

JOINING THINGS UP THROUGH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

- 1.1 This paper proposes the adoption of a series of actions, which together will enable the Council to continue to improve. The Council has been recognised for its performance in a number of service areas. However, there is no room for complacency and continuous improvement is what we all seek to achieve.
- 1.2 Work has been progressing on a number of fronts and with the approach of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the Council is in the position to make a significant step forward.
- 1.3 This report gives an overview of three more detailed documents, which follow on the agenda. Those reports are:
 - The review of the Corporate Plan
 - The review of the Council's approach to performance management and service planning
 - The Best Value cross cutting review of the Council's approach to sustainability
- 1.4 This set of proposals can be viewed as a package, which ensures the Council has a co-ordinated and structured approach to improving overall performance.
- 1.5 Part of that package is a reduced Best Value review programme.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 In any local authority, or indeed any enterprise, forward planning is key to the delivery of quality services. It is essential for local authorities to set objectives and priorities, to turn policy decisions into actions, to allocate resources as efficiently as possible to achieve those objectives, and to review results in order that lessons can be learnt.
- 2.2 Now is an opportune time for this Council to take stock. Members are experienced with the new democratic process and the prospect of CPA is now more clearly understood. A number of developments have been running concurrently and they are put before Cabinet in the next three reports. However, they are all linked and in many respects, are offered as a package of measures to improve performance.
- 2.3 Political structures and leadership need to be supported by sound service and financial planning. Members should feel able to identify and respond to local needs in the knowledge that there is an appropriate way of setting corporate priorities, and allocating resources to them.
- 2.4 A lesson from our recent experience is that robust but simple systems are needed. So the principles that guided the work to date have been simplicity, flexibility and avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy.

3. IS THERE A CASE FOR CHANGE?

- 3.1 The Council believes that it has a sound reputation within local government for being well run and providing good quality services. This perspective is substantiated by external organisations that have, over a number of years, evaluated its performance. Organisations such as The District Auditor, GOSE, Housing Corporation and the IDeA have made favourable comments about the organisation and its operations.
- 3.2 However, both the IDeA review and the District Auditor, and more recently, the Investors in People assessors, have highlighted that the organisation is well run but lacks a robust service planning and performance management framework. Further, we know already that the guidance for CPA will not only cover these factors but also the crucial relationship to the agenda for well being and the relationship to the corporate plan.
- 3.3 If the Council is serious in seeking recognition through the CPA process for being a well run organisation, and achieving the freedoms that come with that, having a robust performance management framework is essential.
- 3.4 New Forest District Council always believes in aspiring to best practice but only if this delivers what is important to the community it serves. This package of documents has been developed with those principles in mind.
- 3.5 In short, if we wish to be an effective organisation, we must know what we are aiming to achieve, where we are achieving and where we are not. It is therefore essential that the Council has an effective framework for understanding these elements and achieving continuous improvement.

4. OVERALL OUTCOMES

- 4.1 The outcomes from the three reports can be summarised as:

Strategic Dimension

Greater clarity about what the Council is trying to achieve
Through:

- Clearly understanding its role
- Knowing what it is trying to achieve
- Identifying how it is going to achieve it

Better co-ordination of the Council's overall activities and performance

Through:

- Consistent and timely approach to service planning
- Creating stronger links between services and the Corporate Plan
- Making best use of performance information to shape strategic decisions

Achieve greater impact across the Council's aims

Through:

- Using a performance management system to identify opportunities to achieve across the three areas of well-being.

Service Dimension

A more transparent and inclusive approach to service planning

Through:

- Giving members more opportunity to input into the development and monitoring of services
- Giving other stakeholders the opportunity to influence decisions on what is delivered

Financial Dimension

Strengthening the Council's annual and medium term financial planning

Through:

- Linking the service planning process with the budget process
- Creating four year budget parcels for individual services to enable greater alignment of service planning, resource allocation and priority setting

5. BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

5.1 The proposals create a robust and effective performance management process that cascades and translates top-level strategic objectives into detailed service objectives.

5.2 Appendix 1 shows how the key priorities and objectives can and should flow from the Community Strategy through the organisation and into individual work programmes. It should also be stressed that this is a two way process and to achieve corporate ownership individual employees need to sign up to what the Council is trying to achieve. This can only be done if those employees have a mechanism for their views to be heard and they are able to have some influence in the objectives that are set.

5.3 Getting ownership of any new system may stem from:

- Involvement in the process at all key levels
- Belief that the process will make a difference
- Commitment of all to develop priorities that reflect evidence of research and results alongside political direction/vision
- Monitoring of how the process evolves and identification of where it is not working effectively

5.4 For the proposals to work, CMT and Members must support the framework and the philosophy that goes with it. They must be an integral part in it and must ensure that objectives and responsibilities are clear and that work programmes/services plans reflect the priorities of the organisation. It needs to become the culture of the organisation as well as its processes. Commitment "from the top" is at the heart of this.

5.5 By linking service plans with the resource allocation process there should be greater direction and focus of delivery for budgets and enable real accountability at the public level for Council Tax payers. Outcomes from stakeholder consultation and involvement should influence annual and longer-term priorities where applicable.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposals contained in all three reports should result in the better use of resources including finance but contain no proposals for additional expenditure.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The overall proposals provide an opportunity for issues such as the environment and crime and disorder to be better integrated into a wider variety of service plans than at present.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 There is a need to strengthen the Council's performance management system in order to move the Council forward.
- 8.2 The proposals for change contained in the three reports should improve the Council's overall performance.
- 8.3 It does however need much more than a system. It requires belief in the process and a real desire for continuous improvement.
- 8.4 Everyone in the organisation has a part to play but the ownership and responsibility has to be with senior managers and Members.
- 8.5 The proposals are geared to achieving the better use of resources. This includes reducing the time Members and officers currently spend on Best Value reviews and targeting their efforts on issues where they can make the biggest difference.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 That this report be noted and the Cabinet consider the following three reports as a package designed to improve the Council's overall performance.

For further information

Chris Malyon
Director of Resources
Town Hall, Lymington
Tel: 023 8028 5701
Email: chris.malyon@nfdc.gov.uk

Martin Devine
Assistant Director of Leisure Services
Appletree Court, Lyndhurst
Tel: 023 8028 5474
Email: martin.devine@nfdc.gov.uk

Dottie Dabrowska
Best Value Co-ordinator
Appletree Court, Lyndhurst
Tel: 023 8028 5474
Email: dottie.dabrowska@nfdc.gov.uk

Jayne Griffiths
Head of Personnel
Appletree Court, Lyndhurst
Tel: 023 8028 5482
Email: jayne.griffiths@nfdc.gov.uk

Helena Renwick
Head of Information Services
Appletree Court, Lyndhurst
Tel: 023 8028 5560
Email: helena.renwick@nfdc.gov.uk

Keith Smith
Head of Performance and Strategic Dev
Appletree Court, Lyndhurst
Tel: 023 8028 5551
Email: keith.smith@nfdc.gov.uk

John Ward
Head of Policy, Design and Information
Town Hall, Lymington
Tel: 023 8028 5348
Email: john.ward@nfdc.gov.uk

MAKING THE CONNECTION – A PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

