

A Review of Performance Monitoring and Reporting in Hillingdon Council



A review by the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee

Councillors on the Committee: Councillors Richard Mills (Chairman), Vanessa Hurhangee (Vice Chairman), Tony Eginton (Opposition Lead), Lindsay Bliss, Farhad Choubedar, Ray Graham, Richard Lewis

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Contents

	Page
Chairman's Foreword	3
Summary of recommendations to Cabinet	4
Background to the review	5 - 6
Evidence and witness testimony	7 - 14
The Committee's Findings	15 - 18
About the Review – witnesses and activity	19 - 20
References	20
Appendices	20

Chairman's Foreword

'A Review of Performance Monitoring and Reporting in Hillingdon Council'

On behalf of the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee, I am pleased to present this report to Cabinet. Having identified a need to explore possible improvements to current data monitoring and reporting processes, the Select Committee elected to conduct a comprehensive review of Performance Monitoring and Reporting within Hillingdon Council. The review aimed to consider the status quo and suggest potential areas for future improvements.



Two witness sessions were held during which Committee Members had the opportunity to meet with a wide range of senior Council officers and seek external expertise. As the review progressed it was widely acknowledged that the current Business Performance Team consistently strove for excellence in data and provided a supportive service both to the Central Management Team and to senior officers. However, the Committee highlighted some potential modifications and improvements, which it was believed would be of benefit in terms of performance reporting to key decision-makers going forward.

Further to the witness sessions, and on completion of the review, the Committee has prepared a number of recommendations relating to performance reporting, culture and innovation.

It is anticipated that the implementation of these recommendations will ensure the provision of user-friendly, timely, reliable and cost-effective performance monitoring and reporting systems across the Council, which will in turn assist in measuring Council performance, driving strategic decisions and meeting the needs of local residents.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those witnesses and officers who have given up their time to assist the Committee and commend them for their continued hard work in striving to ensure the provision of excellent performance monitoring and reporting processes in Hillingdon Council.

Councillor Richard Mills

Chairman, Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee

Councillor for Brunel Ward

Summary of recommendations to Cabinet

Through the witnesses and evidence received during the detailed review by the Committee, Members have agreed the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1

Performance Reporting

That the Business Performance Team and Service areas take into account the varying target audiences and organisational hierarchy for their performance reporting, thereby ensuring that performance outputs and information are presented in a relevant, user-friendly visual format for:

- a. Cabinet – That service heads / directors, in conjunction with respective Cabinet Members, be requested to review the current use of data within their areas during 2022 – either for reporting purposes or to identify performance issues, considering regular monthly or quarterly performance updates to Cabinet Members;
- b. Select Committees – That from May 2022, subsequent to recommendation 1a. above, Select Committees also be presented with regular high-level quarterly performance updates regarding services within their remit / terms of reference, and that this be added to their multi-year work programmes;
- c. Corporate Management Team (CMT) – That Cabinet Members have input into the metrics presented to CMT through the quarterly Balanced Scorecard performance reporting to ensure they are able to measure overall Council performance and drive strategic decisions. Weekly and monthly dashboards should continue for Operational Heads, but should be visible and reviewed in conjunction with the Leader/relevant Cabinet Members.

2

Performance Culture

That awareness and understanding of the importance of data quality and of the services provided by the Business Performance Team be communicated comprehensively across Council departments during 2022, considering the use of manager briefings, toolkits or other online internal information.

3

Performance Innovation

That Corporate Procurement explore appropriate external software / systems during 2022, in conjunction with the Business Performance Team, that could be implemented or integrated to deliver tangible and cost-effective benefits. Particular focus should be placed on looking to assist the move away from traditional manual data manipulation to greater data automation, along with the availability of live data to decision-makers.

Background to the Review

What is Performance Monitoring and why is it important?

According to the Local Government Association's 'Performance Management Councillor Workbook' 2012¹, the monitoring of performance within a local authority is essential to establish "practical ways that a council can improve what it does and, more importantly, what it delivers, in terms of good quality services that meet the needs of local people". Moreover, the LGA affirms that Performance Monitoring is indispensable since "The ability to manage the performance of a council is critical to its success. It enables members and officers to assess whether the organisation is achieving what it set out to do, delivering VFM [*value for money*] and making life better for its citizens." Additionally, effective Performance Monitoring is essential to good governance, scrutiny and monitoring of Council services by Elected Members.

