

**Report to Finance and Performance
Management Standing Panel**

Date of meeting: 26 September 2005

Portfolio: Finance and Performance Management

Subject: Council Plan 2006-2010

Officer contact for further information: S Tautz

Committee Secretary: S G Hill



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Scrutiny Panel consider the approach being taken to the review of the Council Plan.

1. (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management) At the request of the Chairman, this report provides members with an overview of the approach being taken to the ongoing review of the current Council Plan, consideration of which is part of the Scrutiny Panel's work programme for 2005/06.
2. The first Council Plan (known initially as the Corporate Plan and subsequently as the Community Plan) was produced in the mid 1990's and has since been reviewed on a number of occasions to reflect the Council's achievements and set new priorities for future years. The most recent review of the Plan was completed in 2003/04 in advance of the Council's first Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
3. Following the publication of the Epping Forest Community Strategy, the existing Council Plan (2003-2007) is currently being thoroughly reviewed once more, to ensure that it accords with the aims and aspirations for the district contained in the Strategy, to reflect recent progress and the results of the CPA, and to highlight new duties and responsibilities introduced by the government.
4. This purpose of the new Council Plan will be to set out the Council's ambition and priorities for the four years from 2006 to 2010, showing how the authority will support the Community Strategy through its role as a leader or influencer of action, and how it will respond to the priorities of the Government and residents of the district. The new Plan will also provide an opportunity to identify and promote the key aims that will build upon the Council's previous successes and take it forward over the medium-term. Together with its family of supporting plans and strategies, the Plan will show how the Council intends to achieve its priorities and how the authority will manage its resources to secure their achievement and maintain continuous improvement. The Council Plan will outline these priorities and bring together the Council's aims, core values and key priorities to illustrate how the authority will contribute to the vision for the district outlined in the Community Strategy. The target audience for the Council Plan will be councillors, staff and key external agencies, and will be a working document that ensures that the Council and other agencies work toward a common purpose.

5. It is generally accepted by members and officers that the previous versions of the Council Plan have sought to address too many different issues and have lacked focus and prioritisation. The Council Plan should not cover everything that the authority does, but should focus on those issues that matter most to 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 should not contain specific information on the wide range of services provided, or how the authority delivers statutory duties or enforces legislation. For the new Plan it is therefore proposed that priorities for the next four years be focused specifically on the Council's previously adopted medium-term priority of ensuring that the Epping Forest District is a safe, healthy and attractive place in which to live and work, and that this priority should therefore constitute the council's vision and overall strategic aim for the district for the next four years. Whilst remaining important, it is considered that the remaining current medium-term priorities of ensuring that the council is an organisation that listens and leads to resolve local issues and provides accessible, affordable and improving services, act to support the achievement of making the district safe, healthy and attractive. It is therefore proposed that the new Council Plan will reflect these priorities in terms of their support of the council's vision and overall strategic aim for the district until 2010.

6. Through consultation undertaken by the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership, and the analysis of socio-economic and demographic data from sources such as the 2001 Census, it has been possible to establish the main concerns and issues facing the district in the forthcoming years, all of which fall within the safe, healthy and attractive place theme. For the next round of CPA it will be important to be able to demonstrate that priorities are based on those issues that matter most to the Council's customers and, to ensure that these issues are addressed effectively, it is intended that specific aims included in the new Council Plan will be developed in line with the following themes of the Community Strategy:

Green and Unique
Homes and Neighbourhoods
A Safe Community
Fit for Life
Economic Prosperity

7. It is proposed that all aims included in the new Council Plan will be referenced to one of these themes and will be supported by appropriate detail obtained from the evidence sources illustrated in paragraph 5 above. The Council Plan will contain far fewer actions than previous editions, although these will be more closely focused on priority issues, and will be a rolling four year document that will be updated annually. The Plan and its aims and objectives will be subject to appropriate consultation with residents and partner agencies, so as to ensure that actions and resources are targeted at those areas of greatest importance. Members will be asked to consider consultation arrangements for the new Plan in due course, once the results of the Audit Commission's 'User Focus' assessment have been received.

8. A first draft version of the new Council Plan will be considered by the Scrutiny Panel at its next meeting. Members are requested to comment on the approach being taken to the development of the new Plan.