

COUNCIL PLAN 2006 - 2010 – ACTION PLAN

PROGRESS REPORT – 31 MARCH 2008

REF	OBJECTIVE	ACTION (S)	LEAD MEMBER/LEAD OFFICER	REQUIRED OUTCOME(S)	PERFORMANCE TARGET/MEASURE	
GREEN AND UNIQUE						
GU1	To ensure that new homes provided in the district as a result of regional growth are sustainable, by good planning and the provision of adequate infrastructure.	(a) To make representations to the Examination-in-Public of the East of England Plan, in relation to the appropriate level of future residential development in the district;	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	The protection of the special character of the Epping Forest District by a reduction in the number of homes planned for the district, and the number of affordable homes allocated to key workers planned for the east of England region.	(a) A reduction in the number of homes proposed for the district in the final version of the East of England Regional Plan from 11,000;	
					(b) A reduction in the number of affordable homes allocated to key worker homes planned for the region in the final version of the East of England Regional Plan from 760 to 500 per annum.	
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The Council has continued to make representations on the East of England Plan and the number of homes proposed for the district is now around 7,000. The East of England Plan has completed the Proposed Changes stage and the final plan should be issued during summer 2007.</p> <p>When members considered the original draft East of England Plan, they agreed to include in the Council's response concerns about the perceived high level of need for accommodation specifically for key workers, compared to an apparent lack of demand on the ground. The Head of Housing Services attended the Examination in Public (EiP) of the East of England Plan on behalf of the Council for the session on affordable housing, and this was one of the areas covered. Having heard the concerns and information provided at the Examination in Public, the EiP Panel did not include a target in its report to the Secretary of State, nor has the Secretary of State made any reference in her proposed changes to the draft Plan.</p>				
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>There has been delay in the Secretary of State finalising the East of England Plan. Certain further work was undertaken at the Secretary of State's instigation, and a further period of public consultation followed in late 2007.</p>				
		(b) To approach neighbouring local authorities with a view to jointly planning the delivery of additional homes in the region, following the final East of England Plan has been published.	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	The establishment of a joint delivery vehicle for the joint planning of new homes in the Epping Forest District and neighbouring areas.	The establishment of an appropriate Joint Delivery Vehicle by April 2008.	

		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The proposed changes to the East of England Plan indicate that a specific list of bodies will have to work together to create joint Local Development Documents for the growth of Harlow. A delivery vehicle has been established within Harlow called 'Harlow Renaissance, and a number of the specific bodies already meet at Member/Chief Executive level.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>Officers from three neighbouring local authorities have worked together, so as to seek the alignment of their respective Local Development Framework timetables.</p>			
GU2	To increase levels of recycling and to reduce waste growth.	To fully implement the wheeled bin and alternate weekly waste collection arrangements across the district;	Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder/ Director of Environment and Street Scene	The attainment of statutory and local recycling and waste reduction targets.	The achievement of a recycling target of 40% by 2008/09.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>All stages of the wheeled bins programme have been implemented across the district. Recycling performance averaged across the district is approximately 37% and, if performance is maintained, the 40% target set for 2008/09 should be achievable. The total household waste stream has remained almost static which, whilst not meeting the target, is good compared to a national year on year increase of 3%.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>Recycling is currently around 42%, in excess of the 2008/09 target. The new contract is becoming established and the Partnership Board is meeting regularly. To see further increases in recycling will require maintaining education and information to the community and the extension of recycling in flats. Early work underway on the removal of food waste from the waste stream to be implemented in the autumn of 2008 (to coincide with reversion from weekly to alternate weekly residual collections.</p>			
GU3	To increase the profile of the Council's Museum Service and improve access to the collections of the Epping Forest Museum and understanding of the social history of the district.	(a) To undertake improvements to the entrance area and re-display the lower galleries at the Epping Forest Museum;	Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	The provision of improved access to the Epping Forest Museum for people with disabilities, the generation of increased numbers of visitors to the museum, and greater public awareness of the Museum Service and the history of the district.	(a) Improvements to museum entrance area to be completed by 30 September 2006;
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Capital Funding was secured in 2006/07 to undertake refurbishment, access and re-display work to ground floor level of museum, and works to the entrance area and the refurbishment of the Museum Shop were completed. Work is currently underway on the lower archaeology gallery due for completion in June 2007. Access improvements include new low-level display cases for wheelchair users and the re-titling of display/interpretation boards and up-graded lighting to assist people with impaired vision. It is also planned to install a touch-screen display containing a photographic record of social history images and objects. Press and marketing initiatives in relation to the refurbishments should lead to increased museum attendance in 2007/08. Attendances in 2006/07 were adversely affected by some periods of closure to facilitate the improvement works.</p>			

		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		The former BVPI guidance was amended to no longer allow the Museum to include usage from exhibitions at other venues or at external events, which the Museum service attended. This has meant that large numbers of service users cannot be included within the figures captured for the quarterly attendance returns.			
	(a) To undertake a community outreach programme at schools, libraries and public buildings to increase the profile of the Council's Museum Service.	Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	The provision of improved access to the Epping Forest Museum for people with disabilities, the generation of increased numbers of visitors to the museum, and greater public awareness of the Museum Service and the history of the district.	(b) Improved performance of 5% per annum to be achieved on BVPI's in relation to numbers of visitors to the Epping Forest Museum.	
		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
		Pre-planning work has started on Community Outreach Programme to include sourcing of new peripatetic display cases to be located in schools, public buildings and libraries. This will increase access to the museum collection. The full Community Outreach Programme will be rolled-out in Autumn 2007.			
		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		Consultation with users indicated that a web-based local history resource would be more beneficial than case based displays and user figures could be utilised for performance indicator returns, and this approach was agreed. The Museum education service is launching a local history website for schools in September 2008, and the temporary exhibition programme and provision of touring exhibitions to other venues in the district, have been well received and generated publicity for the service.			
GU4	To develop the Local Development Framework for the district.	To commence the development of the Local Development Framework once amendments to the current Local Plan for the district has been completed and the final version of the East of England Regional Plan has been published.	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	The adoption of a development framework for the district against which future planning proposals can be assessed.	The adoption of the Local Development Framework by 30 September 2010 (targets for the completion of numerous intermediate stages of the development of the framework have previously been approved by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).
		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
		The final version of the East of England Plan has been delayed, and publication is now due during Summer 2007. Amendments to the Local Development Scheme to reflect the publication of the East of England Plan await approval from Department for Communities and Local Government.			
		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		No further update required to the 31 March 2007 progress report.			

