

CABINET PRIORITIES 2008/09

PROGRESS REPORT – 30 NOVEMBER 2008

REF	OBJECTIVE	LEAD OFFICER	PROGRESS
CORPORATE			
1.	To ensure that the Council fully contributes to the delivery of the priorities and objectives of the second Essex Local Area Agreement, not only through active participation in the Local Strategic Partnership, but also by robustly monitoring performance against the priority areas that the authority has 'had regard to';	Deputy Chief Executive	The Cabinet has considered the Council's contribution to the second Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA) and has agreed the priorities that the Council will 'have regard to'. The Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel has received an outcome report on the first LAA and a progress report on the current position on the second LAA. Through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), some £453,000 of LAA Performance Reward Grant has been secured, and the LSP will also be monitoring the delivery of LAA targets at the local level.
2.	To explore options to improve the accessibility of the Council's services through customer focused initiatives, including neighbourhood services and one-stop-shops;	Deputy Chief Executive	A Customer Services Task and Finish Panel was established in June 2008 to pursue this objective. The Panel has revisited the customer services agenda previously identified by the Council, and has visited 'Contact Harlow', Harlow District Council's customer services one stop shop. An initial report of the Task and Finish Panel was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 December 2008, with recommendations to be made to the Cabinet in January 2009.

3.	To produce a Sustainability Strategy for the Council, to ensure that the authority minimises the environmental impact of its actions and operations;	Director of Planning and Economic Development	The first draft version of the Council's Climate Change Strategy is ready to be reported and consulted on.
4.	To review options for the future of North Weald Airfield, through the continuing work of the North Weald Airfield Strategy Cabinet Committee;	Deputy Chief Executive	The North Weald Airfield Strategy Cabinet Committee has considered options for the future of North Weald Airfield. The Committee has reported to the Cabinet on the need to commission further external consultancy support to explore aviation related development opportunities, for which a District Development Fund budget of £50,000 has been agreed.
FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO			
5.	To maintain the Council's sound financial position and keep in place the policy of increasing the Council Tax by less than the increase in the Retail Prices Index;	Director of Finance and ICT	The Council will maintain it's sound position in 2008/09 with a further increase in General Fund Reserves. This position allows the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to continue to be based on increasing the Council Tax by less than the increase in the Retail Prices Index (RPI). The Council Tax increase for 2009/10 is anticipated to be 2.5%, which is below the current RPI figure of 4.2% (October 2008 figure is 4.2%, down from 5% in September 2008).
6.	To ensure the Council provides good value for money;	Director of Finance and ICT	A detailed corporate 'Value For Money Review' has been undertaken in order to explore the facts that underlie the views previously expressed by the Audit Commission on the provision of value for money by the Council, through an analysis of information available from a variety of sources (including cost and performance data published by the Audit Commission), in order to reach an overall conclusion on the Council's provision of value for money. The review was presented to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee and the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel during August 2008, and a review and updating of the Council's Value for Money Strategy is now being progressed.

CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES AND ICT PORTFOLIO

7.	To ensure that ICT is provided in a strategic manner to support performance improvement throughout the Council;	Director of Finance and ICT	External consultants were engaged to review and benchmark the existing ICT Service and make recommendations on the strategic direction and future provision of ICT Services at the Council. The key recommendations from this report are now being implemented and the service has been re-structured to assist this process.
8.	<p>To undertake a review of the Council's depot facilities within the district with a view to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rationalising existing provision; • the disposal of site(s) surplus to requirements; and • the re-provision of suitable depot facilities for the Waste Management and Grounds Maintenance Services; 	Director of Corporate Support Services	<p>Planning consent for a range of commercial uses of the Council's Langston Road depot site at Loughton has been obtained. The Council is currently in negotiation with the WRVS who occupy part of the Langston Road site, with a view to agreeing a two to three year lease with a six to nine month break clause. Potential alternative locations for the waste management vehicles currently accommodated at the Langston Road depot are currently under active consideration.</p> <p>The Council has reached a preliminary agreement with Waltham Abbey Town Council for potential health and safety improvements to the Town Mead depot site at Waltham Abbey.</p> <p>The Council is working with Essex County Council and external consultants in relation to the preparation of a development brief for the St. John's area of Epping, incorporating the authority's depot site in the High Street (see also Objective 14).</p>

