

# Performance Management Framework

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1.1	29/9/2025	Anthony Connor	Added fuller details of balanced scorecard approach.

## **What is the Performance Management Framework?**

Performance management is key to all parts of Cumberland Council: it enables elected members, staff, partners, and the public to assess whether the Council is achieving what it has set out to do, delivering value for money, and meeting the needs of residents and customers.

Understanding, analysing, and addressing performance ensures the Council achieves its objectives and can proactively plan for and respond to changing needs.

Successful performance management needs elected members, managers, and staff to understand their purpose and continually improve what they do.

The Performance Management Framework sets out how we will manage the performance of the council based on the Council Plan 2025-2027. It will guide officers, Councillors, and the public, explaining our performance arrangements. It is an essential part of demonstrating good corporate governance.

The Performance Management Framework sets out the purpose and scope of performance management, roles and responsibilities and reporting arrangements.

## **Purpose and scope**

### **Why do we need performance management?**

Robust performance management is essential to help the council deliver the most effective and efficient services to its residents, who include the most vulnerable individuals in need of support.

Our performance management framework aims to ensure staff understand the changing needs of residents and how effectively services are meeting that need and to support on-going development of services.

Performance management is also how we take responsibility for our performance and for the public and national government to hold us to account.

### **What is performance management?**

Performance management is often misconstrued as having to achieve objectives or hit targets.

In fact, good performance management is understanding three things:

- why objectives are (or are not) achieved
- what changes would have the most positive impact
- how to best implement these changes.

Good performance management focuses on progress and change, not on 'being above average' on every measure or hitting targets.

Performance management happens at every level of the organisation and involves elected members as well as management and individual staff.

### **Who needs performance management information?**

#### **Elected members**

... require timely and relevant intelligence to make sound strategic and policy decisions; to be assured that decisions are being implemented effectively and that performance and outcomes are improving.

#### **Council employees**

... require timely and relevant intelligence to deliver effective services and manage their own performance.

#### **Managers**

... require timely and relevant intelligence to make operational decisions and to make best use of resources to meet customer needs and improve outcomes.

#### **Stakeholders, customers, partners and residents**

... require open, relevant, and accurate information to remain informed and hold the Council's services and performance to account.

## Core principles of performance management

There are five core principles for good performance management. They are:

1. Clear objectives
2. Good quality data
3. Meaningful insight
4. Accountability
5. Action.

Good performance management requires an effective performance management system and a strong performance management culture.

## Our approach to performance management

### The Performance Management Cycle

Effective performance management is based on a continual process:

#### **Plan – Act – Track – Review.**

Good performance management is not achieving objectives, but understanding why objectives are, or are not, achieved and acting appropriately to optimise success.



Performance management cycle

**PLAN:** Everyone needs to manage their performance to a clear set of objectives.

The strategic planning process cascades Council Plan objectives from the organisational level to directorate to team and further to the individual.

That means even at the individual level, everyone should be working towards clear objectives with understanding of how they support the Council Plan.

**ACT:** Carrying out the actions in the plan to achieve the objectives.

This phase includes the gathering and collecting of robust data to allow effective review of progress towards the plan's objectives.

**TRACK:** Data is compared to expected outcomes, often using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and reported via scorecards and dashboards.

This needs to be done at regular intervals. However, data, information and insights should be at the fingertips of everyone to ensure on-going awareness.

Reviewing, and understanding how to improve the plan, also needs to include the wider context e.g., national policy, internal audit recommendations, public priorities, resident, and community feedback, learning from complaints, and feedback from staff.

**REVIEW:** Adjusting the plan to better support achievement of objectives.

Positive progress must be acted on to build success, whereas problematic progress must be acted upon to correct it.

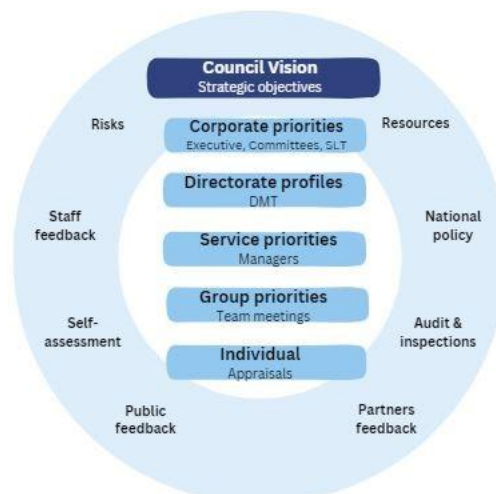
Each insight will require a decision on what action to take. Actions can include changes to systems, process, resources, policies, and procedures.

Making changes can improve the chances of successfully meeting the plan's objectives.