HOMES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

HN1	To increase the amount of affordable housing in the district to meet identified need, and to consider and investigate different options for increased delivery.	(a) To revise the Local Plan for the district to require that 40% of all homes built on developments over fifteen properties are affordable to people on low incomes;	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	An increase in the amount of affordable housing provided through Section 106 Agreements by at least 33%.	The approval of at least twenty more affordable homes per annum through planning permissions, than if the alterations to the Local Plan had not been made.	
		Progress Report (31.3.07)				
		Action achieved. The Local Plan for the district now requires that 40% of all homes built on developments of over fifteen properties are affordable to people on low incomes.				
		Progress Report (31.3.08)				
		No further update required to the 31 March 2007 progress report. In 2007/08, the two Section 106 Agreements entered into required that 111 of the 156 (71%) properties granted permission should be provided as affordable housing.				
		(b) To work with housing associations to provide more local affordable housing;	Housing Portfolio Holder/ Director of Housing	The development of a good relationship between the Council, its housing association partners, and the Epping Forest Strategic Housing Partnership, resulting in the provision of additional affordable housing.	The completion of at least one hundred new affordable homes per annum.	
		Progress Report (31.3.07)				
Due to the current dearth of land available for private development within the district, the amount of new affordable housing provided has been low. The target of at least 100 homes per annum (on average) was met between 2004/05 and 2005/06, when 199 new affordable homes were completed, but only 25 new affordable homes were completed on two developments in 2006/07, and only 13 are expected to be completed on two developments in 2007/08. However, there are a potential 444 affordable properties in the development pipeline, most of which are hoped to come to fruition over the coming years.						
Negotiations with developers on Section 106 sites have been robust, resulting in the Council's target of 30% affordable housing prior to July 2006 and 40% since then being secured, with a small number of exceptions where these have been justified and accepted by members. The Strategic Housing Partnership (comprising the Council and its five preferred Registered Social Landlord partners) continues to strengthen and increase partnership working, and has contributed towards so many potential schemes being developed in the pipeline.						
Progress Report (31.3.08)						
Only 19 new affordable homes were completed in 2007/08. However, a large development is now on site at Epping Forest College, which is due to provide 89 affordable homes. Other large sites with outline planning permissions include White Lodge, Waltham Abbey (96 affordable homes) and St John's School, Epping (around 40 affordable homes). In total, taking into account all developments with planning permissions and those that are on site, there are around 450 affordable homes in the pipeline.						
(c) To consider in detail the following options for increasing the delivery of affordable housing, initially through the Housing Scrutiny Panel:	Housing Portfolio Holder/Chairman of Housing Scrutiny Panel/Director of Housing	The consideration and future adoption of new initiatives to increase the amount of affordable housing.	An increase in the amount of affordable housing available in the district.			

		<p>(i) allowing the development of residential accommodation in the Green Belt, providing significant levels of affordable housing, as a very special reason for departing from normal Green Belt policy;</p>			
		<p>(ii) the development of affordable housing on large urban open spaces within estates;</p>			
		<p>(iii) setting an absolute minimum amount of 20% affordable housing that will be acceptable on large development sites, irrespective of other planning gains;</p>			
		<p>(iv) the provision of more Social Housing Grant to Registered Social Landlords;</p>			
		<p>(v) a review of the Council's landholdings to assess the scope for developing additional affordable housing;</p>			
		<p>(vi) the use of grant funding from the Housing Corporation's London Region to be used to fund the development of affordable housing schemes in the district, with nomination agreements being shared between the Council and London boroughs;</p>			
		<p>(vii) greater commitment by the Council to comply with the agreed Joint Commissioning Scheme, to increase the likelihood of Housing Corporation bids being funded; and</p>			
		<p>(viii) the seeking of 'hot spot' status from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, to reduce right to buy discounts and deter right to buy sales, thereby slowing down the reduction in Council housing stock.</p>			

		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>At its meeting on 3 March 2006, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered the potential ways of increasing affordable housing set out in this action. However, although the Scrutiny Panel did not support suggestions/proposals relating to (c)(i) – (c)(iii) or (c)(v) – (c)(vi), it did recommend to the Cabinet that an additional £1m local authority social housing grant (LA SHG) should be provided and that annual consideration should be given to the amount of LA SHG that should be made in future years (following which the Cabinet agreed to make additional provision of £0.5m and undertake an annual review of LA SHG). The Cabinet also agreed a recommendation from the Housing Scrutiny Panel that the land associated with any General Fund assets that becomes surplus to requirements in the future may be provided to an RSL free of charge to provide affordable housing. However, the Cabinet did not agree the Scrutiny Panel's recommendation that the Council should seek Right to Buy (RTB) 'Hot Spot Status' for the district from the Government which, if obtained, would reduce the maximum discount available to tenants under the RTB from £34,000 to £16,000.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>No further update required to the 31 March 2007 progress report.</p>			
HN2	To prevent homelessness and respond to homelessness applications efficiently, effectively and fairly, to help homeless people secure appropriate accommodation and minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.	(a) To increase the amount of affordable housing in the district to meet identified need;	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	See objective HN1	See objective HN1
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>See progress report in relation to HN1(b) above</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>See progress report in relation to HN1(b) above</p>			
		(b) To provide additional temporary accommodation by the extension of the Fresh START Scheme from ten to twenty privately rented properties leased by a housing association, and the development of Leader Lodge at North Weald for the provision of eight to 1ten self contained flats as temporary accommodation;	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	The provision of eighteen to twenty additional units of temporary accommodation.	The provision of an additional ten units of accommodation by 30 April 2006 and a further 8 to10 units by 30 April 2008.

	<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>East Thames Housing Group has only been able to source 4 of the 10 private rented properties sought under the Fresh START Scheme, that meet the Council's needs and which private landlords are prepared to offer to the scheme. However, following a recent meeting, East Thames has agreed to re-energise their efforts, increasing advertising if necessary.</p> <p>In June 2006, despite an officer recommendation for approval, the Area Plans Sub-Committee refused an outline planning application to demolish Leader Lodge and redevelop the site to provide 10 new self-contained flats. This was because the Sub-Committee felt that 'the proposals would result in a form of development out of character in this area of predominantly single-family dwellings and detrimental to the street scene' and 'would result in an intensification of use out of character with the surrounding properties and likely to result in activity causing disturbance to the occupiers of adjacent properties'. The Housing Portfolio Holder intends to report to the Cabinet in June 2007 on an alternative proposal for the future of Leader Lodge and its associated land.</p>			
<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>Although East Thames has increased the number of properties added to the Fresh Start scheme, other leases have come to an end. East Thames has also experienced problems with being unable to source private properties to let at within housing benefit levels.</p> <p>In June 2007, the Cabinet agreed to pursue a development scheme at Leader Lodge, by retaining and converting the existing building and the provision of an annexe. It was agreed that this should be through a tender with the Council's Preferred RSL Partners. This has now taken place and London & Quadrant Housing Society has been selected, following the withdrawal of the highest tenderer.</p>				
<p>(c) To further develop the Council's homelessness prevention service by the appointment of an additional part-time homelessness prevention officer, specialising in young people's homelessness and to work with partner agencies to tackle homelessness.</p>	<p>Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing</p>	<p>The provision of improved homelessness services, particularly for young people.</p>	<p>The prevention of at least an additional forty incidences of homelessness per annum.</p>	
<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Following the receipt of increased funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (due to the progress made by the Council in the past in preventing homelessness) the capacity of the Homelessness Prevention Service has increased to 4.5 FTE homelessness prevention officers, including the introduction of a Team Leader post. The Service's success continues to increase and 516 cases of homelessness were successfully prevented in 2006/07.</p>				
<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The Homelessness Prevention Team has remained with the same establishment. In 2007/08, 558 homelessness cases were prevented, leading to reduced homelessness applications and less reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation for single people.</p>				