HOUSING PORTFOLIO

9.	To consider the development potential of a package of small Council-owned sites to provide additional affordable housing;	Director of Housing	Six sites have been transferred to Estuary Housing Association, to provide twelve shared ownership and eighteen additional rented properties in Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Waltham Abbey.
10.	To consider significantly increasing the funding for off street parking schemes on Council estates;	Director of Housing	At its meeting on 1 September 2008, the Cabinet agreed that an additional £300,000 from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme be made available for a four year period from 2009/10 to fund further off-street parking schemes match funded from the General Fund. This additional funding could provide approximately 335 extra parking bays on housing-owned land throughout the district at around 15 sites, based on priority need which is asessed under a set criteria.
11.	To undertake an options appraisal for the future delivery of the Council's Careline Service to older and other vulnerable people;	Director of Housing	At its meeting on 1 September 2008, the Cabinet agreed that the Council's twenty-four hour emergency alarm Careline Centre for older and vulnerable people continue to be provided locally by the Council. It was further agreed that detailed consideration be given to a number of future enhancements, including monitoring alarms for other providers, extending routine repairs reporting hours to 8pm on working days, monitoring CCTV systems and the whereabouts of the Council's lone workers out of hours.
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO			
12.	To recognise the Government approval of the East of England Plan and to work with key partners to deliver the Local Development Framework, in particular to have consulted on the Core Strategy within the year;	Director of Planning and Economic Development	The East of England Plan is subject to legal challenge by some key partners, particularly in respect of the proposed future growth of Harlow. The Council has been directed to proceed with the development of a Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document, which is presently at consultation stage. The Core Strategy will follow in mid-2009 on the present programme.

13.	To respond to sustainability issues by creating a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the District within the year;	Director of Planning and Economic Development	As Objective 3. The first draft version of the Council's Climate Change Strategy is ready to be reported and consulted on.
14.	To continue work on development briefs for key sites at The Broadway in Loughton and the St John's area of Epping, so that both are adopted following consultation by the end of the year.	Director of Planning and Economic Development	The development brief for The Broadway was adopted at full Council on 25 September 2008. The development brief for the St John's area of Epping has had to follow in step behind that document because of capacity issues among other factors, although the scoping document and agreement of Council to undertake the St John's brief has been secured. Consultants have been engaged in conjunction with Essex County Council and the inception meeting was held on 18 November 2008. The present economic climate means that the latter brief, in particular, will have to be much more alive to economic circumstances.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

<p>15.</p>	<p>To address the recommendations and criticisms contained within the Audit Commission's report on the Council's Waste Management Service, with particular emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing the garden waste collection service; • considering the introduction of a food waste collection service; • the wider implementation of recycling into flats and communal buildings; • the adoption of the Essex Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy; and • continued improvement in the local street scene; 	<p align="center">Director of Environment and Street Scene</p>	<p>The waste service review has been commenced, with initial report having been made to the Cabinet on 15 November 2008. Discussions are underway with Essex County Council regarding revenue and capital support for the food waste service. A public consultation exercise has been completed using the Forester, from which basic outcomes have been analysed and more in-depth work is currently underway.</p> <p>Recycling facilities now available at more flat locations, with an increase in overall service availability from 89% to 92% (i.e. kerbside collection of two recyclables). It may be possible to achieve rapid progress to 100% coverage through making clear sacks available to occupiers of all flats who request them, and this option is being investigated. The Essex Joint Municipal Waste Management strategy has been adopted.</p> <p>Street cleansing standards are improving, with the relevant performance indicator having improved from the 2007/08 outturn of 27% to 14% as at the end of the first monitoring period for 2008/09</p> <p>The Safer, Cleaner, Greener Strategy has been prepared in draft form, and all related positions within the Environment and Street Scene Directorate have been filled. The rapid response vehicle is now ready for operations as part of the initiative</p> <p>A high level action plan in response to the Audit Commission's report on the Waste Management Service has been completed, supported by operational action plan addressing individual items. The action plan was agreed by the Finance and Performance Cabinet Committee on 17 November 2008 and was also considered by Audit and Governance Committee on 24 November 2008.</p>
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COMMUNITY WELLBEING PORTFOLIO