Background

The Council currently delivers over 700 services to the 100,214 households that comprise the London Borough of Hillingdon and gathers a wide spectrum of data across all directorates. The primary purpose of this data collection is to ensure that services are being delivered in the most effective and efficient manner to meet resident need. Additionally, such data assists in planning for the future development of services – ensuring that, as the Borough changes, the Council's services are agile enough to respond. Finally, there is a requirement to satisfy certain statutory returns which include the annual collection of Council data by Central Government.

Given the voluminous nature of the data gathered and the different purposes for which it is used, the Council has at its disposal a variety of mechanisms to gather, process and 'make sense of the data' from the use of basic spreadsheets through to more bespoke databases and data mining software. Data is used both for 'performance' (assessing the efficacy of services and impact on outcomes) and 'insight' (what the data tells the Council about the Borough and local residents).

Data gathered by directorates and the Business Performance Team is sourced from internal systems and through public and subscription-based services. The data collected is utilised to develop Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports and for insight analysis to commission services. Some KPIs are nationally mandated; where appropriate, national indicators are supplemented with local indicators to reflect local priorities.

The Council utilises a corporate function, through the Business Performance & Insight Team, for the production and development of data and insight with members of the team having expertise across multiple areas of the Council's business. This approach ensures improved transparency and facilitates an opportunity to 'challenge' services – something which might not be possible if

¹ Local Government Association - Performance Management Councillor Workbook, March 2012

services produced/processed their own data.

Services are responsible for inputting data into case management systems, while Business Performance extracts the data and, in conjunction with Directors, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service, develops the suite of reports (operational and strategic) necessary for the services to carry out their business.

Performance reports are built to track performance, so key to this is the inclusion of targets and an associated 'traffic-light system'. The latter rates each metric against a threshold with indicators that are off target flagged as red. Thereafter, relevant Heads of Service are given an opportunity to outline mitigating factors and plans for remedial action; the outcomes of which are reported in subsequent months.

Whilst Hillingdon is required to gather data for the purposes of statutory returns, the primary purpose of data collection is to ensure the Council is appropriately discharging its responsibilities and to aid future service development.

Strategic context

The use of data and insight in local government has received increasing focus in recent years. The Cabinet Office's National Data Strategy ² is "an ambitious, pro-growth strategy that drives the UK in building a world-leading data economy while ensuring public trust in data use." This Strategy sets out the Government's ambition to improve data use in government to boost productivity, create new areas of economic growth, improve delivery of local services and position the UK as the forerunner in public service innovation. The Greater London Authority (GLA)'s work around the City Data Analytics Programme ³ follows similar principles. Using its position as a city-wide resource, the GLA seeks to encourage cross border collaboration to address issues that transcend boundaries (e.g., climate change). Finally, the Local Government Association (LGA) runs a series of programmes including 'becoming an intelligent council' which explores how councils can better run research exercises (quantitative and qualitative) and use these to shape service delivery ⁴

² National Data Strategy [here](#) – Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – published 8 July 2019

³ Greater London Authority – City Data Analytics Programme 2017 [here](#)

⁴ Local Government Association – Becoming an Intelligent Council – from July 2017 [here](#).

Evidence & Witness Testimony

Where are we now?

Prior to commencement of the review, Members of the Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee had received a report detailing current arrangements for the tracking of performance and provision of insight data in the Council, examples of the data provided and ways in which the data was used to shape operational delivery and the strategic development of services. Further to this, having recognised the essential nature of data in facilitating decision-making, identifying and rectifying problems, meeting political objectives and striving for excellence in a performance-driven culture, Members elected to conduct a major review of Business Performance Monitoring and Reporting within Hillingdon Council.

The role of the Business Performance and Insight Team

At the onset of the review, an initial witness session was held which was attended by Naveed Mohammed, Head of Business Performance and Insight. At this witness session, the Committee received evidence detailing how the tracking of performance and provision of insight data were arranged in the Council and ways in which the data was used to shape operational delivery and the strategic development of services.