HN3	To help people with special housing needs to live in homes suitable for their needs, with appropriate levels of support.	To work with the other main agencies involved with supported housing and, after consultation with service providers and service users, produce an annual Local Supporting People Strategy.	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	The production of an annual Local Supporting People Strategy setting out how the agencies involved with supported housing will help meet peoples special needs.	The production of an updated Local Supporting People Strategy by 1 April each year.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>In partnership with other support agencies in the district, the Council has uniquely produced a Local Supporting People Strategy following consultation exercises, annually since the introduction of the supporting people regime. However, the Supporting People Commissioning Body has decided that local strategies should now be produced on a sub-regional basis. Discussions are therefore taking place with the four other Essex local authorities in the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region about the formation of a sub-regional group and the production of a sub regional supporting people strategy and action plan.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>Little progress has been made by the Essex Supporting People Team in developing sub-regional supporting people strategies. However, Essex County Council's Head of Supporting People has established a sub-regional group for the London commuter belt.</p>			
HN4	To ensure that privately owned homes are fit for people to live in, with empty homes kept to a minimum and to provide help to those who need it most.	(a) To target assistance at home owners in need;	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	The provision of improved, more secure homes in the private sector.	(a) The provision of at least four home renovation grants and sixty Home Repairs Assistance Grants per annum, at a cost of no more than £200,000 per annum until the revised Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy is adopted;
					(b) 70% of vulnerable private sector households to be living in homes meeting the decent homes standard by 2010/11.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The Council has adopted its revised Private Sector Housing Strategy and approach for the provision of financial assistance. In 2006/07 the Council provided 2 Renovation Grants and 52 Home Repairs Assistance grants, and has also received additional funding from Go-East to assist it in meeting the 2010/11 target for decent homes.</p>			
<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy which forms part of the Private Sector Housing Strategy introduced a new range of grants to replace Renovation Grants and Home Repairs Assistance. The Policy was adopted later than had been intended and for this reason it has not been possible yet to evidence the successes that had been hoped for. However, work has been carried out at 26 properties under the old grants regime in the year, as well as work being completed to improve the 'Decency' of approximately 30 properties under the new Housing Assistance Policy.</p>					

		(b) To produce an Empty Homes Strategy setting out how the number of empty homes in the district can be reduced;	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	The development of an Empty Homes Strategy setting out the way that the Council will try to minimise the number of empty properties and will deal with long term empty properties causing a nuisance.	(a) The production of an Empty Homes Strategy by 1 September 2006; (b) The bringing of at least ten empty properties brought back into use per annum as a result of initiatives within the Empty Property Strategy.
<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The Empty Homes Strategy has been produced and adopted by the Cabinet/Council. The Strategy was adopted late in the Council year and therefore the target was not met. However, steps are in place to take the strategy forward, including the use of compulsory purchase powers where considered appropriate. In reality, given the nature of the district and the resources available, a more reasonable annual target would be 5 homes rather than the existing 10.</p>					
<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>All financial incentives set out in the Empty Homes Strategy are in place. Take up is slow, but it is anticipated that this will improve with time and continued advertising. Two properties have been brought back into use as a result of the Strategy and Empty Property Officer involvement. It is difficult to quantify the direct impact of Council Tax discount removal at this stage.</p>					
		(c) To analyse the results of the latest Private Sector Stock Condition Survey;	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	To achieve a better understanding of the condition and energy efficiency of the private sector housing stock and the number of empty properties in the district.	The completion of the analysis the results of the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey by 31 March 2006.
<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The data provided by the Stock Condition Survey was used as the basis behind the new Private Sector Housing Strategy and the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy, both of which have now been adopted.</p>					
<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>'Decent Homes' inspections together with inspections being carried out under Housing Act 2004, are providing a valuable source of data which with the findings of the Stock Condition Survey will assist in monitoring the success of the Private Sector Housing Strategy and Housing Assistance Policy.</p>					
		(d) To produce an updated Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy, based on the results of the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey.	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	The development of a clear policy on the criteria to be adopted by the Council for the provision of various forms of assistance to owners and occupiers of private sector properties.	The production of the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy by September 2006.
<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy was adopted by the Council in March 2007.</p>					

		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		It is the Council's stated strategic aim that the Housing Assistance Policy 2007 be seen as an initial step towards providing assistance by way of equity release and/or loans rather than grants, and work was to have begun on developing such a Policy during 2007/08. However, as local authorities within the East of England Regional Assembly have now also begun looking at the potential for a regional loan/equity release scheme, it now seems prudent to be party to this work rather than developing a scheme of our own, particularly given the current financial climate in which there is likely to be a poor uptake of equity release/loans based assistance in the immediate future.			
HN5	To ensure that the Council manages and maintains its homes effectively and efficiently, and that it provides decent homes for its tenants and leaseholders at affordable rents, and deals with issues of anti-social behaviour.	(a) To continue to identify which Council homes do not meet, or will not meet, the Decent Homes Standard, provide sufficient resources and carry out appropriate programmes of work to ensure that all these homes meet the Standard by 2010;	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	The provision of decent homes for occupation by the Council's tenants	All homes to meet the Decent Home Standard by 2010.
		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
		Rather than commission consultants to undertake stock condition surveys, stock surveys are now undertaken on a rolling basis by technical housing officers, in order to maximise value for money. Significant programmes of work continue to be undertaken to improve tenants' homes and reduce the number of non-decent homes. The number of non-decent Council homes has reduced from 22% of the Council's stock in April 2002 to 5.3% in April 2007. The Council is on course to meet the Government's objective of having no non-decent homes by 2010.			
		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		The percentage of non-decent homes reduced further by April 2008, and the Council's target for April 2009 is just 1.5%. The objective of having no non-decent homes by 2010 is still expected to be met.			
		(b) To undertake a major improvement scheme at Springfields, Waltham Abbey;	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	The achievement of ninety-six improved tenanted and leasehold properties that meet the Decent Homes Standard.	The completion of improvement works by 31 December 2007.
		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
Following an extensive resident consultation exercise, which resulted in an agreed specification of works and the receipt of planning permission, tenders are shortly to be invited and reported to the Cabinet in July 2007.					
Progress Report (31.3.08)					
The Springfields improvement scheme commenced in November 2007 and is due to be completed around January 2009.					
(c) To implement an Introductory Tenancy Scheme;	Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing	All new tenants to be provided with non-secure introductory tenancies, for the first twelve months Council tenancy, to reduce anti-social behaviour by new tenants and to enable the Council to take swift action against offenders.	No serious acts of anti-social behaviour by new tenants, which have not resulted in legal action being taken to evict the offending tenants.		

