

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10:00, Tuesday, 28 August 2018

Improving the implementation of Council decision making

Item number	7.13
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	
Council Commitments	

Executive Summary

This report provides a follow up to the October 2017 report on the dissemination of council policies and sets out a strategic approach to how the council can improve the implementation of council decisions and how we can provide better assurance that successful implementation is taking place.

The proposed approach recommended for approval has five strands of work recognising the importance and long-term nature of the issue.

Improving the implementation of Council decision making

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee agrees the approach set out at 3.2 and agrees to a follow up report providing an update on the activity proposed in the report in early 2019.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee (GRBV) had previously agreed a revised approach for the dissemination and implementation of committee decisions by directorates. It was agreed to introduce a spot-check on the dissemination of Council policies with a report going to GRBV in October 2017.
- 2.2 The 2017 report provided the fourth of these updates and included the results of a spot checking exercise that was undertaken in April 2017 which focussed on dissemination to Council officers of two Council policies by way of a questionnaire to randomly selected officers from two service areas.
- 2.3 This was emailed to officers by Senior Executive Officers using the Survey Monkey platform and utilised an expanded sample size. Questions were tailored to gain an understanding of officer's awareness of where to find policies. The expanded sample size of 240 for each survey was maintained, however, response rate was significantly lower than previously, with only 34 individuals responding to each survey. The selected policies were the Health and Safety Policy and the Managing Customer Contact in a Fair and Positive Way Policy.
- 2.4 At Committee it was agreed to provide a future report on more effective ways to monitor the dissemination and understanding of Council policies.

3. Main report

- 3.1 Whilst the approach set out in 2.1 is helpful and provided meaningful feedback it is felt that a refreshed and broader approach is required if longer term improvement and cultural change is to be successful. This revised approach brings together process improvement, digital innovation, and cultural change with the aim of bringing longer term improvement to the successful implementation of council decision making. Within this, the report sets out some improvement activity that has already taken place, some that is in active development and proposals to pilot

new approaches, the culmination of which it is hoped will support a comprehensive approach to the implementation of council decisions.

3.2 The five proposed strands of work are to:

3.2.1 Review and evolve the Council's existing Policy Register to improve the foundations of council policy implementation;

3.2.2 Review the Council's current report template to better capture implementation actions and next steps for all council decisions;

3.2.3 Introduce a new committee management solution to modernise and digitalise the process and recording of Council decision making;

3.2.4 Further align the Council's Change Portfolio to ensure all major change is captured and monitored and successfully implemented; and

3.2.5 Pilot a new learning and insight approach to improve our understanding of the practical delivery of council decisions and how managers can most effectively support their implementation.

Review of the Council's Policy Register

3.3 The council's policy register was established in April 2015 to ensure that all council policies were easily accessible, were created, revised and renewed in a consistent manner and to an agreed standard, and to reinforce the importance of the role of elected members in setting policy. The register is managed by Strategy and Insight and is updated as new council policies are introduced or existing policy amended.

3.4 It is proposed that Strategy and Insight undertake a health check of the register to both ensure that it is fully up to date and optimise the quality and accessibility of the information contained within the register.

3.5 This would also consider how the policy register would align with the introduction of a new committee management solution at 3.7. The conclusions would be brought back to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee if any decision was required and as part of the follow up report to GRBV in early 2019 after consultation with members of GRBV as part of the process.

A review of the Council's Report Template

3.6 The Council's report template is scheduled for review and consideration by Strategy and Insight in conjunction with elected members. It is recognised there is opportunity to improve the template, alongside broader support for officers in improving the quality of council reports, to improve council decision making. As part of this work there is an opportunity for the report template to clarify the implementation approach for council decisions ensuring elected members see greater clarity on next steps and ensuring the policy cycle is fully reflected from inception to conclusion. It is therefore proposed that the review of the template considers an overt implementation section to the template.

Introduction of a new Council decision making support management solution

- 3.7 Strategy and Insight are currently working with ICT to implement a new Council decision making digital solution. The solution will digitalise the management of committee business and follow up decision making, help to make the process more efficient, more transparent, and easier to track progress against.
- 3.8 Procurement and market testing is currently underway with implementation currently scheduled for April 2019. Alongside the other elements of this approach it is intended that this will have a very significant impact in the tracking and follow up of council decisions. It is proposed that an update of this work is brought back in the follow up of this report in early 2019.

Further align the Council's Change Portfolio

- 3.9 In February 2018, GRBV agreed a revised approach to the management of significant change across the council to ensure that all significant projects, both physical and broader change was captured and managed as part of a whole system approach. The first cycle of the new approach was presented to GRBV in May and included 52 different change projects across the council. This is a fundamental part of council implementation and it is proposed that as part of this broader approach to council implementation the alignment between the change portfolio and the policy register is considered to ensure alignment and join up. Any conclusions of this assessment would be again reported back to GRBV as part of the follow up report on this issue.

Pilot a new learning and insight approach to support council implementation

- 3.10 Previous approaches to improve the dissemination of council decision making have centred around undertaking surveys to understand implementations and their implications. Building on this good work it is proposed we pilot a new approach to make the council's approach to following up on council decision making more holistic.
- 3.11 The proposal is that we would pilot an approach where researchers observed officers in a service working in their real-life environment. This approach would be to select a specific council policy, food waste implementation has been suggested as a good example, and to observe in setting the practical implementation of the policy and to then analyse that against the policy agreed by council. In the pilot phase this work would be undertaken by qualified researchers within Strategy and Insight but if shown to be successful could be adopted more broadly across the organisation, building a culture of self-assessment.
- 3.12 Based on the field work we would then work with Communication colleagues, Learning and Development within HR and most of all managers within the service to look at any activity required to ensure implementation aligned with the agreed policy. Practically, this could include additional training, work within teams and communications activity to ensure staff knew what was required of them and that we were working with them in a supportive way to ensure successful implementation.

- 3.13 This approach could also potentially improve council policy making by providing a feedback loop to committee on the practical challenge and consequences of any agreed policy which may result in council wishing to amend or potentially change decisions.
- 3.14 Clearly, resources are not available for this to be undertaken for all council policies but it is proposed that this is piloted with a single policy with the result brought back to GRBV for consideration and analysis before potentially widening out the methodology to further specific council policies. It is proposed that this work would be undertaken in the autumn of 2018 with the result brought back to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee and GRBV in early 2019.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 To have more transparent and effective arrangements in place to improve the process involving the decision and the implementation of that decision.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The proposals in the report seek to improve the governance arrangements supporting decisions and the subsequent implementation throughout the Council. An improved monitoring process and the expected benefits this would bring to culture and operational effectiveness should lead to more effective governance arrangements and reduce the risk of non-compliance with Council policy or statute.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no equality impacts arising from this report but an assessment will be necessary depending on the results of the work proposed.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no sustainability impacts as a result of this report.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Engagement with elected members and officers would take place if the proposals are agreed.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee 31 October 2017 – [Spot-checking on the Dissemination of Council Policies](#)

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11. Appendices

None.