Committee: Overview and Scrutiny	Date: 5th October 2010	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No:	Agenda Item: 8.2
Report of: Service Head – Strategy and Performance, Chief Executives **Originating officer(s)** Stephanie Ford – Interim Performance Manager Afazul Hoque – Scrutiny Manager		**Title:** Councillor Call for Action Performance Digest Update **Wards Affected:** All		

1   SUMMARY

1.1   This report sets out progress developing the Performance Digest report, which is intended to inform the Councillor Call to Action (CCfA) process.

1.2   The Performance Digest report (appendix 1) currently includes complaints and Members Enquiries information, forming the foundation for an evidence base to support CCfA. Work is ongoing to improve and expand the report, so that includes other information sources, such as from Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and petitions.

1.3   There are a number of barriers to further progress, and limitations on what this data can be used for. The Performance Digest report can be a useful part of the evidence base for assessing CCfA requests and other issues, but it will not provide sophisticated resident perception and satisfaction information (for the reasons set out below in Section 5).

1.4   However, work to determine the future of performance management and accountability more broadly is ongoing at a local, regional and national level, which has the capacity to improve information available to support CCfA and other work areas. Changes to Government requirements have created an opportunity to reassess how Tower Hamlets 'does' performance management: what do we measure, who do we report it and in what form.

1.5   A new Performance Management and Accountability Framework is being developed, around three key strands:

- Powerful Public – looking at more relevant and transparent performance reporting, regular perception tracking and citizen engagement in monitoring performance;
- Peers – improved performance benchmarking, shared best practice and external assurance and challenge;
- Partners – ensuring governance and performance management arrangements are able to react to changing environment.

We would be keen to talk further to OSC Members about how to develop this and ensure OSC is part of the framework.

1.6 Furthermore, the Council's Information Management Strategy, part of the Transformation Programme, is being developed to address how we collect and use information across the Council, looking to rationalise and join up systems so that maximum value can be extracted from the information, leading to efficiencies and performance improvement.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS
The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:-

- Note the contents of this report;
- Suggest any changes to the format or content of the appended Performance Digest; and
- Agree to receive the performance digest report at six month intervals.

3   BACKGROUND
3.1 Section 21A of the Local Government Act 2000 includes provision for CCfA that came into force on 1st April 2009. This means the Council is now under statutory obligation to provide Members the opportunity to refer to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) any local government matter which is relevant to the functions of the Committee. Guidance suggests the mechanism should only be used where other methods of resolution have been exhausted.

3.2 The Performance Digest report was proposed as a means of providing the necessary evidence and context to OSC so that it could properly evaluate issues brought to its attention. It aims to compile and analyse quarterly/six monthly data from standard grievance/access systems; complaints, petitions, Members' Enquiries and Freedom of Information requests. It was anticipated that disaggregating the data by theme,

locality and equalities data should allow for the identification of trends and key issues, development of solutions and appropriate action.

3.3   The Scrutiny Review on Strengthening Local Community Leadership undertaken last year has received dummy and draft versions of the Performance Digest and provided feedback on layout and content. A number of barriers have been identified and flagged, relating to the limitations of existing data collection methods and systems.

4   **CURRENT PROGRESS**

4.1   The latest iteration of the Performance Digest report is appended. It draws together information from corporate complaints and Members Enquiries databases. Data is currently split down by issue to LAP level and month to facilitate analysis of major or persistent problems experienced by residents.

4.2   The format of the report introduces key messages based on analysis of the data, a borough overview to provide necessary context and then individual LAP scorecards. Analysis focuses on "top 5" issues within the monitoring period, but considers any changes between monitoring periods and trend information.

4.3   In its current form, the report will allow OSC to identify areas of concern (i.e. emerging and rising complaint trends in LAPs and in the Borough as a whole) and to put into context requests made by Councillors for interventions into service areas or issues.

4.4   This report therefore should fulfil a number of the requirements OSC set out for it, but at this stage it is not possible to produce the report that fulfils all of the specifications requested, though many elements are in place. Previously stated requirements include:

a) Use of complaints, petitions, members' enquiries and Freedom of Information requests;

b) **A tool that allows analysis to go further than a descriptive analysis of number and types of grievance, and moves instead towards a more holistic understanding of resident satisfaction and their views of services**;

c) The content and format should be conducive to analysis and to councillors working in a problem-solving capacity;

d) It should be clear on the front of the report what the key messages are, and what councillors are asked to do with that information;

e) **Information should be disaggregated by equalities strand, to gain a better idea about which sections of the community are concerned about what.**

4.5 Of the points listed above, b) and e) pose the most difficulty, due to the nature of the data and the systems from which it is stored and extracted. The reasons for this are discussed below.

