membership resources

December 2013

Briefing 13-53

Transport performance information on cost and service quality

This briefing provides details of the latest trend analysis of local authority performance on cost, quality and productivity within the transport operations sector. It is provided to local authority chief executives, council leaders and all APSE transport operations and vehicle maintenance contacts.

Key issues:
- Transport is an essential service within local government enabling other services in their delivery e.g. environmental services, housing repairs, social services, education, etc.
- APSE performance networks for transport analyses data across a range of indicators including cost and quality
- This briefing highlights the key findings. Analysis referred to in this briefing is based on first batch data returns. Summary reports will be published in March 2014.

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1. Introduction

APSE performance networks compares transport data from a wide selection of Local Authorities throughout the UK, reporting results annually across a broad range of performance indicators. This briefing paper looks at the continuing trends within the service to provide authorities with a picture of how their performance sits within the broader national trends. The analysis in this briefing paper is based on averages across all family groups and so is service-wide. It shows averages for 2012-13 compared to previous year's performance levels.

2. Analysis and key findings

In terms of effectiveness of the maintenance regime, 3 performance indicators can be used to demonstrate performance. These are PI 73 percentage of vehicles passing the DOE test first time; PI 74 percentage of vehicles serviced within 7 days of schedule and PI 76 percentage of workshop jobs completed within 24 hours. The table below indicates the performance across the last seven years.
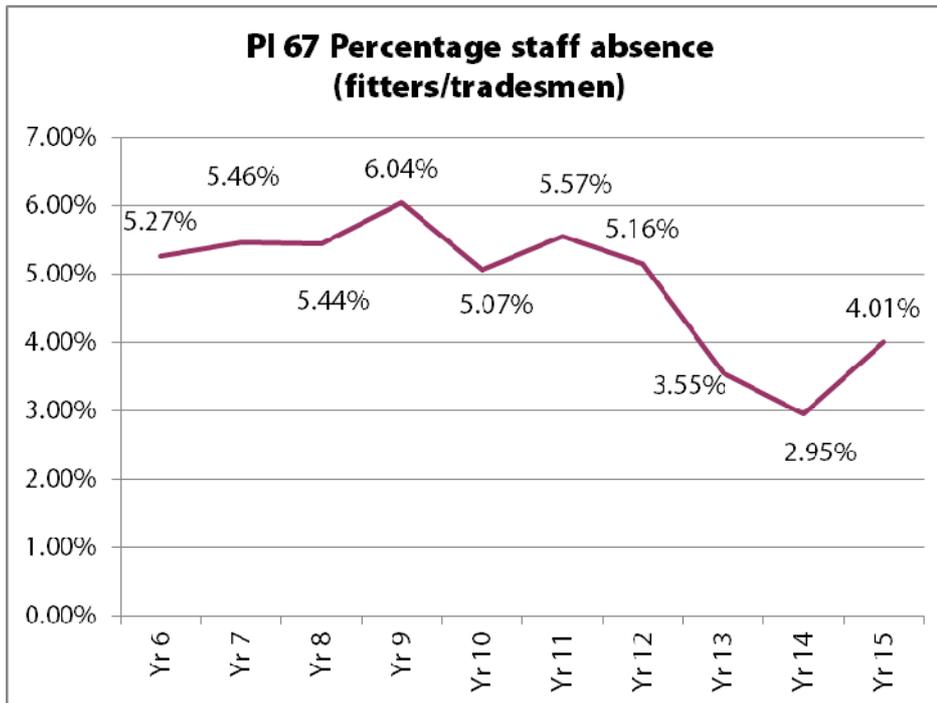
	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13
PI 73a - Percentage of vehicles passing DOE first time	88.45%	88.63%	89.59%	90.10%	91.54%	93.46%	92.33%
PI 74 - Percentage of vehicles serviced within 7 days of schedule	95.22%	95.71%	93.72%	93.89%	93.22%	96.49%	95.24%
PI 76 - Percentage of all workshop jobs completed within 24 hours	75.65%	76.59%	77.61%	77.63%	81.77%	79.11%	80.04%

While both PI 73a and PI 74 show a slight decrease on last year's figures, these are still above the majority of the figures recorded prior to Year 14. PI 76 has shown an improvement since last year to 80.04%, the second highest figure over this 7 year period.