Members were informed that the Council routinely gathered a wide spectrum of data across all directorates – this data was essential to ensure services were being delivered efficiently to meet the needs of residents, to assist in planning for the future development of services and to satisfy statutory returns. It was confirmed that the Council currently provided over 700 services to local residents and had opted to bring together the performance resource into a central team. This approach was beneficial as it facilitated a better use of resources with members of the corporate team having expertise across multiple areas of the Council's business.

The Committee heard that individual service areas were responsible for the input and management of their own data while Business Performance extracted the data and developed the required reports thereafter. Decisions regarding the organisation of the data / report designs were made collaboratively by the Business Performance Team and IT. The level of support individual directorates received was dependent on 3 factors – risk, size of the area and volume of activity. It was confirmed that Children's Care, Housing and Adult Social Care were high-risk departments therefore had a dedicated resource whilst, for other departments, each analyst had responsibility for 2+ areas. This arrangement ensured sufficient coverage of analytical support whilst enabling analysts to develop understanding and expertise across multiple functions.

Members were advised that operational outputs also varied depending on the needs of the service areas. For statutory, high-risk services such as Children's Care, Housing and Adult Social Care there was a requirement for regular weekly / monthly data. In terms of reporting to the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT), comprising the Council's most senior officers, it was

confirmed that CMT worked closely with the Business Performance Team to establish their requirements and were in receipt of quarterly reports in the form of a Balanced Scorecard. This report tracked performance and included targets and a 'traffic-light system' with indicators off target flagged as red.

In addition to performance data, it was confirmed that the Business Performance Team was responsible for the analysis of data to establish patterns and trends. Such information was crucial when planning for strategic changes or service redesign. Moreover, the service supported individual projects with ad hoc analyses as required.

Members heard that the Business Performance Team conducted an overview of their reporting every year or two to ensure the reports produced were still relevant and useful. However, it was acknowledged that some reports were automated and would therefore be regularly circulated irrespective of their usefulness to service areas.

Data culture

Members requested further information regarding the current data culture across the Council and were informed that there were some areas of very good practice whilst, in other areas, it was considered that there was room for improvement. Service areas were responsible for inputting their own data and it was beneficial to these service areas to ensure its accuracy.

Benchmarking

In response to the Committee's requests for clarification regarding current benchmarking, it was confirmed that benchmarking was routinely undertaken. Benchmarking groups were dependent on the service area at hand – so for instance, education, social care, libraries each had a different set of councils that LBH was benchmarked against. Routinely LBH performance would be assessed against the London average and our immediate neighbours. It was confirmed that the Business Performance Team had a good working relationship with the service areas and weekly meetings were held with service heads at which benchmarking issues could be raised and discussed further as necessary.

Current data tools used

In response to their queries, Select Committee Members were advised that the main tools used by the Business Performance Team at present were SAP Business Objects XI (BOXI) and Microsoft Excel. BOXI was used to interrogate the data captured by the service areas while Excel enabled officers to analyse and present the data in a clear format for end users. Other bespoke systems were also used across specific areas.

The Committee was informed that alternative options in terms of data tools to extract the data were currently being explored; one option was Power BI which was a Microsoft product – it was reported that this was a very good product and would be explored, alongside others, depending on the needs of the business.

How data is currently used in services

A second witness session was attended by a number of key officers representing departments from across the Council. Members received evidence from representatives of key users of data including Housing, Adults' and Children's Services, Waste Services and Community Safety and Enforcement.

Children's Services

Alex Coman, Director – Safeguarding, Partnerships and QA, addressed the Committee advising Members that, in Children's Services, data was used both to look at performance retrospectively and to predict future demand on services and resources. There were statutory requirements to report the data nationally, share data locally and Pan-London and benchmark Hillingdon against other boroughs. Additionally, data was used for specific projects; for example, to respond to specific pressures on the service. It was confirmed that data received by the Department was not currently in the most user-friendly format (largely static PDFs or large Excel files) and had to be manipulated manually which was a somewhat onerous and time-consuming task. In terms of future projections, Children's Services worked with the Business Performance and Insight Team to establish trends; the Performance Team then manually produced predictive models on an ad hoc basis. It was reported that it would be helpful if data could be received in a more user-friendly format whereby users could have control of the data themselves thus negating the need to request manual ad hoc reports. Members were informed that the Children's Services Team regularly received automated reports which were extremely helpful; however, weekly reports were run on a Sunday hence, as the week progressed, the data became increasingly out-of-date – it was acknowledged that access to 'live' data would be preferable.