Effective performance management cascades up understanding through the organisation identifying what has and has not worked well - and what we can learn from this to revise the plan.

## Our performance management process

The Council Plan sets out the overall strategic direction and context. This is aligned to the medium-term financial strategy which provides an overarching framework extending beyond the current budget period and draws together all known factors affecting the financial health of the Council over the medium term.



Underlying the Council Plan is the Council Plan Delivery Plan which sets out activity in support of the Council Plan, usually significant activity or programmes that impact across the whole (or a large part) of the organisation, place, or population.

A range of other plans from individual Directorates and specific services plan activity and resources for delivery, together with higher level objectives that are either of significant importance or cut across more than one team or service.

These include annual service plans produced at Assistant Director level. Service and team plans help define the objectives and individual's contribution to the Council Plan for individual employee appraisals.

Other plans may be produced as a result of self-assessments, peer reviews, audits, or other inspections. Project plans are produced for major projects so that timescales, milestones, governance arrangements and resources are mapped out.

Identifying and assessing risks are part of effective delivery and the Council will proactively mitigate any risks that might stop it achieving its aims. Risks to good quality data are also assessed and, where possible, steps taken to address them.

Individuals have a responsibility to ensure that they are clear about their role and what is expected of them in achieving team objectives and promoting organisational values.

The individual appraisal process ensures personal objectives link to team objectives and the Council's priorities.

Specific targets are set for staff annually at appraisals. In many cases, targets align to directorate plan objectives and, in some cases, to actions set out in the Delivery Plan.



## Creating a constructive performance management culture

Effective performance management is not just about systems or developing technically good indicators and measures. It is equally important to establish a culture that allows performance management to be approached positively.

We aim to develop a performance management culture that supports our organisational values as follows:

### Strategic

We are **ambitious** with a desire and commitment to have an evidence-based improvement approach and aim to support robust corporate and service planning and intelligence-based forecasting. We aim to improve integration between performance, risk, and financial information.

### Collaborative

We will work effectively with internal and external stakeholders to share data and optimise service planning and horizon scanning. There is a willingness to share ideas and to learn from poor performance. There is good internal communication of performance management by promoting good practice and communicating successes.

### Accountable

We will ensure accountability and ownership across the organisation making sure this is in line with the 'golden thread' of governance from Council Plan to individual performance.

### Forward thinking

We will be **innovative** and embrace new opportunities and technological developments to ensure we optimise our efficiency and effectiveness. We will make sure that staff are involved and appropriately trained so that they can suggest better ways to deliver individual, team and corporate outcomes. We will look for new ways to present and analyse information and provide insight.

### Progressive

We will foster a culture of being a learning organisation, **empowering** staff to test their ideas and learn from mistakes. We will understand our strengths to drive continuous service development and delivery.

### Informed

We ensure we have access to robust, timely, integrated information at all levels to understand the impact of what we are doing. We will be **compassionate**, ensuring that our people have the right skills, capabilities and behaviours that enable them to deliver in their role, providing support, training, and advice where it is needed.

## How we monitor our performance

### Balanced scorecards

The balanced scorecard approach aligns performance data with strategic objectives. The scorecard provides a more complete picture of performance across the council blending service performance with metrics around workforce, finance and stakeholder feedback.

The cascading balanced scorecard approach brings together service and corporate performance, HR and finance data, customer complaints, audit recommendations and the Council Plan Delivery Plan. This corporate reporting will present a comprehensive 'organisational health' report which will provide a more balanced insight into the key issues facing the council. This approach should facilitate more focused discussions at SLT and at performance clinics.

The scorecard is made up of four reporting areas:

- Operational metrics/Internal business processes (key service performance – CPDP and service plan KPIs)
- Stakeholder metrics (customer feedback, audits, external ratings etc)
- People metrics (HR/workforce data)
- Finance metrics (a sustainable organisation)

Through a more comprehensive triangulation of data, the overall aim is to demonstrate the impacts of individual directorates on outcomes right across the council, rather than looking at services and data in isolation.