The following table also shows some improvements on PG9 notices and overloading prosecutions have remained at an average of zero, which may be as a result of improved policies or better training and monitoring procedures. There has been a slight upturn on the average number of motor vehicle accidents/incidents (PI 116) since 2011/12, although this remains below the average recorded prior to 2011/12.

|	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13
PI 111 Number of PG9 notices issued by VOSA per 100 council vehicles	0.154	0.181	0.157	0.104	0.071	0.070	0.040
PI 113 Number of overloading prosecutions per 100 council vehicles	0.017	0.006	0.062	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.000
PI 116 Number of motor vehicle accidents / incidents reported per 100 vehicles	44.62	42.09	38.43	38.35	35.25	31.64	32.65

In terms of absence levels, after 3 years of decreases, PI 67 is showing an increase in the average for this year, although it remains below levels recorded prior to year 13 (2010-11).

PI 67 Percentage staff absence (fitters/tradesmen)

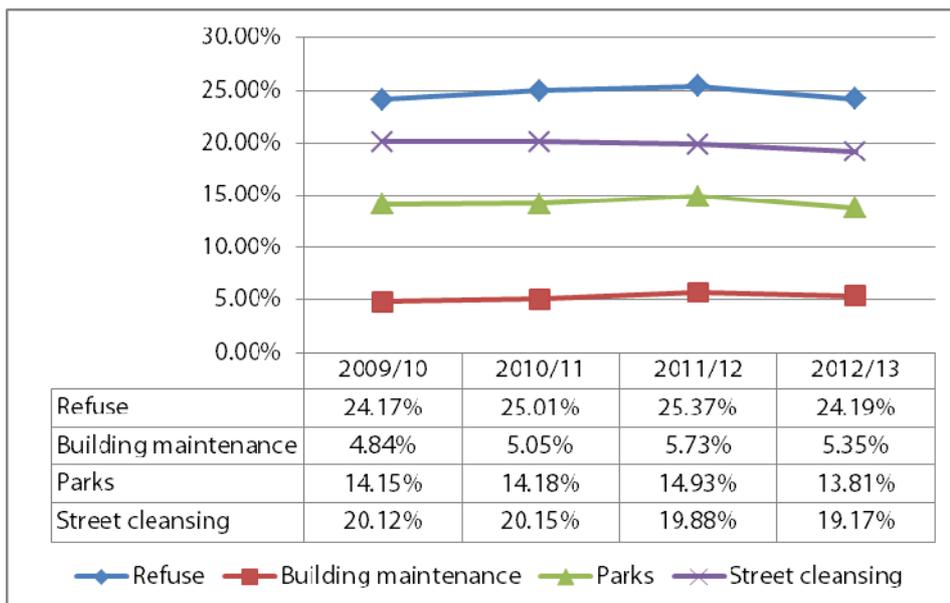5.27% 5.46% 5.44% 6.04% 5.07% 5.57% 5.16% 3.55% 2.95% 4.01%

The quality assurance and consultation performance indicator, PI 70 below, measures customer consultation, quality systems (e.g. ISO), complaints and the publication of service standards. This has shown a decline during the past 2 years from a high of 73.41 to 61.03 this year.