		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The use of introductory tenancies for new Council tenants was successfully introduced on 1 April 2006. In its first year of operation, 311 introductory tenancies were granted. It was necessary to issue Notices of Possession Proceedings in just 16 cases (all on the grounds of rent arrears), which resulted in only one application to court.</p> <p>The use of the introductory tenancy scheme appears to be a significant success in that it has sent a clear message to all new tenants of the Council's expectations of them as tenants, and that the Council will taken action to re-possess their property, much more easily than from a secure tenants, if they fail to keep to their Conditions of Tenancy. It is believed that this initiative has contributed to the rent collection rate increasing further in 2006/07.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The introductory tenancy scheme has now been fully established, with all new tenants being allocated introductory tenancies.</p>			
		<p>(d) To introduce a joint Choice Based Lettings Scheme, in collaboration with five neighbouring local authorities.</p>	<p>Housing Portfolio Holder/Director of Housing</p>	<p>Housing applicants will be able to "bid" for vacant properties in any of the six local authority areas where they are registered, instead of properties being "allocated" by the local authorities to those in most housing need.</p>	<p>The implementation of a joint Choice Based Lettings Scheme by 1 April 2007.</p>
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>A consortium comprising the Council and five neighbouring local authorities has been formed and successfully bid for £96,000 grant funding from the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Consultants have been appointed to project manage the joint implementation of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, a specification of the required service has been produced and tenders are currently being invited from organisations experienced in providing a choice based lettings service to local authorities. A consultation exercise has established widespread support for the introduction of choice based lettings but, due to a number of factors including the temporary withdrawal of one of the local authorities from the Consortium, the anticipated live date for the scheme is now October 2007.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The 'Home Options' choice based lettings scheme went live in November 2007, with regular update reports provided to the Housing Scrutiny Panel. A formal review of the success of the implementation was undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel after six months operation.</p>			
<p>HN6</p>	<p>To continue to undertake improvements in local environmental standards.</p>	<p>(a) To extend the use of locally based cleansing teams where appropriate to the locality;</p>	<p>Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene</p>	<p>(a) Improved standards of street cleansing and local environmental conditions;</p>	<p>Improvements in respect of relevant Best Value Performance Indicators, to achieve top quartile district council performance by 30 June 2006.</p>
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>In view of the demise of the Council's waste management contractor at the start of 2006/07, no further action has so far been taken with respect to the introduction of additional local cleansing teams. BVPI 199 (Local Environmental Cleanliness Standards) outturns for 2006/07 demonstrate a continued improvement in street cleansing standards, with BV199 (a) being recorded as 2%, and BV199 (b) and 199 (c) at zero percent.</p>			

		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The 2006/07 outturn data for BVPI 199a at 2% has been questioned by Defra as being unrealistically low. Encams, on behalf of Defra, have visited the district and provided support and advice on how BVPI 199a monitoring should be undertaken. This has resulted in a re-evaluation of previous results with the 2007/08 outturn result nearer to 20%. This does not mean that the district is significantly less clean than previously, but results solely from adherence to Encams very strict approach to the monitoring of the indicator. BVPI 199 has been replaced by the new NI1 95 for 2008/09, which has slightly different monitoring arrangements.</p> <p>The new waste management contract is working well with the contractor bringing a lot of new plant into the district alongside the previous local teams. Levels of reportable graffiti and fly posting remain at a low level and there are no signs of any increase in incidences of fly-tipping.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="609 422 2058 523"> <tr> <td data-bbox="609 422 1003 523">(b) To utilise where appropriate the new powers available to the Council within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.</td> <td data-bbox="1003 422 1305 523">Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene</td> <td data-bbox="1305 422 1682 523">(a) Reductions in fly-tipping, fly-posting, abandoned vehicles etc.</td> <td data-bbox="1682 422 2058 523">Improvements in respect of relevant Best Value Performance Indicators, to achieve top quartile district council performance by 30 June 2006.</td> </tr> </table>				(b) To utilise where appropriate the new powers available to the Council within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.	Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	(a) Reductions in fly-tipping, fly-posting, abandoned vehicles etc.	Improvements in respect of relevant Best Value Performance Indicators, to achieve top quartile district council performance by 30 June 2006.
(b) To utilise where appropriate the new powers available to the Council within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.	Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	(a) Reductions in fly-tipping, fly-posting, abandoned vehicles etc.	Improvements in respect of relevant Best Value Performance Indicators, to achieve top quartile district council performance by 30 June 2006.						
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The Council has yet to fully consider the implications of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, and this matter remains with the Environment Scrutiny Panel. Performance with respect to the management of fly tipping has improved with fewer reported cases and an additional prosecution having been instigated.</p>							
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The Council has adopted its 'Safer, Cleaner, Greener' strategy and brought all relevant services together under the newly created Environment and Street Scene Directorate. The Environment Scrutiny Panel has made recommendations to the Cabinet following its consideration of the Rogers Review, which Cabinet have accepted. This will result, once the Neighbourhood Teams have been established, of higher profile activity within the district in dealing with 'envirocrime' and related matters.</p>							
HN7	To seek to deal with problems associated with vehicle parking in the built up areas of the district.	To complete parking reviews for the Loughton and Waltham Abbey areas.	Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	The improvement of local parking arrangements, and the management of problems associated with on street and commuter parking.	<p>(a) The completion of parking reviews for Loughton and Waltham Abbey by 31 March 2007;</p> <p>(b) The implementation of locally agreed parking controls to include resident parking schemes where appropriate, commencing during 2007/08.</p>				
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Parking reviews for Loughton and Waltham Abbey have commenced but were not completed by March 2007. The new/revised parking controls for Buckhurst Hill, Loughton (TCE) and Epping became available for implementation and enforcement as of 2 April 2007. However, there are engineering works associated with these schemes and full implementation will be delayed into 2007/08.</p>							

		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The Buckhurst Hill and Epping parking reviews were implemented during 2007, and are both due for post 6 month reviews in the early part of 2008/09. These will almost certainly result in further changes to meet local concerns. The Cabinet has decided not to undertake any further wide scale reviews once these and the Loughton Broadway TCE review are completed. In the future, reviews will be targeted at local parking 'hotspots', but with action only where there is a clear consensus from the local community for the proposed solutions.</p>
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A SAFE COMMUNITY					
SC1	To enhance the safety, security and wellbeing of people using the district's town centres and public car parks.	To include improved lighting and closed circuit television systems as part of programme of town centre enhancements and the upgrading of the Council's public car parks.	Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder/Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	The provision of safer and more secure town centres and public car parks.	The achievement of an appropriate accreditation for at least one car park per annum.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Improvement works have been completed in the Lower Queens Road car park at Buckhurst Hill and the Cottis Lane car park in Epping. The Burton Road car park at Loughton Broadway was also improved as part of the Broadway Town Centre Enhancement scheme. The wider community and economic issues in relation to improved lighting and closed circuit television systems remain under consideration by the Town Centres and Car Parking Scrutiny Panel.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>No further works have been undertaken at car parks other than to deal with routine maintenance issues. Works will be undertaken to the remaining car parks at the Broadway should the TCE scheme be approved for completion. The Town Centres Task and Finish Panel has been wound up, with its role transferred to the Environment and Planning Scrutiny Panel. The issue of CCTV and anti-social behaviour will be managed through the Council's 'Safer, Cleaner, Greener' initiative.</p>			
SC2	To reduce the overall level of recorded crime in the district.	(a) To develop a joint Community Safety Team, consisting of the Council's Crime Reduction Unit and local police officers;	Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	The achievement of reduced crime levels across the district.	The achievement of a reduction in the overall level of recorded crime in the district by 16% by March 2008 based on the crime figures for 2003/04.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The establishment of an integrated Community Safety Team has been delayed for various reasons, including the deferral of the Customer Services Transformation Programme, and police matters such as neighbourhood policing and regionalisation having taken greater priority. The development of a joint Community Safety Team will be further considered as part of the review of the Council's management structure to be completed during the remainder of 2007/08.</p>			