16.	To contribute to the alleviation of health inequalities in the district, through effective collaboration with other statutory and voluntary agencies;	Deputy Chief Executive	A presentation on health inequalities and the Essex wide report published in February 2008 by the Audit Commission and PKF (UK) LLP, was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 November 2008, by the Director of Public Health of the West Essex Primary Care Trust. The Committee has reaffirmed the Council's intention to work in partnership to address health inequalities, and significant external funding has been secured for health improvement initiatives for the elderly. The Local Strategic Partnership has identified health inequalities as a priority for action, and the Council intends to develop a local health inequalities action plan over the next year.
17.	To develop a resource aimed at reducing young persons' fear of crime, through working with the newly formed Youth Council;	Director of Environment and Street Scene	Limited progress has so far made against this objective. A meeting has been arranged between the Safer Communities Team and the Youth Council, through a 'speed dating' event with other partners, and this will be a first step in indentifying key issues. Some current difficulties exist around the chairmanship of the Young People's Action Group, which are required to be resolved with Essex County Council. Participants in the second cohort of the Council's Management Development Programme have been tasked with looking at fear of crime issues to determine correlations between fear and actual crime.

CIVIL ENGINEERING AND MAINTENANCE PORTFOLIO

18.	To consider the outcome of the pilot 'localism' arrangements in respect of local highway maintenance, and to bring forward proposals for adoption of similar arrangements within the Epping Forest District;	Director of Environment and Street Scene	Essex County Council is proposing that this Council be in the next tranche of 'localism' commencing in April 2009. A meeting between members and the County Council's Cabinet Member for highways is scheduled for 18 December 2008, and officers from the district and county councils have held a preliminary meeting to develop the initiative.
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LEISURE AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

19.	To complete negotiations with SLM Ltd and King Harold School in respect of the future management of the Council's sports centres at Epping and Waltham Abbey;	Director of Environment and Street Scene	<p>The dual use agreement with King Harold School has been extended until 2010, and contains a break clause of one year's notice by either of the parties. The Leisure Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel has considered issues around Waltham Abbey Sports Centre and recommended that the sports hall facilities be re-provided at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool. The Cabinet agreed to fund a feasibility study in this respect at its meeting in November 2008;</p> <p>Negotiations with SLM Limited in respect of Epping Sports Centre have reached a position whereby they require an increase in the management fee of £220,000 p/a to extend the contract to 2013. This can be offset in part through capital investments at Loughton Leisure Centre and service changes at Epping Sports Centre. The Cabinet will consider these options at its meeting in December 2008, which will include consideration of terminating the joint use agreement and the closure of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre.</p>
20.	To ensure the maximisation of opportunities presented by the London 2012 Olympic Games, and in particular the legacy of the white water canoe venue at Waltham Abbey;	Deputy Chief Executive	A review of opportunities presented by the 2012 Olympic Games has been completed by the Leisure Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel, and a business breakfast to encourage local small and medium businesses to bid for contracts has been held. The Council has made representations to Broxbourne Borough Council in respect of the proposed white water canoe course, and actively participates in the White Water Canoe Stakeholder Group.
21.	To undertake the feasibility of the provision of a new sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool, to improve access and increase participation in health enhancing activity in the area.	Director of Environment and Street Scene	The Leisure Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel has considered issues around Waltham Abbey Sports Centre and recommended that the sports hall facilities be re-provided at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool. The Cabinet agreed to fund a feasibility study in this respect at its meeting in November 2008.