PI 70 Quality assurance and consultation

65.06 61.27 59.74 69.07 73.33 70.84 69.07 73.41 66.55 61.03
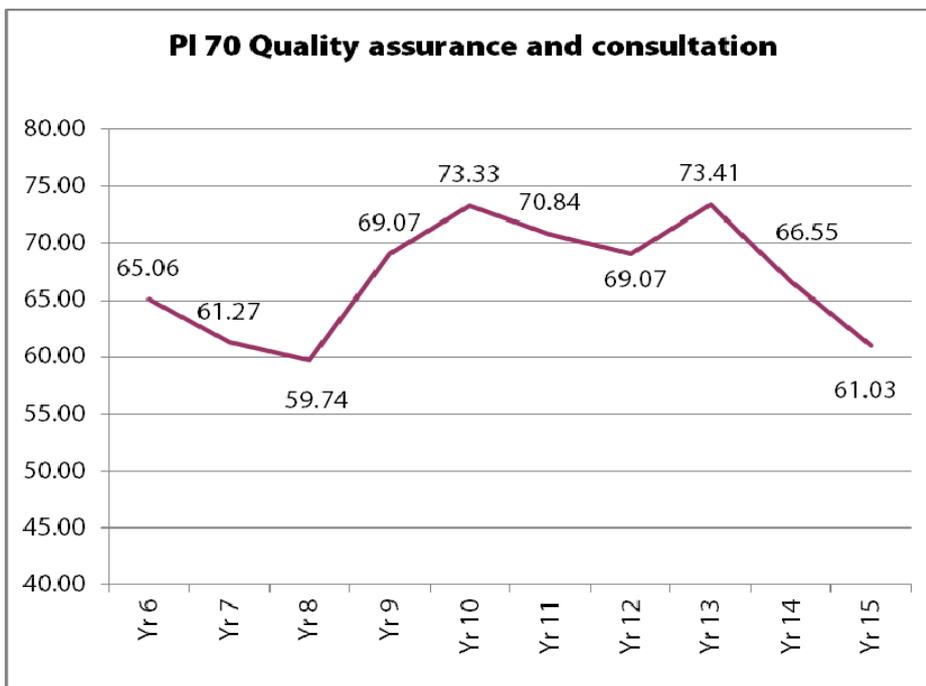
The human resources and people management performance indicator, PI 71 measures investors in people, training, qualification levels and health and safety. This performance indicator has remained fairly constant since last year.

PI 71 Human resources and people management
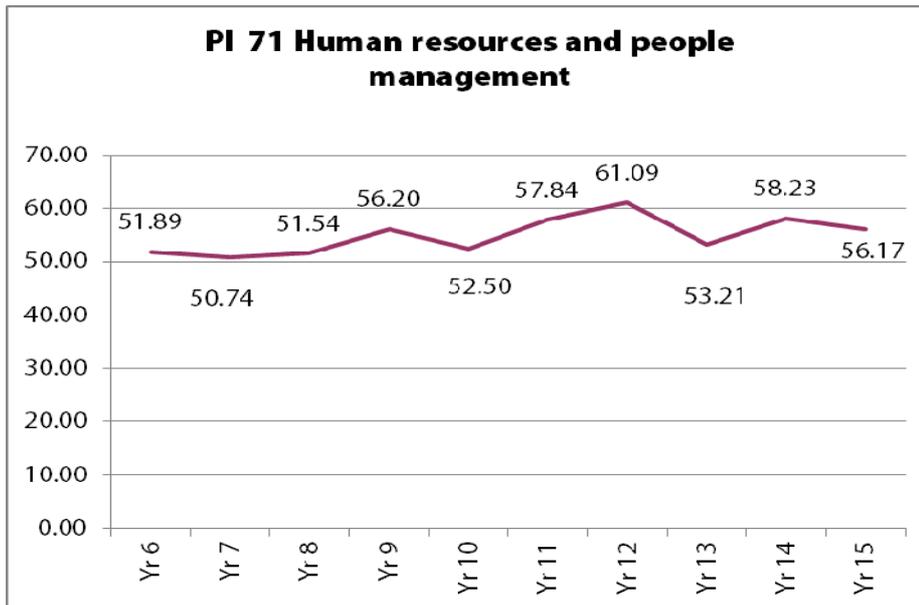
The performance indicators within the model currently mainly relate to internal transport issues. However, transport services are essential to most other local authority services and there is a need to determine if the performance given to clients is actually improving. To give an indication of transport service performance from other models the following information has been extracted. The refuse collection, building maintenance, parks and street cleansing models collect data on transport costs as a percentage of total costs and these are shown in the chart below for the last 4 years. This shows that for each of the services, there has been a decrease in the average transport costs as a proportion of total costs this year.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Refuse	24.17%	25.01%	25.37%	24.19%
Building maintenance	4.84%	5.05%	5.73%	5.35%
Parks	14.15%	14.18%	14.93%	13.81%
Street cleansing	20.12%	20.15%	19.88%	19.17%

3. Future focus

Local authorities continue to face a squeeze on their finances and resources as a result of public spending cuts. Therefore the focus on efficiency and performance in the delivery of front-line local government services remains essential. Performance measurement is a mechanism for local authorities to evidence competitiveness against other providers, identify achievable cost savings and innovative approaches to service delivery, as well as demonstrating value for money to a range of internal and external stakeholders. It also provides a means to learn how other similar services are meeting the challenge and the impact that this is making in terms of cost, quality, productivity and customer satisfaction levels.

