

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE REPORTING POLICY



Reviewed July 2014

Introduction

Managing our performance and reporting our results is a necessary and important requirement. We need to let the public know what we are doing. As managers we need reliable and accurate performance information if we are to improve our service. The main challenge for public performance reporting (PPR) is to provide a balanced view of performance, which is accessible by the specific audience i.e. councillors, managers, public bodies, partners, the public and others.

Aims and Objectives

Moray 2023 – A Plan for the Future and Corporate Plan, set the strategic direction of what should be reflected in a PPR. On an operational basis, Service Plans will have identified priority areas for reporting.

Public performance reports will –

- Provide an honest, balanced account of performance
- Identify key stakeholders
- Meet stakeholders' information needs
- Engage stakeholders in the improvement process
- Align with identified key aims/objectives/or service improvement targets
- Be published at times and in ways that suit stakeholder preferences as well as our own
- Be justified in terms of the balance between relevance, quality and cost

The PPR will report on the Council's priorities, providing information in ways that encourage the target audience to participate in the decision making process and contribute to the development of service improvement.

Performance Management Framework

Within the Performance Management Framework, services are responsible for reporting against priorities within:

- Moray 2023 – A Plan for the Future
- Corporate Plan
- Service Plan

There is already a requirement to prepare a:

- Community Plan Annual Report
- Annual Financial Statement Report
- Corporate Plan Public Performance Report
- Educational Service Standards and Quality Report
- Local Government Benchmarking Framework Overview Report

However annual reports on Service / Team Plans will help us provide a balanced view of all our performance.

How to get started?

Service Managers should be aware of what information or reports are already published. There are some good examples of reporting performance within services such as articles in the Tenants' Voice newsletter, committee reports on performance and general newspaper articles. These illustrate the point that Public Performance Reports do not have to be annual glossy documents. It is essential that Services understand their audiences' requirements, as this will influence the content, style, frequency and format of the PPR. Any report, which provides feedback to a target audience on performance is part of PPR.

What to report?

PPR is not about publishing local or national data simply because it is available or publishing the best or worst result. It is about providing a balanced picture of how the Council is performing in a manner, which the target audience can understand.

When priorities have been established, data collection, monitoring and review processes should be agreed at an early stage. Services should agree the detail of what to report in line with the Council's priorities and in response to stakeholders' views. This provides a demonstrable performance audit trail.

Clear links should be made to long and short-term service policies, objectives, targets, milestones and standards. In addition to reporting on achievements where improvements have not been wholly successful an explanation should be provided.

Background information can be as important as publishing the performance information itself to give people a more rounded and balanced picture of how services are performing.

How to report?

The Council is accountable to a wide variety of stakeholders who represent a range of diverse interests. It is not necessary or realistic to provide performance information specific to every community and every individual. However the needs of key stakeholders should be assessed to ascertain how these might be best served by reporting in different formats.

- Leaflets can provide service delivery and performance information directly to service users.
- Annual reports can be provided to other public bodies and partners.
- Newspaper articles could report on performance for the general public.
- Service newsletters provide access to target audiences.

- Committee reports provide senior officers and Elected Members with detailed information for scrutinising performance.
- Posters can give a snap shot view of performance on a specific area and be displayed at service delivery points.

In addition to translation services information should be available in formats that enable us to comply with our commitment to diversity and equal opportunities.

When to report?

Services should consider when their audience is likely to be most interested in performance information or when it most relevant. For example, the timing of publications may be more important for some areas such as:

- Attainment figures for parents
- Winter maintenance figures for the public
- Council tax collection rates to tax payers

In other cases the timing is not as critical to the audience such as:

- Outcomes from Plan or Strategies
- Library book figures
- Staff absence rates

Knowing when the information will be most valuable to your target audience will influence your publication dates.

What should a Public Performance Report look like?

As a minimum a PPR should –

- Contain the information people need and want to know.
- Describe how information was collected.
- Ensure information is accurate and as up to date as possible.
- Be written in plain language and in a tone and style, which is easy to understand and digest.
- In its presentation consider the needs of people from socially excluded and underrepresented groups.
- Use simple charts, diagrams, illustrations and symbols to convey statistical information.
- Have additional comments on the performance information and the issues that impact upon the level of performance achieved.
- Give sufficient information to enable stakeholders to make informed comparisons on performance achieved in different years and/or with other organisations.
- Indicate how, and where, further information can be obtained.

Resources

PPR will be an integral part of Council work. At the planning stage it is essential to ensure that staff time or resources are not wasted and that a balance is struck between cost of collection and quality of information provided. Senior Managers have received training through the Management Development Programme. The Research and Information Officers receive regular training to ensure that they are able to support Senior Managers in their role of measuring and monitoring their services' performance. The Public Performance and Reporting Officer is responsible for the planning, preparation and publication of Public Performance Reports.

Legal Requirements

There are two main paragraphs within the guidance on Best Value associated with the Local Government Act 2003.

“A local authority, which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate accountability through the use of public performance reporting, so that stakeholders are told what quality of service is being delivered and what they can expect in the future”.

“It is the duty of a local authority to make arrangements for the reporting to the public of the outcome of the performance of its functions. It is for the local authority to determine the form, content and frequency of and time limits for reports, to who they are to be given and by what means they are to be published or made available to members of the public”.

Quality Improvement, Monitoring and Evaluation

Service Managers should review their approach regularly, ensure that all service areas are covered and, reflect stakeholder needs. In summary:

1. Service should explore different ways of publishing performance information to different audiences.
2. Performance measures should be adjusted to ensure they are still fit for purpose.
3. Feedback following publication of the PPRs may provide service managers with information to review service delivery.

Further information, if required, can be obtained by contacting the Council's Corporate Policy Unit.