

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday, 15 July 2021

LATE REPORTS TO COMMITTEE

Report of the Democratic Services Manager

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that this Committee considers the data relating to late reports for the period 1 April 2020 – 22 June 2021, and the actions that are being taken to address this.

Summary

Councillors have requested that research be undertaken in respect of the volume of late committee reports. This report sets out the issues and rationale for late reports and presents the solutions and corrective action being put in place to rectify this.

Focus for Scrutiny

Councillors are asked to consider the rationale for late reports and consider any actions that may be appropriate to rectify this.

Statutory Powers

Local Government Act 1972

Strategic Implications

1. This report has no direct correlation to the achievement of Corporate Plan objectives.

Introduction

2. Councillors have asked for data relating to the number of late reports being circulated after the main agenda has been published.
3. The Council's democratic content management system (Modern.gov) records the number of late reports by amount and percentage (%). It also records the report author and the date the late report was published. However, the system does not have the capability to record a reason for the report being late. Appendix A outlines the results for the year to date (01.04.2020 – 22.06.2021).

4. Agendas for committees are published eight days in advance. This is a statutory requirement and ensures there is enough notice to hold the meeting and information disseminated can be read and understood in advance.
5. All draft reports are circulated to key staff and Councillors for comments. The usual circulation list includes the following:
 - The Chief Executive
 - The Corporate Leadership Board member who overviews the section
 - Any Corporate Leadership Board member who is likely to have an interest in the content of the report (for example, if it relates to a unit/service they overview or to a topic on which they lead, or it is a cross-cutting issue of general significance)
 - Any manager likely to have an interest in the report, either because it relates to their section or to a topic on which they lead
 - Local Area Managers
 - Finance
 - Monitoring Officer
 - the Strategic Planning Manager for the Corporate Plan Objectives (Cabinet and Council reports only)
 - the relevant Legal Officer
 - the relevant Committee Officer
 - the Leader of the Council
 - Any other appropriate councillors (such as the Cabinet Member or Committee Chair).
6. The report circulation checklist (outlined above) can also be found in the Modgov system which is prepopulated with the key approvers. The 'Report Circulation Guide' on the Council's intranet lists all report deadline dates.
7. Reports are sent to committees in a number of ways:
 - (a) Reports can be listed on a specific committee's work programme (or be a key decision on the Forward Plan in the case of Cabinet) and referenced on the relevant agenda. On occasions, reports which are late (due to last minute information being obtained), will be marked 'to follow' and circulated after the main agenda pack has been issued as a 'supplementary agenda';
 - (b) Reports on topics that are requested by Councillors/Committees, as in the case of this particular report.
 - (c) Reports that are deemed 'urgent' and are sent to committee for consideration late on, having never previously appeared on a work programme or Forward Plan. In this instance if a report is required to go before a committee for consideration after the committee agenda has been published, then it will be tabled at the committee.

Findings and corrective action

8. Of the 256 reports that went to Committee between April 2020 and June 2021, only 10.24% (25) were published after the eight-day notice deadline.
9. The analysis shows the committees with the highest number of late reports include Audit and Resources Committee, Cabinet and Eastleigh Local Area Committee (See Appendix 1).
10. There are likely to be circumstances when a report is issued late to committee for a valid reason.
11. In total 5.28% of Cabinet reports (8 in total) were late, mainly due to property transaction reports which can have a short lead in time due to the need to receive commercial information which the Council is not in control of. Property transactions also rely on inputs from a number of external agencies. There were also a number of reports resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic that were produced at short notice.
12. A comparison with 1 April 2020 to 1 April 2021 is attached as appendix 2 for comparison.
13. To ensure that late reports are minimised as far as possible, the following improvement plan has been implemented:
 - Rejection of all late reports by Corporate Leadership Board where there is no valid justification
 - Report Writing training has been made available on EBC Learn for all staff that write reports

Financial Implications

14. There are no financial implications.

Risk Assessment

15. Risk is incurred by not giving due (public) notice of key decisions or contentious issues which could result in complaints or investigations against the Council.

Equality and Diversity Implications

16. The Equality Act is not relevant to the decision in this report because
 - It is a report dealing with internal or procedural matters only.

Therefore, it is considered that for this decision the Equality Duty does not need to be addressed and an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been carried out.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

17. There are no climate change or environmental implications associated with this report.

Conclusion

18. The Committee are asked to consider the findings of this report and note the steps being put in place to improve the timings of reports.

LAURA JOHNSTON
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

Date: 22 June 2021
Contact Officer: Laura Johnston
Tel No: 02380688041
e-mail: laura.johnston@eastleigh.gov.uk
Appendices Attached: 2

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information.

* None.