		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		There has been no progress on this proposal. However, the Council's Safer Communities Team has been strengthened through the recent corporate restructure, with new posts of Anti-Social Behaviour Investigator (x2) and CCTV Officer being created. This, in combination with the formation of the Environment and Street Scene Directorate, will see the safer communities agenda being taken forward. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership continues to function well and the Council has assumed the chairmanship of the Panel for 2008/09.			
		(b) To reduce the incidences of recorded domestic burglary, theft of vehicles, criminal damage and robbery that occur in the district.	Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	The achievement of reduced crime levels across the district.	The achievement of a reduction in the overall level of recorded crime in the district by 16% by March 2008 based on the crime figures for 2003/04.
		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
		The Council and the Crime and Disorder Reduction partnership are constantly monitoring procedures and looking at ways to reduce the incidence of all types of recorded crime in the district, in order to meet the target of a 16% reduction by March 2008.			
		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		The target of a 16% reduction in overall crime from the 2003/04 baseline was not achieved, the reduction being 12%. However, within this outturn, there are key reductions in criminal damage (down 26%), wounding (down 24%), theft from a person (down 57%). On the negative side domestic burglary was up 16%, assault without injury up 20% and robbery of personal property up 42%. These issues will all be targeted in the Safer Communities Partnership Plan for 2008/09.			
SC3	To reduce levels of anti-social behaviour and provide leisure and training opportunities for young people to encourage positive and healthy lifestyles.	To work with the Council's partners to secure ongoing external funding for the project.	Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	To reduce levels of anti-social behaviour and to work with young offenders to assist rehabilitation.	The provision of at least one on-going activity per annum in each area identified by Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in relation to anti-social issues involving young people.
		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
		Unfortunately, NACRO have terminated funding to the Epping Forest Community Sports Project, which targeted young people at risk of offending, although a limited service is to continue in 2007/08 with the assistance of funding from Sport England. The Council's Young Persons Officer has been active in crime reduction initiatives, particularly the establishment of a community outreach worker to work with young people in Loughton on anti-social behaviour issues, in conjunction with the private sector.			
		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		In conjunction with Tottenham Hotspur Community Trust, an innovative programme of diversionary activities has been implemented at the Limes Farm Estate at Chigwell. External funding is being secured from the Sports Lottery Fund to extend this initiative to Waltham Abbey and the Shelley Estate in Ongar.			

FL1	To ensure that the leisure management contract entered into with SLM Limited delivers the Council's key objectives for the future of its leisure facilities, with respect to lower revenue costs, increased investment, continuous improvement and the transfer of risk.	(a) To undertake regular and effective monitoring of the leisure management contract entered into with SLM Limited;	Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	The maintenance of high standards of service and customer satisfaction in accordance with the requirements of the leisure management contract.	(a) The number of Default Notices issued in relation to the Leisure Management Contract to be below ten complaint notices or five default notices in any four consecutive week period; (b) The number of Stage 2 Complaints made to the Council in respect of its leisure facilities to remain at less than 1% of total number of participants using the facilities.	
		Progress Report (31.3.07)				
		Regular monitoring of the Leisure Management Contract is taking place on an ongoing basis through site visits, statistical returns and monthly meetings at officer level. The Contract Monitoring Board has met on several occasions and is working effectively. The number of Default Notices issued is below the threshold, with only one default and seven improvement notices required in the first fifteen months of the contract. Similarly, the number of Stage 2 Complaints received is also well below threshold, with less than 10 received in the same period.				
		Progress Report (31.3.08)				
		The monitoring regime for the Leisure Management Contract is well embedded with respect to site visits, core meetings and the Monitoring Board. The Improvement Notice/Default Notice and complaints thresholds have not been exceeded, although there is still an ongoing concern around the timeliness and accuracy of financial information required to be submitted by the contractor.				
		(b) To explore further service initiatives to reduce revenue costs and increase participation;	Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	The provision of new facilities that increase participation.	An increase in Participation and level of Income in line with projections contained in the contractor's tender.	
		Progress Report (31.3.07)				
Several major marketing initiatives have been undertaken by SLM Limited to increase participation, particularly in the area of health and fitness. Reprogramming of swimming lessons has increased the number of attendances and reduced waiting lists. Re-negotiation is underway regarding an extension of the contract for Epping Sports Centre for seven years, with the expectation of lower revenue consequences by way of a reduced management fee or increased investment by SLM.						
Progress Report (31.3.08)						
SLM have submitted a charge proposal for Epping Sports Centre , which predicts a substantial increase in management fee. SLM have been asked to look at revised proposals for the whole contract to contain costs.						
(c) To ensure that capital investment is completed on time and to the correct standard.	Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	The maintenance of assets to appropriate standards.	The achievement of a guaranteed level of capital investment completed on time and to the appropriate quality in accordance with the contractor's tender.			

		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Major capital investment schemes at Ongar Leisure Centre and Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool have been completed in line with agreed timescales and at a level of £1.5m as guaranteed within the tender. Quality of work remains good and has met customer expectations.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The Council is undertaking a feasibility study in 2008 for the provision of a sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool, which may allow an efficiency saving to be achieved.</p>			
FL2	To increase access to leisure and cultural opportunities in the rural parts of the district through the 'Beyond Suburbia' Cultural Development Programme.	To implement the key findings of the Beyond Suburbia initiative in partnership with local parish councils and other agencies.	Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	The improvement of quality of life for rural communities, the alleviation of isolation and economic benefits.	(a) The achievement of ten new activities in rural parishes per annum;
					(b) The generation of external funding of £50,000 per annum for one new facility development project each year.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The target of ten new activity sessions with respect to leisure and cultural opportunities has been met. External funding levels have been reached to enable major improvements, including a new playground to be undertaken at Matching Tye.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The target for activity sessions continues to be met. The success of the 'Big Lottery' Play Strategy funding bid has secured investments in playgrounds of £245K over the next 30 years. Rural parishes at Nazeing and Abridge are in the first phase of planned improvements.</p>			
FL3	To increase access to opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to lead a healthy lifestyle.	To expand the district wide 'Active Life' programme of activities to include the 'Life Walks' 'Bodycare' and general practitioner referral schemes, and other initiatives.	Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	Increased participation in physical activity by people at risk leading to lower incidence of ill health.	(a) The achievement of an increase in the number of participants in the 'Active Life' initiative of 5% per annum;
					(b) The achievement of an increase in the number of people referred by General Practitioners and other health professionals of 5% per annum;
					(c) The achievement of at least two activity sessions becoming self-sustainable per annum.

