

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-064-2009/10

Date of meeting: 21 December 2009



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Performance Management.

Subject: Council Plan 2006-2010, and Key Priority Objectives 2009/10 & 2010/11.

Responsible Officer: Steve Tautz (01992 564180).

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That the Cabinet considers:

(a) performance against the objectives, targets and actions contained in the Council Plan for 2006 to 2010, for the year to 31 March 2009; and

(b) performance for the first eight months of 2009/10, in relation to the Council's key priority objectives for the year; and

(2) That the Council's proposed key priority objectives for 2010/11 be agreed.

Executive Summary:

The Council Plan for 2006/07 to 2009/10 is the authority's key strategic planning document, setting out service delivery priorities over the four-year period, with strategic themes matching those set out in the current Community Strategy for the District.

The Local Government Act 1999 and the Best Value regime previously required all local authorities to publish an annual Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP). Although the statutory requirement to publish a BVPP was removed from 2009/10, this process traditionally provided an opportunity for the Council to articulate its key priority objectives for each year, and, at its meeting on 5 February 2009, the Cabinet therefore adopted a range of specific key priority objectives for 2009/10.

As a result of the alignment of the Council's business, budget, and workforce planning and development processes into a clear framework to enable the authority to focus on key priorities and improve performance, it is also necessary to now adopt the Council's key priority objectives for 2010/11.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

It is important that relevant performance management processes are in place to review and monitor performance against the Council's key objectives, priorities and targets, to ensure their continued achievability and relevance, and to identify proposals for appropriate corrective action in areas of under performance.

The annual identification of key priority objectives provides an opportunity for the Council to focus specific attention on how existing weaknesses will be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered for local people.

Other Options for Action:

No other options are available in this respect. Failure to monitor and review performance against key objectives, priorities and targets, and to take corrective action where necessary, could have negative implications for the Council's reputation and for judgements made about the authority in the Comprehensive Area Assessment and similar corporate assessment processes. The Council could decide not to set any specific key priority objectives for 2010/11, although this might mean that opportunities for improvement were lost.

Report:

Council Plan 2006-2010

1. The Council Plan for 2006/07 to 2009/10 translates the vision for the district set out by the Community Strategy into the Council's strategic direction, priorities and the most important outcomes that it wants to achieve, and informs all other plans and helps prioritise resources to provide quality services and value for money. The Council Plan does not cover everything that the authority does, focusing instead on those issues that matter most to local people, national priorities set by the government and local challenges arising from the social, economic and environmental context of the district. As a strategic document, the Council Plan does not contain specific information on the wide range of services that the authority provides, or how it delivers statutory duties or enforces legislation, and details of the provision of services can be found in the individual directorate business plans produced each year.

2. The Council Plan is an important element in the Council's Performance Management Framework and corporate business planning processes, and informs the content of annual directorate business plans to illustrate the work that directorates and services perform that directly contributes towards the achievement of the Council's corporate objectives. The Council Plan also provides the policy foundation for the authority's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

3. Progress against the objectives and specific actions contained in the Council Plan is reviewed on an annual basis by the Cabinet and the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel, and a schedule setting out current (year three) progress towards the achievement of individual Council Plan objectives and actions is attached at Appendix 1 to this report. It should be noted that this progress report, which has previously been considered by the Scrutiny Panel, reflects performance as at 31 March 2009. Final outturn performance in respect of the Council Plan will be reported to the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Panel in June 2010.

4. As the current Council Plan has now entered its final year, it is necessary to commence work on the initial development of a new corporate plan to take the authority forward from 2010/11 to 2013/14. The development of a new Council Plan will need to be undertaken in conjunction with the similar development of the new Community Strategy for the district by the Local Strategic Partnership. The new Council Plan will need to complement the emerging Community Strategy and reflect those issues and priorities identified in the Community Strategy where the Council can have maximum impact. The Corporate Executive Forum has recently considered arrangements for the development of the new Council Plan, and has established an officer Working Party to take this process forward.

