


the performance management checklist

The checklist below, developed for the IDeA publication 'Making Performance Management Work', in consultation with local authorities, will help authorities to define where they are in developing effective performance management arrangements and help prioritise actions for improvement. It:

- sets out the characteristics of effective performance management
- identifies key questions to help focus attention on what is important
- provides a checklist to help assess a council's corporate performance management arrangements
- identifies the principal benefits of having these in place.

The checklist identifies essential or good practice elements or features that should characterise corporate performance management arrangements. Negative responses to any of the questions may suggest areas for further work.

figure 4: managing performance checklist

clear vision	
Does your local authority have a clear vision of what economic, social and environmental conditions the local community wants?	
Was this vision developed through engagement with all stakeholders, including residents, service users and strategic partners?	
Is there clarity about the priority issues facing the local community? Is there ongoing dialogue to ensure priorities continue to focus on the needs of the local community?	
Have the vision and priority issues been developed in a coherent community strategy?	

a focus on outcomes

planning and service review	✓
Does the community strategy act as an overarching framework for corporate, service or theme specific plans?	
Have the priority community issues been translated into corporate objectives?	
Is there a corporate plan in place that identifies the tasks and resources necessary to achieve the corporate objectives?	
Is resource allocation based on corporate objectives?	
Are service, improvement and financial planning integrated?	
Are there up to date departmental, service and/or business plans in place that translate corporate objectives into action plans?	
Do service and/or business plans link with/reference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvement reviews and action plans? • financial resources? • human resources? • IT plans? 	
Are staff routinely involved in developing service and / or business plans?	

performance management	✓
Have the outcomes that the council needs to achieve to realise the community vision, been defined?	
Has a set of performance measures (indicators and targets), which will measure progress towards achieving the desired outcomes, been developed (including statutory and local performance indicators)?	
Are these performance measures specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound?	
Is there a balance between process and output / outcome performance measures?	
Do these performance measures provide the information necessary to determine how well the council is performing overall and where it needs to improve?	
Does the council understand the level of importance and satisfaction that different sections of the community attach to its activities?	
Do performance targets cover the short, medium and long term?	

monitoring performance	✓
Do chief officers and the executive receive regular (e.g. quarterly) reports on performance that allow them to assess progress towards achieving corporate and community objectives?	
Is performance monitored regularly at department / service level?	
Does your council's monitoring arrangements incorporate information from partner organisations? (to provide a more complete picture of progress towards achieving community strategy objectives)	
Are comparisons with other councils / organisations used to identify performance issues?	
Does poor performance result in action being taken to improve?	
Is poor performance addressed through service improvement plans and realistic target setting?	

commitment and accountability

leadership	✓
Do senior management and members use the community vision to motivate staff and gain commitment improvement?	
Is good performance recognised and celebrated?	
Do senior managers and members engage with staff in an open and honest way?	
Are staff surveys – covering morale, commitment, attitudes – conducted and are staff given feedback on the results and any subsequent action to be taken?	
Are staff informed of their rights, responsibilities and what is expected of them?	
Are there high levels of feedback and coaching?	

accountability	✓
Are managers and staff accountable for performance?	
Is there widespread ownership and commitment to what the Council is trying to achieve amongst staff?	
Is there an understanding of and ownership and commitment to the community vision amongst strategic partners?	
Is every target 'owned' by individuals or collectively (units or teams)?	
Do senior staff have sufficient delegation relevant to budget allocation?	

communication	✓
Is there frequent two-way communication between management and staff?	
Do staff feel that they are kept up-to-date and informed on current issues, policy development and changes in their or others' roles? Do staff feel able to contribute to these corporate discussions?	

democratic and community engagement


executive and scrutiny	✓
Does the executive regularly receive performance information?	
Is the executive able to take timely decisions to improve performance?	
Does overview and scrutiny have access to the information needed to review the outcomes council policies are achieving?	

customer and citizen focus	✓
Do the public have access to easy to understand information on the council's performance – overall and service specific – combined with information on how public money is spent, so that they can assess whether they are getting value for money?	
Does performance monitoring and review include assessment based on citizen and customer feedback and consultation?	
Are there clear standards set for the services provided? i.e. do clients know what standards of service they can and cannot expect	
Were users involved in setting these standards?	

an enabling corporate core

people management	✓
Are all staff and managers set personal performance measures, related to team, service and corporate objectives?	
Is there annual formal appraisal / performance review process for all managers and staff at all levels? Is there a system in place to monitor whether staff receive an appraisal?	
Does this also assess the training and development needs of staff?	
Are there systems and procedures in place to deal with poor staff performance and capability issues?	
Are there systems in place to monitor sickness absence and turnover levels?	
Is this information used to indicate general staffing issues that could affect corporate performance?	

project/quality/systems management	✓
Is project management methodology used in the authority (to assess the scale and resources needed and to secure and monitor the implementation of major capital/change projects)?	
Are any quality systems/external accreditation systems used (e.g. ISO 9002, EFQM, Charter Mark)?	
Does your authority have an ICT strategy for the department/service?	

financial and asset management and procurement	
Do managers have sufficient devolved responsibility, within an agreed framework, to make appropriate purchasing decisions?	
Have resources been allocated based on community priorities (is resource allocation based on needs and aspirations)?	
Have changes in budgets in recent years closely reflected strategic priorities?	
Are there budget plans in place for the department's revenue and capital budget for the medium term (3 years ahead)?	
Are there systems in place for monitoring budget spend by cost centre managers on a regular basis?	
Does this include budget profiles and predicted variations/outturn figures?	
Are systems in place for monitoring capital spend?	
Are systems in place for monitoring the financial performance of contractors?	

Is financial information/budget information relevant to outputs/outcomes communicated regularly to members and managers?	
Is there a procurement strategy, including a written policy on evaluation and appraisal?	
Are systems in place to co-ordinate and control procurement of good and services?	
Does the department/service have an asset management plan?	

source: Making Performance Management Work, IDeA 2000: www.idea.gov.uk/knowledge, click on 'improving your council' and 'performance management'