		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The 'Active Life' programme has been extended in 2006/07 with targets achieved in respect to participation and General Practitioner referrals. Unfortunately, the West Essex Primary Care Trust has withdrawn funding for cardiac rehabilitation classes and the seated exercise scheme for the elderly. Alternative external funding options are currently being explored but may affect the achievement of participation targets for 2007/8. It may be possible for a number of the seated exercise classes to be self-sufficient by charging participants a nominal fee.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The 'Life Walks' and 'Bodycare' programmes are still running and have been supplemented by external funding of £140k over the next four years to deliver a wide range of health improvement Initiatives jointly with neighbouring authorities, called 'Active Health'. Participation targets should be reached., and the seated exercise programme is largely self-financing.</p>			
FL4	To work more closely with the local Primary Care Trust to ensure that the activities that the Council carry out in environmental monitoring and inspection contribute fully to improving the overall health of the community, including specifically the promotion of anti-smoking initiatives.	To review the Council's environmental, inspection and enforcement arrangements and policies along with the Primary Care Trust.	Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	The alignment of the Council's inspection, enforcement and awareness activities with the relevant public health objectives of the Primary Care Trust	The adoption of a jointly agreed public health policy with the Primary Care Trust by 31 March 2007.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Due to the significant changes in the structure of the local Primary Care Trust (PCT), there has been no progress in this regard. However, with respect to the new 'no smoking' legislation, joint action with the PCT and Harlow District Council is to take place in June 2007 with the holding of a business seminar. The PCT's newly appointed Director of Public Health is keen to work with the Council and this will be progressed.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The 'no smoking' seminar for businesses was held on a joint basis with Harlow Council and the PCT. The no smoking legislation has presented few difficulties and the temporary no smoking post has not been reappointed following the resignation of the previous postholder. There has been very little progress on the wider strategic health agenda and working with the PCT. There is an intention to part fund a Health Promotion post with Harlow and Brentwood Council's and the PCT, to promote healthy eating.</p>			
FL5	To implement the requirements of forthcoming legislation dealing with smoking in the workplace.	To incorporate the enforcement of workplace smoking into the Council's existing environmental health inspection regime.	Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder/Director of Environment and Street Scene	The achievement of a reduction in coronary heart disease, lung cancer and other smoking related diseases.	(a) To undertake appropriate public information campaigns to bring the requirements of workplace smoking legislation to the attention of employers, employees and users of public premises in the district, within six months of the date of the new legislation coming into force being known; (b) To monitor reductions in smoking related illnesses within the district in liaison with the Primary Care Trust.

	<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Government funding has been made available to support the new workplace smoking legislation. Additional temporary staff are in the process of being appointed, and a local business seminar has been arranged in conjunction with Harlow District Council and the Primary Care Trust for June 2007. Monitoring of reductions in smoking related illnesses will await the implementation of the new legislation.</p>
	<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The new legislation came into force with little adverse reaction (from both sides of the argument) within the district. The only clear issue relates to an increase in smoking related litter, which will be dealt through an Encams assisted publicity and education campaign. A business seminar was successfully held in conjunction with Harlow District Council and the West Essex Primary Care Trust. The Council's Smoke Free Officer has resigned, and consideration is being to whether the post should be filled or the ring-fenced money freed up to be targeted at education etc.</p>

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY					
EP1	To continue to remain a low tax authority.	To set Council Tax increases for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 of no more than 2.5% per annum by no more than the rate of increase in the Retail Price Index.	Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder/Director of Finance and ICT	Council Tax levels for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 will increase by no more than 2.5%.	The actual level of Council Tax increases for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The Council's adopted policy (Cabinet - 6 February 2006) is to increase Council Tax by no more than the rate of increase in the Retail Price Index, rather than to not increase it by more than 2.5% as set out in this Council Plan action, which therefore requires correction. The target for keeping the increase in Council Tax below the increase in the Retail Price Index was achieved for 2007/08. For 2007/08 the district Council Tax was increased by 3.54% at a time when the rate of increase in the Retail Price Index was 4.6%.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The Council's adopted policy continues to be to increase Council Tax by no more than the rate of increase in the Retail Price Index. The target for keeping the increase in Council Tax below the increase in the Retail Price Index was achieved for 2008/09. For 2008/09 the district Council Tax was increased by 2.5%, at a time when the rate of increase in the Retail Price Index was 4%.</p>			
EP2	To enhance the town centre areas at Loughton High Road and Loughton Broadway to provide improved environments for the users of the centres and the providers of services.	To complete the agreed programme of town centre enhancement works and improvements.	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	The achievement of enhanced town centre environments, providing improved facilities for all users of the town centres.	<p>(a) The completion of Phases 1 and 2 of the Loughton High Road town centre enhancement scheme by 31 December 2006;</p> <p>(b) The commencement of Phase 1 of the Loughton Broadway town centre enhancement scheme by 31 July 2006.</p>

		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
		Phases I and II of the Loughton Town Centre Enhancement Scheme (TCE) are complete, with the exception of traffic and parking controls, which are currently being implemented. Final financial outcomes for the scheme are presently being analysed. Phase I of the Loughton Broadway TCE was completed by Christmas 2006, although Phase II of the scheme has been delayed due to technical problems associated with a gas main and the highway infrastructure, and revised proposals are currently under consideration.			
		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		Phases 1 and 2 of the Loughton TCE have now been signed off by the County Council, who will deal with maintenance etc in the future. The scheme at present looks to have remained close to its budget, but further data is awaited from the statutory undertakers regarding monies owed to the Council. The Broadway scheme remains in abeyance, although agreement has been reached with National Grid Gas as to how the works can be undertaken in the vicinity of their medium pressure gas main. Cabinet are to consider implementation of the scheme shortly. The Council has commissioned a Broadway Design Study Brief to consider the longer term development of the gateways to the Broadway and the area around Debden Station, and t Cabinet will consider the recommendations of that design study shortly.			
EP3	To co-ordinate land use and planning policies, and housing, transport and local infrastructure.	(a) To secure amendments to the district Local Plan to ensure the planning and development policies for the district for the foreseeable future are co-ordinated and appropriate;	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	The coordination of land use, planning policies, housing, transport and infrastructure to promote sustainability, economic prosperity and tackle areas of deprivation.	The completion of the coordination of all relevant policies by 31 August 2006.
		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
		Action achieved. All relevant policies coordinated within the Local Plan.			
		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		No further update required to the 31 March 2007 progress report.			
		(b) To secure the inclusion of a statement in the new Local Development Framework emphasising need to co-ordinate land use, planning policies, housing, transport and infrastructure in a way that ensures economic prosperity and tackles deprivation, taking account of what has been secured in alterations to the Local Plan.	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	The coordination of land use, planning policies, housing, transport and infrastructure to promote sustainability, economic prosperity and tackle areas of deprivation.	The completion of the coordination of all relevant policies by 31 August 2006.
Progress Report (31.3.07)					
As explained in relation to objective GU4 above, work on the Local Development Framework is delayed, pending the issue of the final version of the East of England Plan, and cannot be achieved within the originally identified timescale.					
Progress Report (31.3.08)					
The Local Development Framework is still delayed pending the final approval of the East of England Plan.					

