

CABINET – 5 July 2004

POLICY AND STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – The Council’s Improvement Plan








Summary of Purpose and Recommendations:

To approve the Council’s Improvement Plan and note progress against the various areas for improvement.

Cost to Council: no direct costs

Within existing budget? N/A

Contribution to Corporate Plan (Minor/Moderate/Major/Neutral):

	+		-		+		-
	Major			Priorities			
	Major			Clean Streets and Public Space	Major		
	Major			Crime and Disorder	Major		
	Major			Housing	Major		
	Major			Managing our Finances	Major		

Comments on Impacts on Corporate Objectives and Priorities:

The contents of the Improvement Plan are geared to make major impacts across the 5 corporate objectives. It is particularly strong in improvement areas relating to maintaining the Council as an organisation of excellence. The other improvement areas provide a good spread across the other 4 corporate objectives and the 4 Council priorities, sometimes as part of larger areas such as the delivery of the Community Strategy and the implementation of the Performance Management System.



Organisation of excellence



Working with public and partners



Economic well being



Social well being



Environmental well being

THE COUNCIL'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Key features of an 'excellent and improving' authority include learning from experience and being able to focus on what it wants to improve on.
- 1.2 The production of an Improvement Plan for the Council is an expression of these key features.
- 1.3 This report sets out the Improvement Plan for approval and gives members an update on progress against the various areas for improvement.
- # 1.4 A copy of the Improvement Plan is attached at the Appendix.

2. DEVELOPING THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 2.1 The initial version of the Improvement Plan was approved by Members as part of the Council's corporate self-assessment for the CPA process.
- 2.2 This had been informed by discussions amongst members and officers as well as the peer challenge provided prior to the CPA inspection.
- 2.3 The current version has been further developed to include issues coming out of the CPA inspection.
- 2.4 At present there is an expectation from the Audit Commission that all authorities will give proper attention to improvement planning but there is no prescription as to the format of an improvement plan. It is suggested that the improvement plan be used as a potential checklist of key corporate improvement issues facing the authority and that it be updated and reviewed on a regular basis. This simple approach should avoid duplication and confusion with the four-year Corporate Plan and the annual Performance Plan which remain the key corporate planning documents of the authority.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications to having an improvement plan other than the costs associated with the different areas for improvement.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Some areas of the Improvement Plan provide focus on some specific areas eg completion of the Waste Management Strategy. Other areas provide impact on these issues through the delivery of improvement eg implementing the Community Strategy.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The plan will evolve further as some areas for improvement are completed and new ones are identified.
- 5.2 It provides an opportunity for members and officers to use the Plan as part of a strategic overview approach to ensure the Council continues to move forward.
- 5.3 The plan will be updated every 6 months with this in mind.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That this Council's Improvement Plan be approved and progress noted.

For further information

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Background papers

CPA Self Assessment
CPA Inspectors' Report

THE COUNCIL'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2004 – 2006 - PROGRESS

Improvement Activity and HOS Lead		Projected Outcomes	Current Position	Next report to			Target date for completion (if applic)
				HOS	CMT	Cab	
1	Lead a multi agency response to help meet the diverse needs of the District by						
	a) Finalising the Community Strategy (KS)	Clear Vision for the District, topic based objectives, priorities to be tackled and partnership based actions and resource	Draft being updated following consultation period. LSP and Cabinet approved amendments.		11/05/04	02/06/04 (Sp Council 14/06/04)	Publish in July
	b) Ensuring the Community Strategy is implemented and reviewed (KS)	Strong vibrant communities where all have improved quality of life	CANs and Leads geared to delivering the actions and identifying next year's actions. Developing ideas about how best to bring CAN leads together to encourage more cross cutting approach. CANs to monitor own action plans and report to LSP initially once a year in first instance. Some CANs still need to be developed.			(CAT – July LSP – Sept//Oct)	Action Planning – April 2005 Major Review April 2007
2	Develop communication/consultation framework by:	Clear understanding amongst employees and partners. Improved awareness of and increased involvement in Council activities (including hard to reach groups)					
	a) Launching and promoting Heart of the Forest (DY/KS)		HoF launched through hard copy and website publication and Leader & Chief Executives employee briefings, Member training, posters, plans to business units. Shared with partners & public, greater prominence through service plans, cabinet reports and performance plan. Considering minor review & potential for greater impact on website.				
	b) Reviewing effectiveness of communication/consultation mechanisms (DA)	Principle of developing best practice guidelines rather than strategy approach agreed. Citizens Panel and media asked for views on effectiveness of Council's communication.		September 2004			

