

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – The Council’s Improvement Plan








Summary of Purpose and Recommendations:

To note progress against the various areas for improvement contained in the Council’s Improvement Plan and to consider any further areas for inclusion in the plan.

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 progress against the various areas for improvement as contained within the Council's Improvement Plan.

1.4 A copy of the updated Improvement Plan is attached at the Appendix.

2. DEVELOPING THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 2.1 The Improvement Plan was formally approved by Members on 5 July 2004 following the CPA process.
- 2.2 Improvement planning is an important aspect for any successful organization. The Improvement Plan does not stand still and it needs to develop as new key challenges present themselves. Members role in this development is crucial.
- 2.3 The Improvement Plan is updated and reviewed on a regular basis and acts as a focus for key corporate improvement issues facing the authority. It needs to work in harmony 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 continue to evolve 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 is updated every 6 months with this in mind.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That progress against the Council's Improvement Plan be noted; and
- 6.2 That Members identify any issues for inclusion in the Improvement Plan.

For further information

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Background papers

CPA Self Assessment
CPA Inspectors' Report

THE COUNCIL'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2004 – 2006 – PROGRESS (As at June 2005)

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. These to create economic growth, safer & healthier communities, an improved environment, a socially inclusive community providing freedoms and choice and greater opportunities for all.	Community Strategy approved and published for 2004 –2007 along with progress report against 04/05 Action Plan. View on www.changinglivesnewforest.gov.uk web site.	(Meeting of CAN leads to be held 27/6/05)	LSP 20 July 2005 (05/06 Action Plan)	3 August 2005 (05/06 Action Plan)	
b) Ensuring the Community Strategy is implemented and reviewed (KS)	Agreed actions delivered that contribute towards an improved quality of life based on priorities, themes and criteria that are relevant to the communities of the District. Multi agency resource established to develop and deliver the actions.	CANs developed the 04/05 Action Plan and identified potential actions for future years. Delivered virtually all those actions. Meeting of CAN leads held 28/4/05 which finalised 2004/05 progress report, and drafted 05/06 actions encouraging a more cross cutting approach. CANs monitoring own action plans and reporting to LSP in January each year. Nine CANs now in place. Lifelong Learning and Environment yet to be established.	(Meeting of CAN Leads to be held 27/6/05)	LSP 20 July 2005 (05/06 Action Plan)	3 August 2005 (05/06 Action Plan)	Action Planning – April 2005 Major Review during 2006. Strong links with LDF process New Strategy by April 2007

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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.				
	b) Reviewing effectiveness of communication/consultation mechanisms (DA)		Agreed principle of developing best practice guidelines rather than strategy approach. Citizens Panel and media asked for views on effectiveness of Council's communication and results shaping the way we communicate with various user groups. Communications Officer producing document to include communication protocols.	May 05	June 05		
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. Greater opportunity for strategic overview and cross cutting working to contribute towards the Council's performance management system	Scrutiny review completed. Implemented new arrangements including creation of the Corporate Overview Panel in September. Specific training delivered for members of the new panel and general scrutiny training and specific training for all panels delivered September – November. Members now have a clear role in the service planning process – particularly through the Lead Scrutiny Member (LSM) approach. Clear understanding of which panel is leading on and which panels have a real interest in each of the Council's corporate aims. Further training for LSM's planned for mid 2005.			(LSM training – July/August 2005)	

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4	Develop senior managers' roles and structures (DY)	Firm focus on delivery of Council's priorities and strategies	Monthly Heads of Service meetings continuing to develop. Rotating Chairman opportunities and development of robust strategic and service based work programme. External review completed of HOS roles and conditions. Pilot extension of CMT group.	Monthly			
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. Working Group set up including employee side reps & Scrutiny Members. Flexible working protocol drafted and being piloted for 3 months.		June 05	June 05 (IRC)	Summer 05
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 deliver benefits to both councils. Report addressing future provision of financial systems and support services to be discussed with Joint Committee 25 May 05. Last meeting of Joint Committee 3/3/05 received Directors Report for period 1/4/04 – 31/12/04			Joint Committee 25/5/05	Ongoing
7	Implement the new performance management framework by	Effective delivery of the Council's corporate plan and the Council's contribution towards the Community Strategy					

Improvement Activity and HOS Lead		Projected Outcomes	Current Position	Next report to			Target date for completion (if applic)
				HOS	CMT	Cab	
	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	2005/06 service plans completed for all services. HOS involved in reviewing success of the process and the guidelines issued in time to help develop the 2006/07 plans. Plans are geared to deliver on key service and corporate issues eg e gov, diversity & equalities workforce planning etc. SMART principles adopted for service planning and key target setting. Assessment of Council's key targets has again been made against the structure of the Corporate Plan. Medium term targets to be included against each of the Council's aims for inclusion in the Performance Plan.	26 April 2005 Input into review of service planning process and agree areas for focus and improvement	Performance Plan development - May	Perf Plan approval Cabinet June Council June	Performance Plan 30 June
	b) Ensure focused and rigorous review of performance against BVPI's and other measures (KS)	Identification of potential improvements to shape future service delivery	CMT and Members much better engaged in the use of performance information both from a service and strategic perspective. "Focusing on Performance" reports to CMT and COP include an annual report plus exception reporting every 4 months. Basket of key PI's being developed for inclusion in Performance Plan this year. Lead scrutiny member roles developed and service planning geared to making use of performance information in developing services improvement plans. Continually improving the Performance Plan through design amendments, challenging the criteria used for green, amber & red pi categories. Pocket-sized approach has been useful in helping to promote it as a management tool.	Annual Report on performance in June. HOS input into CMT via DMTs on exception reports.	Annual Report June then exception reporting every 4 months.	Annual Report to COP in June then exception report to members every 4 months.	Ongoing
	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 approved. Short and medium term financial objectives established and included within the service planning process. Individual proposals for 2005/06 are clearly linked to corporate priorities.			July 2005	Annual