In response to Members' queries regarding data accuracy, the Committee was informed that weekly, monthly and statutory reports were regularly spot checked by officers in Children's Services. In terms of ad hoc reporting, officers relied on their colleagues in the Performance Team to ensure the accuracy of the data. Any anomalies would be discussed and ironed out between the two departments. It was confirmed that data was extracted by Business Objects and manipulated in Excel spreadsheets due to a lack of availability of more up-to-date tools.

Adult Services

Kate Kelly-Talbot, Director of Service Delivery - Adult Social Work, addressed the Committee confirming that, in Adult Services, much of the reporting was statutory and a secure case management system was utilised to store data. The Business Performance and Insight Team extracted the data and weekly, fortnightly and monthly reports were received on statutory operations. Bespoke dashboard style reports were also prepared for Adult Services. It was felt that all the required information was available to officers but was not currently presented in a user-friendly format; the dashboard could bring the information together, but this involved a lengthy manual exercise. Access to live data was limited hence data available to officers was, at times, potentially older. The Committee was advised that ad hoc reports were also prepared in

collaboration with The Business Performance and Insight Team as required.

In terms of data use, it was confirmed that a wide range of statutory returns were completed by Adult Services. Data was also used for benchmarking, to assist managers in managing their teams and, at Head of Service level, to allocate resources. It was reported that the data was used across the team to drive practice and performance. KPIs were analysed on the basis of individual members of staff / groups and a range of management metrics were included in appraisals and performance reviews. Members heard that reporting was regularly reviewed to ensure reports prepared / received were still relevant and of use.

Housing

Rod Smith, Head of Housing and Tenancy Management, addressed the Committee confirming that the Council's landlord service managed approximately 13,300 properties with a rent roll of about £64m a year and service charges of some £1.6m. The service dealt with the end-to-end management of tenancies and was regulated by the Social Housing Regulator hence statutory returns were a necessity.

Members were informed that data was used both operationally and strategically. Operationally, weekly and monthly automated reports were produced to support the delivery of KPIs and to assist in managing the workforce. Members heard that, at the height of the pandemic, weekly data sets had been developed in collaboration with the Business Performance team to enable staff to target bandings of debt and high-risk tenants. It was reported that this data set had been vital in supporting the stabilisation of the debt and recovery work thereafter. In terms of empty property management, the Committee was advised that work had been undertaken with the Business Performance and Insight team to produce a visual representation of the end-to-end void process, thereby enabling officers to identify bottle necks and monitor performance / resource issues.

At strategic level, the Committee was informed that reporting was of a more bespoke nature and there was a reliance on the Business Performance and Insight Team to produce what was needed. It was reported that the Team was extremely knowledgeable and supportive; however, a digital self-service approach would be welcomed thereby negating the need for over-reliance on Naveed and his colleagues.

Waste Services

Cathy Knubley, Head of Waste, addressed the Committee informing Members that, in her service area, most targets were based in legislation under the Mayor of London's office or Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). Much of the data came from outside the Council and was based on tonnages and waste room. Members were advised that, each month, the team input data into the Defra waste data flow analysis which compared Hillingdon to all other Councils nationally in terms of recycling percentages. The Head of Waste prepared a monthly report for the Cabinet Member which incorporated a large amount of data and statistical information. MTFE was regularly analysed to ensure the department was on track for 2021/22

savings and KPIs were submitted to the Business Performance and Insight Team every quarter.

In response to Members' enquiries, it was confirmed that, at present, data for the CMT Balanced Scorecard report was input manually into a spreadsheet on a quarterly basis. It was noted that it would be preferable if the information were automatically populated from source data, but it was recognised that this was not a straightforward process.