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3	Review effectiveness of democratic arrangements including developing role of review panels by reviewing structure and providing training/support (GO'R)	Real and robust scrutiny that has credibility with the public and an enhanced policy development role for non executive members	Scrutiny review completed. Consequent amendments to existing arrangements likely to be implemented in September. Training for members of the new panel geared for September prior to first meeting.			July Council	
4	Develop senior managers' roles and structures (DY)	Firm focus on delivery of Council's priorities and strategies	Monthly Heads of Service meetings tackling corporate delivery agenda. Pilot extension of CMT group.	Sept 2004			
5	Develop ways of achieving more flexible working patterns (JG)	Meeting changing customer expectations and improving work/life balance of employees	Action plan agreed. Employee focus groups arranged. Steering group set up to agree policy changes.		July/Aug 04		Autumn 04
6	Build on establishment of Test Valley Partnership (JM)	Delivery of full benefits of joint working to provide a better service for public, and share lessons learnt	Partnership continuing to make good progress, benefits accruing to both authorities. Quarterly progress reports to Commercial Services Joint Committee. Annual Service Plan to Joint Committee (14 April) and full Council for approval		15 June 2004	5 July 2004	Ongoing

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7	Implement the new performance management framework by	Effective delivery of the Council's corporate plan					
	a) Identify smarter targets against Council's priorities and aims as part of the service planning process (All)	Clear, smart targets against four priorities and other 22 aims	Service plans exist for all major service areas. Service planning guidelines being finalised in time for 2004/05 process. Creates stronger links to Corporate Plan.				
	b) Ensure focused and rigorous review of performance against BVPI's and other measures (KS)	Identification of improvements to shape future service delivery	Reports to CMT and Member training raised awareness of need to do more. Issue progressed through review panels and service planning. Strategic approached still required at CMT/HOS/Cabinet/Corporate Plan & Finance Review Panel?				
	c) Improve the medium term financial strategy through better alignment of strategic, financial and workforce planning (CM)	Effective use of tax payers resources	Financial Strategy for 2005/06 onwards drafted. Initial discussions taken place on linking savings and bids into service planning framework.			July 2004	
8	Finalise the risk management strategy (CM)	An integrated approach to the identification, evaluation and control of risks	Strategy finalised. Piloting Risk Register in one directorate. Corporate Strategic Risk Assessment to be done with CMT and members.		Autumn		
9	Agree and implement an enhanced and integrated e-government strategy (KC)	Improved delivery of Council services through innovative use of new technology	Good progress is being made on developing key access channels to services e.g., through the Customer Services Contact Centre, improved telephone call handling, enhanced local information offices and via the Forest Local Access Project (FLAP). Efforts are now being focused on improving the Council's web site (both in terms content, transaction fulfillment and links to other sites).		22 June 2004 (web site improvements).		December 2005 (e-government strategy)

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10	Deliver the Council's Contact Centre vision (GM)	Enhanced and consistently high quality response service to customers	Contact centre telephony system implemented May 2004. Resource implications currently being assessed. Parallel developments across access channels being explored. Current year timetable for transferring services into contact centre agreed.	Dec 2004			
11	Explore methods of attracting additional external funding (CM)	Improve local services without cost to local tax payer	Increased attention to income generation opportunities, including use of HCC grant finder service.				
12	a) Agree homelessness strategy (DB)	Reduce levels of homelessness in the district	Strategy completed and approved by Cabinet				Completed
	b) Develop innovative ways of delivering affordable housing (DB)	Help create balanced sustainable communities	Requirements for land for affordable housing to be transferred to RSL's at nil value on sites delivered using planning powers. Implementation of New Forest affordable housing sustainable development framework. Investigation into a grant free model for development of surplus Council owned land		January 2005	February 2005	Completed Completed
	c) Develop clear approach to achieving the Decent Homes Standard (DB)	Achieve a high standard of public sector housing throughout the district	New stock survey complete and now being analysed. This will clearly identify those properties that do not meet the DHS and will enable clear targets to be set to achieve the DHS together with the finance required. Options appraisal process currently underway will ensure that the required finance can be obtained to meet the target. Reporting of progress against targets will be made on a quarterly basis to the Housing, health & Social Inclusion Review Panel.		Options Appraisal Report – Oct 2004	Options Appraisal Report - Nov 2004	
13	Expand on the variety of methods for individuals to access training and development, including use of new technology and partnership working (JG)	A workforce capable of meeting the changing needs of the organisation today and in the future	Workforce Development Strategy has been agreed. E-learning being developed. Service development plans to be contained within each service plan, Head of Personnel to meet with each HoS				On-going