EP4	To ensure that young people can express informed views on issues that affect them and actively take part in the democratic process.	To support the work of the Essex Youth Assembly and local youth councils to enable young people's voices to be heard.	Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	The empowering of young people to influence decisions on those matters that directly affect them.	The achievement of full representation for the district on the Essex Youth Assembly and youth councils by local young people by 31 December 2006.	
		Progress Report (31.3.07)				
		A number of local young people have been elected to represent the district on the Essex Youth Parliament, with one individual also now serving on the National Youth Parliament. The Young Persons Officer and the Head of research and Democratic Services supported the elections. Since appointment in November 2006, the Young Persons Officer has been actively engaged in working with secondary schools and young people on advocacy and citizenship issues with the expectation that a formal Youth Council for all/parts of the district can be established in 2007/08.				
		Progress Report (31.3.08)				
		The Epping Forest Youth Council was established in January 2008, following extensive consultation and elections. The Youth Council meets on a regular basis, with training and support provided by the Council. a district-wide youth debate event is planned for Autumn 2008.				
EP5	To respond to issues of deprivation in the district, based on the results of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004.	(a) To continue to identify measures to alleviate specific deprivation problems identified through an analysis of the 2004 Indices of Deprivation; and to work with partner agencies to tackle deprivation issues;	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	The development of targeted programmes of action to address the needs of local communities.	The establishment of six children's centres within the district by 31 March 2008.	
		Progress Report (31.3.07)				
		An analysis has been undertaken of a number of deprivation indices by reference to Super Output Areas (which are areas smaller than a ward) relevant to a number of existing or potential programmes, ranging from town centre enhancements in Loughton Broadway to the nature of economic development schemes that have been undertaken in Waltham Abbey. The deprivation indices are also relevant to actions indicated in the Essex Local Area Agreement and the action plans in the Community Strategy.				
		Progress Report (31.3.08)				
The Council has agreed to appoint consultants to create a development brief for The Broadway area of Loughton, and work on this has been progressing. Public consultation on the development brief will commence shortly. The reference in this action to the establishment of six children's centres within the district by 31 March 2008 appears to a 'cut and paste' duplication from Action EP5(b), where it is logically placed. Unfortunately, this error appears in the published version of the Council Plan and has not previously been highlighted. Future reviews of the Council Plan will report on actions intended to achieve the required outcomes for Action EP5(b).						
		(b) As a partner agency to the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership, to establish children's centres within the district.	Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	The development of targeted programmes of action to address the needs of local communities.	The establishment of six children's centres within the district by 31 March 2008.	

		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The Council has a duty to co-operate in meeting the requirements of the Children's Act 2004 and the 'Every Child Matters/Change For Children's' agenda, although it is not the lead authority for the provision of children's centres. To meet its obligations, the Council has appointed member and officer representatives to the board of the Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership (CYPSYP) and its associated working groups. There are plans for seven children's centres across the district, some in new build accommodation, whilst others will be virtual centres based on existing facilities and services. The Council has recently determined planning applications for the first two new build centres. The proposal for Waltham Abbey was granted, whilst the application for the Alderton School site in Loughton was refused.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The CYPSYP is now Chaired by a council member. New children centres have been constructed at Hillhouse School and Alderton School. Provision for children's centre services also exists at Shelley Primary School and Waltham Abbey Community Centre, and new provision is planned for Limes Farm during 2008.</p>			
EP6	To maintain and improve the links between the Council, local town centres and the business community of the district.	To further develop the Town Centre Partnerships, or other appropriate local business forums, to encourage participation by local businesses.	Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder/Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	The achievement of stronger links between the Council and local business communities across the district.	The achievement of full local business community representation on the individual Town Centre Partnerships or other appropriate local business forums.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The six partnerships that the Council helped to establish, and for which it provides basic funding, are Buckhurst Hill, Epping, Loughton Broadway, Loughton High Road, Ongar (now called a forum) and Waltham Abbey. Each partnership tends to go through cycles or high points of activity and interest, followed by lower points. A Town Centre Manager post was funded from June 2004, although this arrangement is due to end in 2007/08. The principal focus of the Town Centre Manager post has been in Buckhurst Hill and the two Loughton partnerships, however each of the partnerships have been given special project grants of up to £2,000, and these have supported activities ranging from a green fayre (Buckhurst Hill), the howzat cricket festival, (Loughton High Road), the Debden day (Loughton Broadway), a promoting local shopping event (Epping), a town sign (Ongar) and priming funding to seek to get a statue of King Harold in Waltham Abbey. It is also clear that the business community struggle to have long-term involvement with organisations that hold day (trade) time meetings, and various steps have therefore been taken by the different partnerships, varying from breakfast to evening meetings. In contrast, the Federation of Small Businesses is actively involved in the Economic Prosperity Action Group of the Community Strategy.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The Council has agreed to fund a Town Centre Officer position for three years commencing in 2008/09. This post will assist the six partnerships in their ongoing work, and a three year increase in the special projects fund has also been agreed.</p>			

IMPROVING OUR PERFORMANCE					
IP1	To implement the Customer Services Transformation Programme.	(a) To identify and agree the appropriate resource requirements for the implementation of the Customer Services Transformation Programme;	Customer Services, Media, Communications and Information Technology Portfolio Holder/Director of Finance and Information and Communication Technology Corporate Support Services and ICT Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	The achievement of improvements in answering telephone calls and the implementation of consistent telephone answering standards; the provision of customer access to Council services through 'self service' electronic channels; the provision of customer access to the majority of services in a single ground floor reception area at the Civic Offices; and the provision of extended opening hours to meet customer demand.	The resource requirements for the Customer Services Transformation Programme are currently being assessed by the consultants engaged by the Council to devise the programme. Specific targets and performance measures will be developed as the implementation of the Customer Services Transformation Programme is progressed.
		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
		The implementation of the Customer Services Transformation Programme has been deferred until further capital funding is available.			
		Progress Report (31.3.08)			
		As a result of the corporate restructure, customer contact is now a responsibility of the Deputy Chief Executive. A fresh review is being conducted of the Council's requirements, through the Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel established for 2008/09.			
		(b) Subject to (a), to establish a corporate customer contact centre as the first phase of the Customer Services Transformation Programme.	Customer Services, Media, Communications and Information Technology Portfolio Holder/Director of Finance and Information and Communication Technology Corporate Support Services and ICT Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	The achievement of improvements in answering telephone calls and the implementation of consistent telephone answering standards; the provision of customer access to Council services through 'self service' electronic channels; the provision of customer access to the majority of services in a single ground floor reception area at the Civic Offices; and the provision of <i>extended opening hours to meet customer demand</i> .	The resource requirements for the Customer Services Transformation Programme are currently being assessed by the consultants engaged by the Council to devise the programme. Specific targets and performance measures will be developed as the implementation of the Customer Services Transformation Programme is progressed.
		Progress Report (31.3.07)			
		As IP1(a) above. The implementation of the Customer Services Transformation Programme has been deferred until further capital funding is available.			
Progress Report (31.3.08)					
As IP1(a) above. As a result of the corporate restructure, customer contact is now a responsibility of the Deputy Chief Executive. A fresh review is being conducted of the Council's requirements, through the Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel established for 2008/09.					