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8	Finalise the risk management strategy (CM)	An integrated approach to the identification, evaluation and control of risks	Strategy finalised. Currently piloting Risk Register in one directorate. Corporate Strategic Risk Assessment will be complete as soon as pilot is completed. Risk management included as part of the <u>Service Planning Guidelines</u> .		Spring 2005		Completed
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 fulfilment and links to other sites).				December 2005 (e-government strategy)
10	Deliver the Council's Contact Centre vision (GM)	Enhanced and consistently high quality response service to customers across all access channels	The number of contacts dealt with by Customer Information Services continues to grow by over 20% each year. Contact centre team and local offices amalgamated into one section to help promote equality and consistency across access channels. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) are being updated and opportunities for more self-service (via web and phone) being explored. The telephony system is producing very useful management information to help shape future service delivery and customer satisfaction surveys have recently been completed.	January 2006	August 2005		

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11	Explore methods of attracting additional external funding (CM)	Improve local services without cost to local tax payer	<p>Increased attention to income generation opportunities, particularly within the expenditure planning process. This Council has joined with five other Hampshire district councils to employ a Joint Funding Officer hosted by HCC. The individual has only recently commenced employment and inaugural meeting in early December.</p> <p>The Council has been a significant player in the work on LPSA2 participating in more targets than any other district and enabling the involvement of its partners in the county - wide discussions. Currently finalising negotiations re stretch and levels of pump priming and reward monies required..</p>		May 05	January	Ongoing
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	<p>Requirements for land for affordable housing to be transferred to RSL's at nil value on sites delivered using planning powers.</p> <p>Implementation of New Forest affordable housing sustainable development framework.</p> <p>Investigation into a grant free model for development of surplus Council owned land and into the Council acquiring an equity stake in new dwellings as an alternative to giving grant.</p> <p>The Stock Options Appraisal process has been extended to encompass an investigation into alternative funding for new development. Joint working with other southern Hampshire LA's to investigate options for attracting funds for affordable housing into the District.</p>		January 2005	February 2005	Completed

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	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 initial analysis completed. This has identified that only 14% of stock currently does not meet DHS but that 73% will become non-decent by 2010 if action is not taken. Options appraisal process currently underway will ensure that the required finance can be obtained to meet the target of achieving DHS by 2010. Reports considered by CMT and Cabinet. Reporting of progress against targets will be made on a quarterly basis to the Housing, health & Social Inclusion Review Panel. Asset Management Strategy now written incorporating DHS requirements and in process of being implemented.				
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. European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) being piloted. Essential skills being piloted. E-learning being developed. Service development plans to be contained within each service plan, Head of Personnel to meet with each HoS		June 2005	June 2005 (IRC)	On-going
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. Raised awareness of opportunities for learning. Update taken to HoS incorporating action on investors in people. Complaints procedure revised to share learning. Learning to be incorporated in each HOS agenda.				On-going
15	Complete strategies/reviews required by Heart of the Forest, including:	Effective delivery of Council's corporate plan					

Improvement Activity and HOS Lead	Projected Outcomes	Current Position	Next report to			Target date for completion (if applic)	
			HOS	CMT	Cab		
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. Level 2 achieved. Assessment made in March 2005. Working Plan including objectives and targets for 05/06 to be carried out by CDG, CREG & Equality Unit.		Portfolio holder & Lead Scrutiny Members to agree draft working plan		Level 3 60%– March 2006 Level 3 100% March 07	
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 NFLSP, NFDC and HCC to scope the production of such a plan and develop communication links. LSP presentation and discussion in March. National duty to co-operate and national guidance on the production of plans, reinforce the desirability of a locality based multi agency plan. Children and Young People CAN supported this at April 2005 meeting.	Community Services Directorate Management Team to consider response to guidance in May 05	CAN Leads meeting 28/4/05	LSP Core Group update July 05	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.	Waste Strategy approved by Cabinet (4 August)				Completed	
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	National Park Authority established. NFDC Cabinet decision taken on preferred partnership for planning service delivery. Discussions with NPA ongoing.	Update as appropriate	Planning service delivery - July	Planning Service delivery - August	NPA to be fully established by 1 April 2006

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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. Developing the challenge element for fundamental reviews of services around the procurement issue.		December 2004		April 2005
18	Complaints (GO'R/GM/HR)	Ensuring consistency and maximise learning across the Council from complaints received.	A system that provides a consistent approach to recording, analysing and reporting all complaints was piloted for 6 months in 3 major services and went live 1/04/05 with all Council services	Review with HOS January 2006		COP June 05. Standards Committee -summer 05	Completed March 05. To be reviewed annually.
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. (JW)	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.	Following consultation with all local councils part of Planning Delivery Grant being used to appoint parish plans liaison officer to help parishes in their production of parish plans. Countryside Rural pathfinder project incorporated into this initiative.			6 monthly progress reports to portfolio holder	Parish Plans Liaison Officer funded until April 2007
	b) Agreeing a compact with the voluntary sector (SP)	Clarity and transparency of expectation about delivery to and from the voluntary sector.	Compact for the whole of Hampshire now agreed and published. Launched at a Chairman's evening with the voluntary sector in November 2004.				Completed - November 2004

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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 updated at least every 6 months including targeted completion dates for individual actions. Need to consider impact of any changes on CMT work programme and the Council's Forward Plan. Corporate Overview Panel now has specific review role for the Improvement Plan. Individual services are encouraged to consider contributions towards the plan as part of the service planning process. Need to consider implications of future CPA criteria on the Plan.	May 2005		June 2005	Ongoing Individual targets for specific actions.