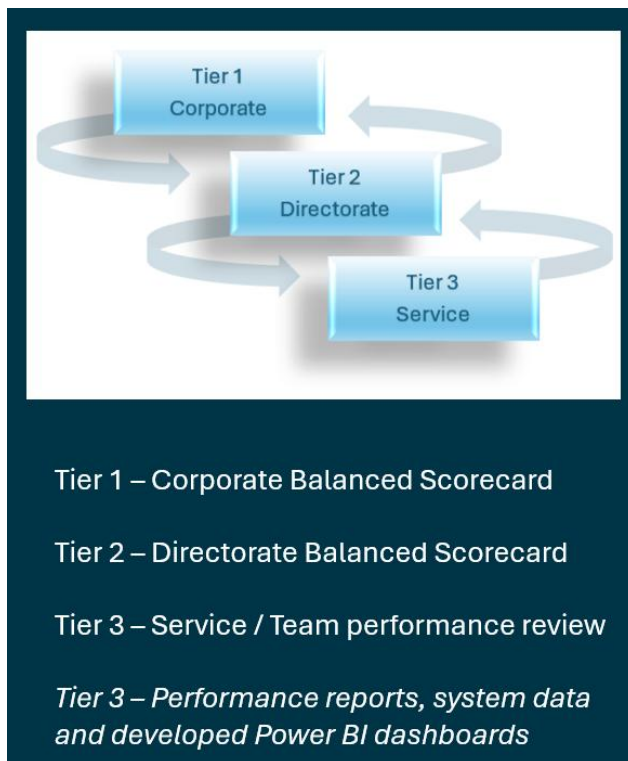
There will be three tiers of cascade:

- Tier 1: Corporate level
- Tier 2: Directorate-level breakdowns
- Tier 3: Service-level scorecards

**Tier 1** presents key performance metrics at the highest level, at the overall council level of reporting. This scorecard incorporates the Council Plan Delivery Plan key metrics and other metrics at the council-wide level e.g. council-wide staff sickness rate.

**Tier 2** reporting is at directorate level and presents key performance metrics at the next level down, the level below the overall council level. They incorporate the Council Plan Delivery Plan key metrics relevant to the directorate along with service KPIs and other metrics at the Directorate level e.g. the directorate staff sickness rate. The scorecards will also feed into Performance Clinics as well as DMTs.

**Tier 3** reporting will be undertaken in collaboration with colleagues in directorates to support team level service delivery and monitoring.



Performance and risk information will be reviewed on a regular basis to allow continuous improvement through the cascading measures via the balanced scorecard approach.

The approach will be to:

- Focus on the delivery of Council outcomes as set out in the Council Plan and related planning framework documents
- Use information as up to date as possible
- Make the information easily accessible for elected members, managers, customers, and the public.

All action plans, key projects, initiatives, and performance indicators are monitored regularly by various means.

Plans are reviewed and revised using the latest information and intelligence available including:

- operational performance (benchmarking where appropriate)
- financial performance
- assessment of risk
- resident and community feedback
- learning from complaints
- feedback from staff
- internal audit recommendations - external audit and inspection findings.

Performance data are distributed through balanced scorecards, dashboards and other reporting mechanisms to the Executive, the Senior Leadership Team and Directorate Management Teams, including the delivery of a quarterly director performance clinic and a quarterly corporate report. The corporate report will be reviewed by Executive as well as by the Overview and Scrutiny committee. This report will be publicly available.

Requests for ad hoc data and analysis work are assessed on a priority basis and programmed into the work schedule accordingly.

### **Reporting of performance and risk**

Executive members and the Business and Resources Overview and Scrutiny committee monitor performance through formal reports.

Formal reporting of quarterly performance information will include a review of actions in the Council Plan Delivery Plan and corporate performance measures in the Corporate Performance Framework.

This will enable Executive to review performance against the Council Plan Delivery Plan and will also support Overview and Scrutiny in their role.

The Strategic Risk Register will support Audit Committee to have an overview of the risk profile and the effectiveness of risk management actions. It will be presented to the committee every eight weeks.

### **Performance clinics**

Performance clinic meetings occur with individual directorates on a quarterly cycle.

These meetings consider each directorate's performance service metrics, financial performance, and HR performance through the production and maintenance of a cascaded balanced scorecard. In addition, a suite of key operational measures relating to the directorate will be included.

These meetings also include content on directorate project and programme activity.

Performance clinics provide the Leader and Chief Executive with an opportunity to have meaningful performance conversations with directors and portfolio holders.

Apart from ensuring directors have ownership of, and understand, their directorate data, the clinics are designed to:

- evaluate and improve the performance of the council's directorates in terms of priorities, budget performance, forecasting, and service performance data
- provide an opportunity to look retrospectively at performance but also identify future priorities and resource prioritisation.

Individual officers are responsible for relevant performance indicators and are required to keep this performance data updated in preparation for these regular meetings.

### **Management information – Balanced scorecards and dashboards**

Performance indicators and tailored scorecards are devised from management information and service plans to provide an overview of how a team, service area, directorate, or corporate priority is performing, depending on the user requirements.

In addition to this, data quality checks will be undertaken, and benchmarking will be applied to identify how our services are performing against regional and national comparators.