5 BARRIERS

5.1 The barriers to further development of the Performance Digest report fall into two main categories: the limitations of the data collection systems, and the limitations of the data itself.

Limitations of the data collection systems

5.2 There are a number of technical restrictions that dictate the limits of what can currently be achieved with the Performance Digest report. These restrictions arise from the existing database systems, which have been developed separately to meet different requirements. These issues affect the following:

- ME's, Complaints and FOI requests do not share the same theme/issue set. Whilst there is crossover to allow for merging the themes, the analysis is subjective and time consuming, more prone to human error and important detail may be lost;
- Although there is equalities data available (for ME and complaints), at present systems used to process the data do not link equalities data to theme/issue or locality. This makes it impossible to analyse equalities information in a useful way.
- Furthermore, there are collection difficulties with this information, whereby it is reliant on the willingness of the complainant to provide personal information. A consequence of this is very patchy information relating to faith/religion and sexuality equalities strands.
- There is a limited amount of petition information available. At present the only source of collated data is the constitutional requirement to report the 3 largest petitions to Cabinet quarterly. Further systems for collating all petitions received would need to be developed.

<u>Limitations of the data</u>

5.3   Furthermore, the type of data being gathered may not be the most appropriate for assessment of resident satisfaction. Measuring perception can be a complex and costly exercise, reliant on surveys or other tools, such as commercial data mining software. A more intelligent use of data already collected by the Council, as we are attempting with the Performance Digest, is cost effective in comparison to these methods, but cannot provide the same kind of perception information. For example:

- Complaints, the most appropriate of the datasets being used, is not a perfect way of understanding underlying satisfaction with services or the Council as a whole - it tells you nothing about the degree to which people may *positively* view a service;
- FOI requests, taking Q1 20010/11 as an illustration: of 167 FOI requests received, only 12%, or 20 of those requests can be linked to a LAP, 19% or 33 requests originated outside of the borough and it is unknown as to where the remainder came from. Nationally, evidence indicates that only 1/3 of FOI requests come from the public – the remainder come from journalists, businesses or researchers.

5.4   It should also be noted that timeliness of reporting to OSC is a limiting factor in how this information can be used. Currently we are working to a 6 monthly frequency, and 1-2 month(s) elapse between the end of the monitoring period and OSC receiving the report, given the time taken to collate and report the information through the proper OSC reporting timetable. This would limit the scope of OSC to react to emerging issues, but it does not diminish the capacity to use this report to identify persistent and major issues, or as evidence to support anecdotal information Members may have received about service performance over the monitoring period.

5.5   Moving beyond these issues, of the type of data used and the data collection methods, and toward a more holistic understanding of resident satisfaction and their views of services, would require significant changes, which would have significant resource implications, over and above the resources already committed to the production of the appended report.

6   NEXT STEPS

6.1   As noted, work is ongoing to integrate FOI and petitions information into the Performance Digest in a useful way. The next iteration of this report will be submitted to OSC at a date to be agreed, taking into account any feedback from this meeting.

6.2   Work is ongoing within the Council to agree a new Performance Management and Accountability Framework, and to develop better systems for collecting and reporting data through the Information Management Strategy. We would like OSC to be involved in the development of this, and to consider whether they would like this to be progressed through the full OSC meeting or a working group of the committee.

7   COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

7.1   The report describes the progress in the development of the Performance Digest report, which supports Councillor Call to Action (CCfA) arrangements.

7.2   There are no specific financial implications emanating from this report. However, in the event that the Council agrees further action in response to this report's recommendations, officers will be obliged to seek the appropriate financial approval before further financial commitments are made in addition to the financial constraints the Council now faces with lower funding for services from 2011-12 onwards.

8   CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

8.1   The functions of Overview and Scrutiny under the Council's Constitution include reviewing action taken in exercise of the Council's functions and the making of reports or recommendations in connection with the discharge of functions. The receipt by Overview and Scrutiny of performance information is an important means by which the Committee can understand how Council functions are being exercised.

9   ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

9.1   This report aims to improve understanding of issues of a local level for all Tower Hamlets communities. A better understanding of resident satisfaction and grievances will help the Council to target resources in a way that reduces inequalities, ensures strong community cohesion and strengthens community leadership.

10   SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

10.1   There are no specific SAGE implications.

11   RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

11.1   There are no specific risk management implications.

12   CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1   This report includes information about complaints or Member Enquiries relating to crime or anti-social behaviour, however there are no specific crime and disorder reduction implications.

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**Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)
List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report**

Brief description of "background papers"	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection.
None	**None**

13   APPENDICES
Appendix 1 – Q1 Performance Digest