Community Safety and Enforcement

Richard Dawson, the former Interim Head of Community Safety and Enforcement, addressed the Committee confirming that, for his area, the main source of data related to antisocial behaviour. Members were informed that the team was in the process of moving to a new case management system as they did not currently have access to the level of data needed. It was confirmed that the team already had access to a real-time dashboard and strategic information on past performance; however, they were unable to view details of the journey of each case and this was holding the team back operationally. Members heard that the Community Safety team was relatively self-sufficient, but Business Performance was helpful in providing trend information.

In response to further questions from Members, it was confirmed that some of the concerns relating to Anti-social Behaviour and Environment (ASBET) which had been raised in a recent internal audit had been linked to problems with the case management system. The Community Safety and Enforcement Team was now using an alternative system; however, this was not a case management system and further improvements were still required to improve the richness of the data and encompass every aspect of a case from start to finish. An improved case management system would resolve these challenges and provide managers with greater oversight. It was confirmed that the new case management system would go live at the end of the year and would provide all the required information – a bridging system was in use at present.

Reporting to decision-makers

Engagement with Corporate Directors and Cabinet Members

All Heads of Service were requested to clarify their upward reporting and engagement with Corporate Directors and the relevant Cabinet Member(s). It was confirmed that, for Children's Services, reporting of performance against KPIs was produced on a monthly basis. Performance against the MPFF was also reported and reviewed regularly. Members heard that Children's Services were held to account by Cabinet Members on a quarterly basis. A bespoke report was produced which set out the journey of the child, education data, SEND information etc and a quarterly meeting was held with the relevant Cabinet Members, the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors.

In the case of Waste Services, it was confirmed that monthly meetings were held with the Director and the Cabinet Member. There was also high scrutiny in conjunction with the Financial Team to ensure MPFF targets were met.

Members were informed that the CMT report was vital in the context of upward reporting. The

Business Performance and Insight Team worked in collaboration with Directors to determine which indicators would be reported to CMT on a quarterly basis. There were some 97 indicators which were RAG (Red, Amber, Green) depending on the direction of travel. Subsequent reports would pick up changes and remedial action could be taken to address underperformance as necessary.

CMT Balanced Scorecard

In terms of the CMT Balanced Scorecard, the Head of Business Performance and Insight addressed the Committee confirming that:

1. All Members of the Corporate Management Team (Directors) attended CMT meetings chaired by the Chief Executive;
2. Prior to the meetings, Naveed Mohammed (Head of Business Performance and Insight) and Alison Coote (Senior Business Analyst) liaised closely with the Heads of Service and Directors to pull the narrative together. The Balanced Scorecard was presented by the Head of Business Performance and Insight as a collective piece and included information across all service areas. Part of the presentation focussed on exception reporting in relation to indicators that were red – this set out the context and the story behind the figures, trends, what services were doing to remedy the matter and when it was hoped that the situation would improve;
3. Data was presented to CMT within 3 or 4 weeks of quarter end;
4. Measures were determined in conjunction with Directors on the basis of what was important for individual services. These measures were reviewed annually; however, there was room for flexibility and they could be reviewed more regularly dependent on need.
5. Metrics were drawn from the full spectrum of key services – Finance, Building Services, Procurement, Recycling, Repairs etc. In terms of annual reviews of metrics to be reported on, Members heard that this was determined by means of a collaborative exercise within CMT. The Chief Executive would also be consulted on this.

Members heard that the current quarterly reporting frequency to CMT appeared to be working well. Each Balanced Scorecard was reviewed regularly and updated by individual service areas. It was noted that KPIs were additionally produced on a weekly and monthly cycle and seen by service managers and heads. Moreover, information could be requested on an ad hoc basis to support the needs of services.

Performance reporting to the overview and scrutiny function

In terms of performance reporting to the Select Committees, Members noted that this was currently somewhat limited in that performance updates were provided to Select Committees on an ad hoc basis at the request of the appropriate Committee. There was no regular reporting structure in place at present to ensure Select Committees were appraised of all updates relating to service areas within their remit / terms of reference.