## Roles and responsibilities

Performance management is the responsibility of everyone in the Council. Accountability for performance follows the 'golden thread' of the Council Plan, which provides the overall strategic priorities for the council which then determines the organisation's priorities.

A summary of the key roles and responsibilities of officers and elected members is set out below.

## Elected members

The key roles and responsibilities in relation to performance and risk for members are set out here:

Roles	Responsibilities
Full council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approve the Council Plan, key strategies, and Medium-Term Financial Plan</li></ul>
Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approve the Performance Management Framework</li><li>• Ensure strategic delivery of Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan</li><li>• Evidence progress against corporate priorities</li><li>• Provoke debate about what should happen next</li><li>• Challenge financial and non-financial performance of all services</li><li>• Receive quarterly performance reports to evaluate and improve directorate performance</li></ul>
Portfolio holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regularly monitor, review and challenge performance to ensure delivery in relation to their portfolio</li><li>• Where required, participate in quarterly performance clinics with the Leader, Chief Executive, and directors to monitor, review and challenge performance</li></ul>
Scrutiny members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hold Executive to account</li><li>• Scrutinise the Council's performance, including via the quarterly performance report</li><li>• Undertake specific reviews of any identified performance issues which can be undertaken through the Council's arrangements for Scrutiny</li></ul>

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Audit Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain assurance over the governance of risk</li> <li>• Receive regular updates and reviews on the effectiveness of risk management</li> <li>• Support the development and embedding of good practice in risk management</li> <li>• Gain assurance over financial and non-financial performance as reported</li> </ul>

## Officers

The key roles and responsibilities in relation to performance and risk for officers are set out here:

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Senior Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee the Performance and Risk Management Frameworks</li> <li>• Oversee the development of the Council Plan Delivery Plan</li> <li>• Ensure commitment to the delivery of Council's priorities through the allocation of responsibilities and resources</li> <li>• Take responsibility for the delivery of the annual revenue budget, capital programme and Medium-Term Financial Plan</li> <li>• Take strategic responsibility for the delivery of the Council Plan. This includes reviewing risks on an eight-week cycle and reviewing performance</li> </ul>
Directorate Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that a relevant planning and risk framework underpins performance with the Council Plan</li> <li>• Respond to service and organisational workflow and workload issues</li> <li>• Revise plans to reflect current activity</li> <li>• Facilitate learning</li> <li>• Regularly review relevant performance and risk at Directorate Management Team meetings. Formal service/Assistant Director review of operational risk registers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ quarterly - high-risk scores (Red)</li> <li>○ half-yearly – medium-risk scores (Amber)</li> <li>○ annually – low-risk scores (Green)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Roles	Responsibilities
Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to and produce relevant plans and objectives which contribute to the Council Plan</li> <li>• Seek support to improve performance and review systems and processes</li> <li>• Inform workforce development and continuing professional development</li> <li>• Provide data in accordance with performance reporting requirements</li> </ul>
Team Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform planning, resourcing, quality management and service delivery</li> <li>• Provide data in accordance with performance reporting requirements</li> <li>• Seek support to improve performance and manage risks</li> <li>• Manage staff performance and undertake appraisals</li> <li>• Inform workforce development and continuing professional development</li> <li>• Encourage staff to seek support when needed to improve performance and provide support when requested</li> </ul>
Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for personal development and performance</li> <li>• Participate in annual appraisal</li> <li>• Understand how work contributes to the Council Plan</li> <li>• Seeking support to improve performance and manage risks</li> <li>• Raise specific issues regarding risk and performance with Managers</li> <li>• Ensure that activity listed within individual appraisals is implemented on schedule</li> </ul>

## **Performance management service delivery**

Cumberland Council's centralised performance team provides performance management support.

Its overarching ambition is to support directorates and service areas in embedding effective performance management, with service area managers using performance in a systemic way to support learning and development to achieve objectives, from service plans to individual appraisals.

Due the volume and complexity of performance management in complex service areas, such as social care, public health, and place and economy, individuals with business area expertise are essential for building a collaborative working relationship with the performance team.

The performance team's responsibilities include:

- Supporting service areas in embedding the principles, skills, and tools to support an effective Performance Management Framework
- Providing training and communications to support effective development of performance reporting across the organisation
- Helping to embed a robust performance management and service user orientated culture across the council.
- Supporting the implementation of the Data Quality policy and supporting activity on improving data quality.

The centralised team also has key performance and intelligence reporting responsibilities, including:

- Corporate reporting
- Statutory reporting
- Statutory assessments
- External partnership collaboration.

Services have responsibilities for effective performance management within their service area, and application of information and analysis to support the successful achievement of objectives as outlined in service plans from directorate level to individual appraisals.