance management review in 2008 focused on:
 - the clarity of the Council's priorities and the means by which they are translated into meaningful targets for officers;
 - the use of trend analysis and benchmarking;
 - the progress on providing the IT infrastructure to support the performance management framework;
 - officers' understanding and adherence to data protection principles; and
 - partnership performance management arrangements.
- 3 The previous review concluded that the Council's priorities were clear. It found that good use was being made of service plans and appraisal processes to support the delivery of Council priorities. Trend analysis and benchmarking was being used adequately to deliver service improvements in the specific service areas probed. Data protection principles were understood, addressed and the Council's arrangements for meeting Data Protection requirements were found to be adequate.
- 4 As part of the process of assessing performance management, the review considered how well the Council was using the findings of its staff surveys. The staff survey had raised several issues that the Council had responded to with an action plan. The review recommended regularly reporting the progress of this action plan to the Performance and Finance committee.
- 5 The previous review also found that good progress had been made to implement Performance Plus - the IT system used by the Council to support its performance management framework. However it found that some users, such as staff from Housing were spending more time than under the previous system, producing performance management reports. A recommendation was made to provide support for Housing staff to produce these reports.

- 6 The review also explored what progress had been made to implement a previous year's review of the performance management arrangements of partnerships. It found that while some work had taken place the recommendation to:
- develop a register of current partnerships and map the reporting and delegation arrangements for each partnership to ensure the Council has up-to-date information about its involvement in partnerships had not been sufficiently addressed. This led to a further recommendation to develop a process for keeping the partnership register up to date.

Objectives and audit approach

Objectives

- 7 The key objective of this review was to follow up on the recommendations made in the performance management report of 2008 which were to:
- regularly report progress against the staff survey 2007/08 action plan to Performance and Finance Committee;
 - provide support to housing staff to reduce the time taken to produce performance reports; and
 - develop a process that keeps the corporate partnership register up-to-date.
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Audit approach

- 8 The audit approach included:
- a review of relevant documentation; and
 - Interviews with key staff.

Main conclusions

- 9** Good progress has been made to implement all the recommendations of the previous review with specific actions taken to improve systems and processes. The staff survey action plan has been subject to review by the Performance and Finance Committee and senior managers have pledged to address issues raised by staff. The performance management system is fit for purpose. The IT system, Performance Plus, which supports the performance management system, has been updated to improve the user experience in relation to inputting data for housing staff. A clear system is in place to update the partnership register but further refinements are suggested to improve the accessibility of the register.
- 10** The recommendation to keep members informed about the results of the staff attitude survey has been met. Progress against the 2007/08 staff survey action plan was presented to the Performance and Finance Committee in February 2009. The report to members outlined the actions taken which covered health and safety, working conditions, communication and leadership, change management, bullying and harassment, work-life balance, professional development and appraisal. The report highlighted improvements achieved.
- 11** The 2008/09 survey results were presented to the Performance and Finance Committee in September 2009. The report presented highlighted the main findings and provides some comparisons with results from the 2007/08 survey. In response to concerns about whether the findings of staff survey will be addressed, the Council has produced a pledge statement which identifies the issue of concern and what action is being taken to address this. The involvement of Members in monitoring progress in addressing the issues raised in the staff attitude survey, encourages service areas to address areas of concern and improve the experience of staff.
- 12** Some progress has been made to implement the recommendation to provide support to housing staff. This is to reduce the time taken to produce performance reports. Improvements have been made to the functionality of Performance Plus such as the introduction of a new front page with hyperlinks to the relevant sections. This has resulted in increased user satisfaction among Housing users and increased the speed at which information is loaded on to the system.
- 13** While there have been improvements to the functionality to enter data, the reports that Performance Plus produces do not fully meet the requirements of housing department users. This means the information in the Performance Plus reports still have to be transferred into a word document to better meet the needs of housing managers. The reporting limitations of Performance Plus for housing have been fed back to the supplier. The Council expects a more updated version of the package from the supplier to be available shortly which is hoped will mean more user- friendly reports produced resulting in improved efficiency.
- 14** Progress has been made to implement the recommendation to develop a process that keeps the corporate partnership register up-to-date. A clear process is now in place to update the partnership register. This takes place annually by a policy officer in the policy team. This process is set out in the Partnership Working Guidance document.

Main conclusions

- 15** However one area of inconsistency is in relation to partners' ability to access the register. The Partnership Working Guidance document says that the register is an on-line access point for basic information about the borough's partnerships. The document says that the register can be viewed by partners. However currently the register is not directly accessible to partners although the LSP has been told about its existence and can access the register by requesting it from the policy team. One of the functions of the register is to allow the Local Public Services Board (LPSB) to monitor and evaluate Partners for Brent involvement in partnership working and identify potential risks. Given this, the Council should consider providing additional alternative forms of access for LSP members.

Recommendation

- R1** Make available partnership information on-line as outlined in the partnership working guidance.

Appendix 1 – Action plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
7	R1 Make available partnership information on-line as outlined in the partnership working guidance	2	Cathy Tyson	Yes	Will incorporate information on partnership sub groups and related activity on LSP website.	May 2010

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