The abolition of national performance frameworks and the demise of the Audit Commission in England with the transfer of responsibilities for local public audit and value for money to the National Audit Office, has led to a much more decentralised approach to the benchmarking and publishing of performance information. The Rt. Hon Margaret Hodge MP who chairs the influential Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee and who spoke at last year's performance networks seminar has recently said that councils could be subjected to a "deep dive" investigation by MPs as part of broader reviews of local government performance. This in response to the recently published Local Audit and Accountability Bill which sets out the post Audit Commission arrangements.

There is an increased emphasis on value for money and on open data set out in the Government's own "Open Data" White paper published in June 2012 with a focus on data transparency and the use of data to hold public authorities to account. The subsequent Shakespeare Review on public sector information in response to the White paper published in May 2013 explored the growth opportunities of, and how to widen access to, the wealth of information held by the public sector. It is clear that the drive for performance improvement and publishing meaningful data on performance has not gone away, but is being designed around greater data transparency and public accountability at a local level.

In Scotland, 'Scotland Performs' the national performance framework has been in place since 2007 and there has been a clear emphasis on the use of performance information to drive up the standards in all public services. In March 2013, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Improvement Service launched a new benchmarking project for Scottish local government based on 55 indicators across major service areas with recognition that benchmarking can help to deliver *"even better local services for local communities"*. The approach was based on a move away from focussing on *"meaningless league tables"* towards *"efficiency, effectiveness and outcomes"*. Robust and systematic data to support change and improvement based on knowledge and best practice is at the core of this approach and is precisely what a benchmarking and improvement model like performance networks is designed to facilitate.

Similarly in Wales, the Welsh Government publishes National Strategic Indicators (NSIs) to measure the performance of local authorities at a national level and focus on key strategic priorities. But Local authorities also use these performance indicators, along with other indicators that they choose to use and a wider range of information, in order to plan and deliver improved services. Self-assessment and review is a key feature to the Welsh approach to improvement.

Also the Northern Ireland Local Government Bill which sets up the new local authorities in Northern Ireland and is currently progressing through its stages in

the Northern Ireland Assembly has a section which specifically talks about a general duty of improvement and refers to the use of performance indicators and standards similar to other parts of the UK. The aim is that the new local authorities in Northern Ireland will collect and publish performance information relevant to service users and to ensure greater accountability for performance across councils there.

An independent study for APSE by Michael Hughes the former Director of Studies at the Audit Commission in 2012 *entitled 'How are we doing? Performance measurement, comparison, and review in UK councils'* pointed out that "*Trustworthy performance measures, that are analysed competently and communicated clearly, are important for service managers, for service commissioners and client managers, for councillors, and for citizens.*" The diagram below illustrates the role of performance information in informing people inside and outside the council:
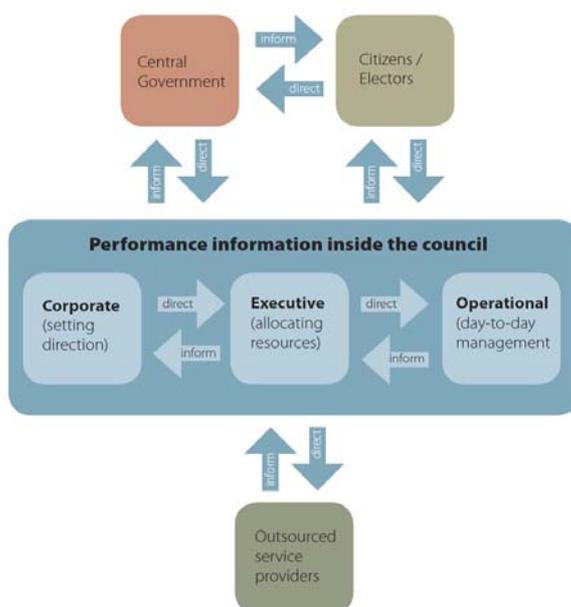
Good performance information supports the decisions that lead to good directions, instructions, and targets. APSE performance networks can assist local authorities by:

- Helping to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.
- Assessing the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis
- Helping to report data in meaningful ways to both elected members and the public.
- Identifying direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.
- Identifying inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.
- Supporting service improvement through process benchmarking and sharing best practice examples.

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