5. Whilst the Council Plan covers the medium-term (four years), it is also necessary for the Council to identify its immediate priorities for each year, and for these to be factored into the Council's corporate planning arrangements. The identification of key priority objectives for 2010/11 is addressed later in this report.

Key Priority Objectives 2009/10

6. The Council's key priority objectives for 2009/10 were adopted by the Cabinet at its meeting on 5 February 2009. A schedule detailing current performance (November 2009) against the key priority objectives is attached at Appendix 2 to this report.

7. Progress against the Council's key priorities and objectives is an area of inspection focus in the Managing Performance element of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment process introduced in April 2009. The Managing Performance assessment has replaced the former Direction Of Travel report, as the annual assessment of the progress the Council is making towards achieving improvement in the services it delivers to the public, and is intended to identify and reflect efforts to put in place plans to secure improvement. It is therefore important to ensure that relevant performance management processes are in place to review and monitor performance against the authority's key objectives, and to agree proposals for corrective action in areas of current under performance.

8. Final outturn performance in respect of the key priority objectives for 2009/10 will be reported to the Cabinet in June 2010.

Key Priority Objectives 2010/11

9. During the last year the Council has implemented arrangements for the alignment of its business, budget, and workforce planning and development processes into a clear framework to enable the authority to focus on key priorities, improve performance and the way that performance is managed, and to improve communication and consultation on key priorities.

10. As a consequence of these new arrangements, the Council's key priority objectives for 2009/10 were agreed by the Cabinet in February 2009, much earlier in the planning cycle than in previous years. However, in order to improve the authority's planning processes further, it was accepted at that time that the identification of key priority objectives for 2010/11 and future years would need to be brought forward, in order to ensure alignment with the preparation of the budget and directorate business plans for next year. It is therefore necessary to now identify the Council's key priority objectives for 2010/11.

11. For 2010/11, the Leader of the Council has indicated that specific priority objectives be identified for each portfolio (in addition to appropriate 'corporate' priorities), based on key areas highlighted in the draft budget for 2010/11 and that, as for 2009/10, particular regard should be had to the identification of priorities relevant to the current economic climate. Portfolio Holders have therefore recently been meeting with individual service directors in order to determine the detail of these key member objectives, which are attached at Appendix 3 to this report (*to follow*).

12. Although the key priority objectives identified by individual Portfolio Holders and adopted by the Cabinet will no longer be published within a BVPP, they will be incorporated within respective directorate business plans for 2010/11. Formal performance reports against the key priority objectives will be made to the Cabinet after six months and at year-end.

13. The Cabinet is requested to consider progress against the key priority objectives within the Council Plan 2006-2010 and those adopted specifically for 2009/10, and to agree the Council's key priority objectives for 2010/11.

Resource Implications:

Resource requirements for any proposals for corrective action in respect of areas of current under-performance set out in this report will need to be identified.

Legal and Governance Implications:

There are no legal implications or Human Rights Act issues arising from the recommendations in this report, which ensure that the Council monitors progress and reports against the achievement of its corporate priorities.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

There are no implications arising from the recommendations in this report for the Council's commitment to the Nottingham Declaration for climate change, the corporate Safer, Cleaner and Greener initiative, or any Crime and Disorder issues within the District.

Consultation Undertaken:

Current performance against the objectives and actions contained in the Council Plan 2006-2010 and the Cabinet's key priority objectives for 2008/09 have been reported by each appropriate Service Director.

Background Papers:

None.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The respective service director will have identified any risk management issues arising from proposals for corrective action in respect of areas of current under-performance in relation to the Council's key priority objectives for 2009/10, as set out in this report

Equality and Diversity

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications?

No. The content of this report has no specific equality implications. However, the respective service director will have identified any equality issues arising from proposals for corrective action in respect of areas of current under-performance in relation to the Council Plan for 2006 to 2010, the Council's adopted key priority objectives for 2009/10, or the draft key priority objectives for 2010/11.

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?

N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?

N/A

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?

N/A