Review of performance reporting and best practices

External advice

At one of the Committee's witness sessions, testimony was received from James Wigley, Managing Director – Key Intelligence UK. It was confirmed that Key Intelligence UK provided technical assistance when performance teams found that the toolkit they were using to extract data from their client management systems (CMS) to present as a story was limiting them in some way. Members heard that the providers of CMS often supplied a data warehouse to translate the heavily technical data into a slightly more digestible format. The tool Business Objects was then used by performance teams to interrogate the database and produce data set reports. Finally, the data would be presented using Excel charts, narrative reports, tables etc. It was clarified that there was a limitation in the way warehouses had been designed hence they were good at extracting the data but not adept at finessing it. In the case of Hillingdon, a short-term capacity issue had been identified around reporting following the implementation of the Stronger Families Programme. Key Intelligence UK had been called in to assist with the urgent development of new reports and to provide a wider overview of social care reporting.

In response to their enquiries, Members heard that, compared to other London boroughs, Hillingdon had a smaller sized performance team with a strong knowledge of databases and business processes. However, it was recognised that some other boroughs had access to more technical support, either provided externally or through inhouse inbuilt SQL development skills to speed up the process of getting the data. This enabled performance teams to focus more on presentation, distribution of the data and analysis. It was confirmed that this supplementary level of support could be achieved in a number of ways; either at service area level with additional data officers working on data quality or by means of higher-level technical skill within the performance team to focus on SQL type work. It was further confirmed that, given a stronger data warehouse and SQLs, Hillingdon had the skillset to tell the story effectively. Members were advised that the Business Performance Team had a thorough and nuanced understanding of the service areas and of the Borough itself therefore were well placed to spot anomalies in the data.

The future in terms of data collection, use and reporting

Members heard that the Council now appeared to be in a good position to make a step change; once officers had access to the required tools and the data had been lined up correctly, the Business Performance Team would be well placed to perform more analysis of the data and tell the detailed story with less requirement to focus on data production and checking. The Committee learnt that, at the forefront of this change was the use of technology; there was an acceptance that LBH was now behind the curve both in relation to other local government and wider public sector peers. Initiatives being considered included the adoption of better tools such as Power BI that would facilitate key improvements including the following:

- Encouraging service ownership of data;

- Improvements in data visualisation and presentation to target audiences to make it easier to understand;
- The production and development of more intuitive data products; moving away from the current practice of static PDF and Excel documents thereby improving usability;
- Providing more timely information including, in some areas, real-time data (so decisions were based on the most current available data set);
- Improving data quality;
- Improving the capacity of the Council to overlay multiple datasets to understand patterns and co-dependencies (at present analysis was very much silo-based and any attempts to 'mash' data together a manual exercise); and
- Whilst not an immediate improvement – tools such as Power BI could help the Council make its first steps towards using data for predictive analytics. The Committee was informed that alternative options in terms of data tools to extract the data were currently being explored including, for instance Power BI.

The Committee's Findings

General conclusions

Performance Reporting

Having received detailed and comprehensive testimony from a variety of witnesses representing key departments across the Council, the Committee was pleased to note that a vast quantity of data was currently being collated across a wide range of services. Members observed that some services areas had made significant progress in utilising performance data to assist them with service monitoring and delivery and this was to be welcomed. Nevertheless, the Committee concluded that it was not always entirely clear how effectively the data was being used, analysed and reported across all services at present. The evidence received clearly demonstrated that there was undoubtedly scope for improvement in some areas and an exigency to work towards a more comprehensive and established regime of performance monitoring across the Council.

In addition to the above, having reviewed the evidence received in totality, Members concluded that there was an evident need for a consistent level of data reporting to key decision-makers; namely CMT, Cabinet Members and Select Committees, noting that Select Committees did not at present routinely receive regular high-level performance updates regarding services within their remit / terms of reference. Moreover, Members felt it essential that all data be presented in a visually comprehensible and user-friendly format with due consideration given to varying target audiences.

In respect of the CMT quarterly Balanced Scorecard, Members commented that this was a valuable reporting mechanism which was regularly reviewed and updated within service areas. The frequency of the Balanced Scorecard reporting was deemed appropriate; however, it was felt that it would be beneficial if Cabinet Members were able to have input into the metrics presented to CMT through the Balanced Scorecard to ensure the metrics could measure overall Council performance and drive strategic decisions.

