

Best Value Performance Plan

Our Priorities and Performance

Each year we publish a Best Value Performance Plan to tell you what our priorities are and how we are performing. A summary of our priorities and performance is set out in this leaflet. We will produce our next performance plan in June 2008 and you will be able to obtain a copy by:

Writing to us at: Epping Forest District Council, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex, CM16 4BZ, telephoning us on: 01992 564180, faxing us on: 01992 578018, or E-mailing us at: bestvalue@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Our Thematic Approach

In this summary of the Best Value Performance Plan we have linked the way in which we provide services to the following themes of the Community Strategy for 2004 to 2021. The Community Strategy sets out the major challenges facing the Epping Forest District over the long-term and how these will be addressed by statutory and voluntary agencies:

- Green and Unique
- A Safe Community
- Homes and Neighbourhoods
- Fit for Life
- Economic Prosperity
- Improving Our Performance

This leaflet shows the issues we face and our aims for 2008/09, and what we have achieved so far during 2007/08 within each theme. We hope that you find this useful.

Green and Unique

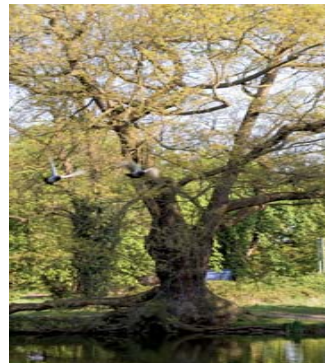
One of the key objectives of the Community Strategy is that the district will maintain a unique, green and sustainable environment in which communities prosper. This vision is reflected in our medium-term priorities, which seek to maintain the special character and advantage of the district and address local environmental issues. Our Environmental Protection and Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolios, and the planning functions of the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio, are included within this theme.

Our Achievements and Aims

We aim to protect the environment of the district through the use of statutory powers, education and the adoption of good environmental practice and to maintain the highways infrastructure in the district through formal liaison arrangements with Essex County Council.

We have developed a new waste management contract, which will improve further our recycling and diversion from landfill to meet the needs and wishes of residents. We have completed work on the landfill remediation site at Bobbingworth Tip.

We have reduced the risks of localised flooding by carrying out asset condition surveys of piped watercourse and by flood alleviation schemes that maintain and enforce watercourse control. We aim to improve the treescape of the district and the new District Tree Strategy will be available in Spring 2008. This document tells you about our policies and objectives to manage and retain our neighbourhood trees.



We have reviewed our parking policies and now provide free parking on Saturdays throughout the year.

A Safe Community

A second key objective of the Community Strategy is for the Epping Forest District to be an area where people will be reassured that criminal and disorderly behaviour is unusual and, where it does occur, that the police, other agencies and members of the community will do their utmost to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. This vision is reflected in our medium-term priorities, which seek to maintain the district as a safe, healthy and attractive place. The Community Wellbeing Portfolio is included in this theme.

Our Achievements and Aims

We have increased the number of Service Level Agreements for community groups in receipt of long-term funding to ensure that they are working within the guidelines set out in contracts.

Protecting Young People

The Council participated in the Essex Police '2 Smart 4 Drugs' scheme in schools, providing education about drugs, alcohol and staying safe; and we have developed policies on gambling to ensure the protection of the public and young people.



Protecting Families and the Vulnerable

We have provided 3 Sanctuary Schemes in the district. Sanctuary Schemes help families to stay in their homes if they have become victims of domestic violence or hate crime. Schemes like this are running successfully in a number of areas across the country. Our Sanctuary Scheme is for people who normally live within the Epping Forest District, and was set up with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

The security of the home is improved through a variety of measures. A Sanctuary Room is created to provide a safe room in the home and a number of security measures are provided,

such as internal fire doors, additional locks in to the premises and fire fighting equipment.

Protecting The Elderly

A substantial number of older people reside in the Epping Forest District. As a result, the area suffers regular attention from burglars acting as bogus callers. These criminals are very plausible and persuasive and older people will often let them into their homes. We have implemented a 'Nominated Neighbour' scheme, where we issues cards to elderly residents for them to display prominently, which asks all doorstep callers to call at a neighbours' house first to prove identity before they will open the front door. Our objective is to reduce incidences of artifice burglary in respect of the elderly or more vulnerable residents in the District, and from October 2007 we have been implementing nominated neighbour cards.



We have also developed a strategy with Essex Police on the deployment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and continue to jointly fund 6 PCSOs.

Homes and Neighbourhoods

Another of the key objectives of the Community Strategy is that the district has safe, decent and attractive housing that meets the needs of those who want to live in the district. This vision is reflected in our medium-term priorities, which seek to address key housing need. The Housing Portfolio is included within this theme.

Our Achievements and Aims

The Council is a responsible landlord for around 6,500 tenants and around 900 leaseholders, offering reasonable rents, and managing its properties effectively and efficiently.

Providing Affordable Homes

We continue to work with developers and housing associations to provide all types of new homes in the District, including affordable housing for rent and shared ownership. We have also initiated a 'Finders Fee' scheme to bring at least five private sector empty properties back into use per annum and make them available to our housing applicants.

We aim to introduce two low cost home ownership initiatives (Home Ownership Grants and Open Market Shared Ownership) in 2008/09, to assist first time buyers enter home ownership. We will also be carrying out a Housing Market Assessment to increase the Council's understanding of the local housing market to inform future policies and strategies.

Safe and Well Managed Housing Stock



We were re-accredited with the Charter Mark Award for Customer Excellence, for the whole of Housing Services, for a further three years and commenced a major £4m improvement scheme at Springfields, Waltham Abbey.

We introduced our HomeOption Scheme, which gives housing applicants greater choice and transparency in the letting of Council properties and we implemented a licensing regime for houses in multiple occupation to ensure that they provide safe accommodation.