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14	Develop a learning culture at all levels which evaluates what we do and shares learning from successes and failures (NJG/JG)	A confident organisation which operates in a learning and no blame culture	Learning culture discussion paper discussed at HoS meeting and IRC. Update taken to HoS incorporating action on investors in people Further action points to be developed	Sept 04			On-going
15	Complete strategies/reviews required by Heart of the Forest, including:	Effective delivery of Council's corporate plan					
	a) Equalities Strategy (including Race Scheme) (DY)	Council services and employment opportunities accessible to all.	Strategy completed. Emphasis now on delivery against the different levels of the Equalities Standard. Progress report to C&F RP on 24 June. Officer Group established – first meeting 22 June.		October		Level 2 – March 2005
	b) Children and young people (MKD)	The production of an integrated strategy currently contained in the C&YP topic chapter of the Community Strategy that engages all agencies active in the District. A strategy that also serves as the Local Development Plan for "Every Child Matters". A strategy that has a clear and evident relationship to Service based plans and thinking.	Funding agreed by NF and HCC LSP to scope the production of such a plan and develop communication inks.				Complete scoping by end February 2005 Target date for production yet to be determined.
	c) Waste (in addition to Project Integra Business Plan) (JM/CR)	Clear overall approach to dealing with waste in the New Forest District.	Draft Waste Strategy prepared, to be reported to Environment Review Panel (23 June) and Cabinet (5 July)			5 July 2004	5 July 2004

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16	Evaluate the options arising from decision over a New Forest National Park and agree the Council's strategy (JW)	Arrangements that best meet the needs of the people of the New Forest district and maximise local accountability	Awaiting Secretary of States decision. Technical Officers Group and Councillors Steering Group evaluating options before the end of 2004.	Following Secretary of States decision	Following Secretary of States decision	Following Secretary of States decision	
17	Procurement (GB/PH))		Action plan prepared to address priorities identified in National Procurement Strategy. Small working group established to progress actions. Report back to CMT in 6 Months.		Nov 2004		
18	Complaints (GO'R/GM/HR)	Ensuring consistency and maximise learning across the Council from complaints received.	Officer group working on developing a system that provides a consistent approach to recording, analysing and reporting all complaints. System to be piloted for 6 months.	July	July	September (C&FRP?)	Pilot – September Implement – April 05
19	Working more proactively with key stakeholders to improve local decision making by						
	a) Improving working relationships with town and parish councils in respect of planning decision-making.	Better understanding of key issues which influence planning decision making to enable local communities to play a more effective role in planning outcomes in the local community.	Discussions under way about how Planning Delivery Grant funding can be most effectively used to facilitate the outcomes				implement Autumn 2004, Review 2005
	b) Agreeing a compact with the voluntary sector	Clarity and transparency of expectation about delivery to and from the voluntary sector.	Draft Compact for Hampshire published for consultation. First meeting of New Forest Compact Group taking place 25 June involving NFDC, Community First and other partners.		September 2004	February 2005	March 2005
20	Develop this Improvement Plan and ensure it is delivered (DY)	An improved organisation which has made full use of the CPA process to achieve its aims for improving the quality of people's lives	Improvement Plan currently being updated including targeted completion dates for individual actions. Need to consider impact of any changes on CMT work programme and the Council's Forward Plan. Profile of the Improvement Plan being raised as part of the current review.	15 June 2004	15 June 2004	5 July 2004	Ongoing Individual targets for specific actions.