Performance Culture

Through the evidence received, the Committee observed that teams / departments across the Council were not consistently au fait with the services provided by the Business Performance Team. Moreover, it was noted that, in terms of data quality, there were some areas of excellent practice whilst, in other areas, there appeared to be scope for improvement. In view of this, it was felt that service ownership of data was to be encouraged.

Members opined that a business performance structure incorporating a central team was to be welcomed. However, it was noted that there was scope for further improvement in relation to the level of awareness and understanding of data within the Council as a whole and how it could be used across the organisation. It was acknowledged that upskilling within the various departments across the Council to facilitate data / management information production within service areas would be extremely beneficial and was to be welcomed.

Performance Innovation

As the review progressed, Members noted that it would be helpful if data could be received in a more user-friendly format whereby users could have control of the data themselves thereby negating the need to rely on manual ad hoc reports produced by the Business Performance Team. Additionally, the Committee observed that automated reports were helpful in assisting with decision-making but rapidly became out-of-date. The ability to provide more timely information and, where possible, access to 'live' real-time data would be far preferable to enable decisions to be made based on the most current available data set. Moreover, it was noted that, at present, data for the CMT Balanced Scorecard report was input manually into a spreadsheet on a quarterly basis; the information would ideally be automatically populated from source data.

In respect of data innovation, the Committee believed that the Council was now in a good position to make a change; once officers had access to the required tools and the data had been organised correctly, the Business Performance & Insight Team would be well placed to perform more analysis of the data and tell the detailed story rather than focusing on data production and checking. Members recognised that Hillingdon was at present a little behind the curve in terms of relevant technology. It was considered that the adoption of better tools such as Power BI would facilitate key improvements and assist the Council in taking its first steps towards using data for predictive analytics. The Committee noted the need for the production and development of more intuitive data products; moving away from the current practice of static PDF and Excel documents thereby improving usability and encouraging automation.

The Committee's recommendations to Cabinet

Having conducted a thorough review of the status quo and having considered where the Council needed to be in respect of performance monitoring and reporting, Members were minded to propose a number of recommendations in relation to the review. It had been noted that there were improvements to be made in respect of the format and presentation of current reporting thereby ensuring its relevance and user-friendliness. Moreover, it had been observed that some reports were produced routinely but it was unclear whether they were still relevant and of use. It was therefore suggested that service heads and directors, in conjunction with Cabinet Members, be requested to conduct a thorough review of the current use of data within their areas.

In addition to the above, the Committee noted that Select Committees did not currently routinely receive regular high-level quarterly updates regarding services within their remit. It was felt that this would be highly beneficial to fully fulfil their statutory monitoring role, hence Members requested that this requirement be included in the recommendations further to the review.

Finally, with regards to reporting to CMT, the Committee held the view that Cabinet Members should be encouraged to have input into the metrics presented to CMT through the Balanced Scorecard to ensure they measured overall Council performance and drove strategic decisions appropriately.

On that basis, it is recommended that:

1

Performance Reporting

That the Business Performance Team and Service areas take into account the varying target audiences and organisational hierarchy for their performance reporting, thereby ensuring that performance outputs and information are presented in a relevant, user-friendly visual format for:

- a. **Cabinet – That service heads / directors, in conjunction with respective Cabinet Members, be requested to review the current use of data within their areas during 2022 – either for reporting purposes or to identify performance issues, considering regular monthly or quarterly performance updates to Cabinet Members;**
- b. **Select Committees – That from May 2022, subsequent to recommendation 1a. above, Select Committees also be presented with regular high-level quarterly performance updates regarding services within their remit / terms of reference, and that this be added to their multi-year work programmes;**
- c. **Corporate Management Team (CMT) – That Cabinet Members have input into the metrics presented to CMT through the quarterly Balanced Scorecard performance reporting to ensure they are able to measure overall Council performance and drive strategic decisions. Weekly and monthly dashboards should continue for Operational Heads but should be visible and reviewed in conjunction with the Leader/relevant Cabinet Members.**

In terms of Performance culture, the Select Committee observed that, within the Council, some service areas appeared to lack a thorough understanding of the role and remit of the Business Performance and Insight Team. Additionally, it was felt that the importance of exemplary data quality was not routinely prioritised sufficiently. With this in mind, Members recommended that the central Business Performance and Insight Team be retained as is and a series of measures be introduced aimed at raising awareness of the function of the Business Performance and Insight Team throughout the Council and highlighting the importance of data quality; such measures could include the dissemination of information via manager briefings, toolkits or other online internal information channels.