IP2	To achieve and maintain top quartile district council performance for the speed of processing of new Housing Benefit claims and changes of circumstances, and to maintain current top quartile performance for the accuracy of benefit assessments.	(a) To implement an Electronic Records Document Management System for the Benefits Division;	Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder/Director of Finance and ICT	(a) Time currently lost on searching for paper files will be able to be devoted to more productive activities and medium term efficiency gains secured.	(a) The achievement and maintenance of top quartile district council performance for the speed of processing of new Housing Benefit claims and changes of circumstances. The necessary hardware and software for the Electronic Records Document Management System are already in place and funding of £15,000 has been allocated to aid the implementation of the system.	
		Progress Report (31.3.07)				
		This target has been achieved as the Benefits Division has now gone live with Anite at Work, the corporate Electronic Records and Document Management System.				
		Progress Report (31.3.08)				
		Mobile working has been successfully implemented within the Benefits Division in April 2008, later than originally planned. Although the mobile processing of claims is still for future introduction, benefit staff can now take photographs of documents during visits, instead of having to bring original documents back to the Civic Offices and the whole 'mobile working' initiative is proving very popular with customers.				
IP3	To achieve and maintain top quartile district council performance for the determination of all planning applications.	(b) To investigate the use of information technology to enhance performance by mobile working, in partnership with other appropriate local authorities.	Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder/Director of Finance and ICT	(b) Benefit Visiting Officers to be provided with tablet personal computer equipment containing benefit information that can be used to check and verify benefit entitlement during the course of a visit. Eventually claims will be able to be processed during visits, which will assist claimants and improve performance.	(b) To maintain current top quartile district council performance for the accuracy of Housing Benefit assessments. A grant of £133,000 has been awarded by the Department of Work and Pensions to enable this initiative to commence in partnership with two other local authorities.	
		Progress Report (31.3.07)				
		A considerable amount of work has been undertaken to get the necessary infrastructure in place and functioning. Go live is now scheduled for June 2007.				
		Progress Report (31.3.08)				
		No further update required to the 31 March 2007 progress report.				
IP3	To achieve and maintain top quartile district council performance for the determination of all planning applications.	To fully implement agreed proposals for planning performance improvements, including new information technology systems, a planning 'hit squad' and the service restructure.	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder/Director of Planning and Economic Development	The achievement of improved determination times for all classes of planning application.	The achievement of top quartile district council performance by 30 June 2006, and the maintenance of top quartile performance thereafter.	

		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Planning Services has implemented the main building and planning modules of the Building Control, Local Land Charges and Planning integrated ICT system, and work continues on moving the Land Charges system to the latest full specification, and on further enhancements of the overall system that has changed many business processes. The Anite @work document management system has also been rolled out, but does not yet offer a complete "back catalogue" and is not yet seamless. However, the upgrading of systems and the provision of transformational access for staff and customers has been achieved in a short timescale. Planning Services have also successfully reduced a backlog of planning cases, and implemented a restructure. The combined effects of those measures has moved planning application performance from a poor position to one which is well above Government targets, and where the top quartile position (which is also moving higher) is close to achievement on BV109 (a) and (b) and has been achieved on 109 (c). Three particularly long serving and/or senior staff in an establishment team of twelve professional officers left the authority last year and although they have been successfully replaced with more junior and presently less experienced staff, this has inevitably impacted upon performance.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>In considering performance against the top quartile, an action plan was agreed for 2007/08. Some important points in that action plan required decisions of Members, and in turn the involvement of local councils to move to a position where there is a three weekly cycle of Plans Sub-Committee meetings, and where there is the shortest gap in the cycle of meetings around election time. Whilst those steps have now been agreed, they did not commence such that they could have an impact in 2007/08. Performance in the top quartile has only been achieved in one of the three indicators so far, but is now very close to the challenging top quartile position in the other two indicators.</p>			
IP4	To deliver customer-focused services which meet the needs and aspirations of the diverse communities of the district.	To develop and adopt a corporate Public Consultation and Engagement Policy and Strategy.	Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder/Deputy Chief Executive	The establishment of meaningful opportunities for residents and customers of the Council to inform and influence policy development and service provision.	The adoption of new Public Consultation and Engagement Policy and Strategy by 31 October 2006.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Action achieved. A new Public Consultation and Engagement Policy and Strategy was adopted by the Council in April 2006.</p>			
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>No further update required to the 31 March 2007 progress report. The Council's public consultation and engagement function transferred to the Public Relations and Marketing Unit as part of the corporate restructure in 2007/08.</p>			
IP5	To achieve top quartile district council performance for each Key Performance Indicator identified by the Council on an annual basis.	(a) To develop annual improvement plans in respect of all Key Performance Indicators;	All Portfolio Holders/All Directors	The achievement of top quartile district council performance in the service priority areas identified by the Council each year.	The achievement of top quartile district council performance in priority areas by 31 March each year, based on quartile data published by the Audit Commission.
		<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>Improvement plans in respect of all Key Performance Indicators for 2006/07 were completed and considered by Management Board. The success of improvement actions was monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the year by the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel.</p>			

	<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>Improvement plans in respect of all Key Performance Indicators for 2007/08 were completed and considered by the Corporate Executive Forum. The success of improvement actions was monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the year by the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel.</p>			
	<p>(b) To monitor progress towards the achievement of top quartile district council performance for each Key Performance Indicator on a quarterly basis.</p>	<p>All Portfolio Holders/All Directors</p>	<p>The achievement of top quartile district council performance in the service priority areas identified by the Council each year.</p>	<p>The achievement of top quartile district council performance in priority areas by 31 March each year, based on quartile data published by the Audit Commission.</p>
	<p>Progress Report (31.3.07)</p> <p>The overall year-end position with regard to the achievement of top quartile (or other relevant) targets set for 44 of the KPIs (excluding 7 indicators for which performance cannot be measured against targets, and one that reflects a base-line position brought forward from the preceding year) was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 (50%) achieved the performance target for 2006/07; • 7 (16%) did not achieve the performance target for 2006/07, although outturn performance was within 5% of the target for the year; and • 15 (34%) did not achieve the performance target for 2006/07 and outturn performance was not within 5% of the target for the year. 			
	<p>Progress Report (31.3.08)</p> <p>The year-end position with regard to overall improvement and the achievement of top quartile (or other relevant) targets for the KPIs for 2007/08, was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 (53.5%) achieved the performance target for 2007/08; • 6 (13.9%) did not achieve the performance target for 2007/08, although outturn performance was within 5% of the target for the year; • 14 (32.5%) did not achieve the performance target for 2007/08, and outturn performance was not within 5% of the target for the year ; • 23 (53.5%) improved in performance compared with 2006/07, or maintained the level of performance achieved for 2006/07; and • 20 (46.5%) worsened in performance compared with 2006/07. 			