We will be commencing an upgrade programme for communal TV aerials on estates, to enable receipt of digital TV prior to the changeover from analogue TV.

Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour

We met the Government's Respect Standard for Housing Management, which gives a public commitment to the Council's approach for dealing with anti-social behaviour.

Work on anti-social behaviour is delivered through two Area Housing Offices (north and south) and the Limes Farm Estate Office, Chigwell, which is a sub office of the Area Housing Office (South).

Fit for Life

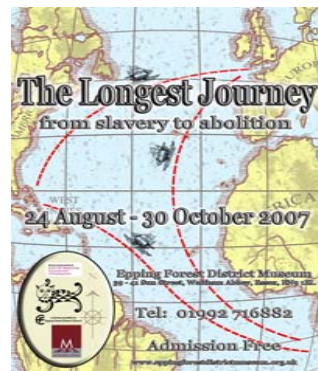
The Community Strategy aims to ensure that Epping Forest District is an area where people of all ages and abilities can lead a healthy lifestyle by having access to effective high quality leisure and cultural services. This vision is reflected in our medium-term priorities, which seek to address leisure need. The Leisure and Young People Portfolio is included within this theme.

Our Achievements and Aims

Throughout the year we improved opportunities for local people of all ages and abilities to participate in sports, arts, heritage and community activities, through securing over £310k external funding from bodies including the Arts Council and Big Lottery Fund.

Community & Culture

We have invested in the re-display of our Museum in Waltham Abbey, to improve visitor access for people with disabilities and enhanced interpretation of our historic collections. £30k external funding was also secured towards two oral history projects; 'Tales of the Boarders', which focussed on life as a 'live-in' pupil of Great Stony School, Ongar, and an exhibition to celebrate the 'Abolition of Slavery', which included a drama production and film, which went on to tour across the Eastern Region.



Our Arts Section secured £25k from the Arts Council, for 'homelife', a special project, which involved artists working with young people, and the elderly within residential care homes in the district. The work encouraged young people to look at their local environment and enabled them to create a rap performance and DVD called 'estate life'. The older participants were involved in creating DVDs, which included memories of their lives before moving into residential care.

Children and Young People

We have set up an Epping Forest Play Partnership and from this, developed a 10 year Play Strategy for 0 – 16 year olds. This provided the basis of a bid to the Big Lottery Fund for £240k towards the provision of new play equipment for children and young people in the District. This funding will be used over 2008/09 to provide new facilities in the areas identified with greatest need.

We established an Epping Forest Youth Council (EFYC) in January 2008 involving young people aged 13 – 17 years, from throughout the District. The EFYC will give young people a 'formal voice' on the key issues and concerns that affect them locally and will provide a direct link to the Essex Youth Assembly.

Working with Essex County Council and local partners through a Children and Young people's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), we have attracted £90k to the district to provide new activity sessions for children, parenting classes for teenagers and a range of professional support for families. As part of CYPSP work, six new 'Children's Centres' will be available within the district by 2008, to provide new childcare facilities and a resource for children, families and local communities. These will be based in Chigwell, Waltham Abbey, Ongar and Loughton.

General Leisure

We reviewed our playing pitch facilities and formed a play pitch strategy, which will help to secure external funding and further develop and improve our local pitch sports.

North Weald Airfield hosted numerous public events, with the highlight of the year being involvement in the 21st World Scout Jamboree (WSJ) event, joining Scouts from 159 Countries around the World. North Weald Airfield was used to register volunteers, scouts and visitors as well as a park and ride and food distribution centre.

Economic Prosperity

Another key objective of the Community Strategy is that the district will have a thriving and sustainable local economy, which extends opportunity for local residents and promotes prosperity throughout the district. This vision is reflected in the Council's own medium-term priorities, which seek to encourage sustainable economic development. The Economic Development function of the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio is included within this theme.



Our Achievements and Aims

We have been working with representatives of groups with disabilities using their knowledge and expertise to consider the impact of the Council's policies and plans, which affect the way people, live and work.

We appointed an Economic Development officer in our aim to achieve both stronger links between the Council and local business communities across the district, and a full local business community representation of the individual Town Centre Partnerships and other appropriate local business forums.

Improving Our Performance

This theme is not directly linked to the Community Strategy, but reflects key areas where the Council has recognised that it needs to improve current services on performance.

The Leader's Portfolio, the Finance, Performance Management, and Corporate Support Services Portfolio are included within the theme. These

important corporate services provide essential support to the work of the council.



Our Achievements and Aims

Value for Money and Use of Resources

We kept the Council Tax increase below the increase in the Retail Price Index of 3.5%. We introduced mobile working in the Benefits Service and achieved top quartile performance in our council tax collection rate. We shared service delivery across Essex as part of the 'Transformational Government' initiative and developed public access to services through the Government Connect (Direct.Gov). We joined the Essex Procurement Hub and anticipate efficiency savings through our desktop equipment, refuse fleet and photocopier contracts.

The Audit Commission awarded the Council an improved score for our use of resources, which analyses how cost effective we are in delivering services, and we introduced a new staff suggestion scheme to enthuse the workforce to improve services still further.

The Council has listened to what residents of the district have said in our Customer Satisfaction Surveys for 2007. The Council is undergoing an organisational restructure in order to improve and enhance service delivery. This will involve some services becoming fully integrated such as Environmental Protection and Street Scene, which will have more input into not only protecting our environment but also protecting our citizens.

Want to find out more?

If you would like to know more about our priorities and performance, you can write to us or contact our Performance Management Unit on the telephone and fax numbers or email address given earlier in this leaflet.

Copies of the Best Value Performance Plan will also be available at our information centers, or from our website (www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk). We will also be able to provide a copy in large print or on audiotape if required.