On that basis, it is recommended that:

2

Performance Culture

That awareness and understanding of the importance of data quality and of the services provided by the Business Performance Team be communicated comprehensively across Council departments during 2022, considering the use of manager briefings, toolkits or other online internal information.

As the review progressed, Members heard that Business Objects was the system currently used to extract information for large users of data such as Children’s Social Care, Adult Social Care and Housing. Said information was then manipulated manually by means of Excel spreadsheets. Members agreed that this was an onerous and cumbersome system which would benefit from updating and automation. As part of the review, the Committee had also received evidence from representatives of key areas within the Council, many of whom had highlighted the need for ‘live’ real-time data to assist them with their decision-making. Members noted that there were a number of ongoing digital transformation programmes within the Council and acknowledged that the next step would be to explore the options available in terms of bringing in new tools and ways of working – it was vital that the Council invested in the right products and that the data extracted was of value.

On that basis, it is recommended that:

3

Performance Innovation

That Corporate Procurement explore appropriate external software / systems during 2022, in conjunction with the Business Performance Team, that could be implemented or integrated to deliver tangible and cost-effective benefits. Particular focus should be placed on looking to assist the move away from traditional manual data manipulation to greater data automation, along with the availability of live data to decision-makers.

About the review - witnesses and activity

The following Terms of Reference were agreed by the Committee from the outset of the review:

1. **Where are we now?** - To ensure Members receive a broad overview of existing arrangements in respect of data collection, use of data and performance reporting across all parts of the Council.
2. **What do we need to do better and how?** - To review the Council's current arrangements in the use of data to manage operational delivery and drive service improvements and seek to:
 - a. compare and contrast arrangements in Hillingdon with peer authorities and other public organisations and to understand areas of good practice and further improvement and developments required; and
 - b. Investigate short-medium term improvements in data reporting and presentation to decision-makers, e.g., Corporate Management Team / Cabinet Members / Select Committees.
3. **Where do we want to be?** - To provide Members with an insight into the future of data collection and reporting, along with associated technology and its practical application for decision-making. To encourage officers to buy into the process and produce honest and useful data.
4. To make practical, prudent recommendations to Cabinet, (and other bodies if applicable), based on the Committee's findings.

The Committee received evidence from the following sources and witnesses:

<p>Witness Session 1 – 7 September 2021</p>	<p>External witnesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Wigley – MD Key Intelligence (external consultant) <p>Council officers in attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naveed Mohammed, Head of Business Performance and Insight
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**Witness Session 2 –
21 October 2021**

Council officers in attendance:

- Naveed Mohammed, Head of Business Performance and Insight
- Alex Coman, Director – Safeguarding, Partnerships and QA
- Kate Kelly-Talbot, Director of Service Delivery - Adult Social Work
- Rod Smith, Head of Housing and Tenancy Management
- Cathy Knubley, Head of Waste
- Richard Dawson, Interim Head of Community Safety and Enforcement

References

Local Government Association - Performance Management Councillor Workbook, March 2012

National Data Strategy [here](#) – Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – published 8 July 2019; last updated 17 December 2019;

Greater London Authority – City Data Analytics Programme 2017 [here](#)

Local Government Association – Becoming an Intelligent Council – from July 2017 [here](#).

Review photo – PxHere.com - [here](#)

Examples of Reporting to Directorates which were presented to the Select Committee as evidence:

- *Weekly Report for Housing Services detailing the number of applications made on Locata, how many of those had proceeded and how many were outstanding;*
- *Charts from monthly Adults Teams dashboard which tracks activity against a range of KPIs;*
- *Children’s Services - monthly ChAT report used for operational management and to plan for inspection readiness.*
- *Quarterly London Innovation and Improvement Alliance report.*

Appendices

Extracts of current data reported to CMT to follow.