

**Report to Finance and Performance  
Management Overview & Scrutiny  
Standing Panel  
Date of meeting: 8 November 2005**

**Portfolio:** Finance and Performance Management

**Subject:** Council Plan 2006-2010

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**Committee Secretary:** S G Hill (ext 4249)

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**Recommendations:**

- (1) That the Scrutiny Panel consider and comment on the proposed format and structure of the draft Council Plan for 2006 to 2010;**
- (2) That members consider initial proposals for consultation on the new Council Plan; and**
- (3) That the timetable for the completion of the new Council Plan be noted.**

**Background**

1. (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management) At its last meeting, the Scrutiny Panel received a report on the background to the development of the new Council Plan for 2006 to 2010. This report seeks member agreement to the proposed format and structure of the new Council Plan.
2. The new Council Plan will set out the Council's ambition and priorities for the next four years, showing how the authority will support the Community Strategy for the Epping Forest District through its role as a leader or influencer of action, and how it will respond to the priorities of the Government and residents. The 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.
3. A first draft of the new Council Plan is attached for consideration by the Panel as Appendix 1 to this agenda. Whilst the text currently included in the draft document seeks to reflect the major issues currently facing the district, it is emphasised this has been drafted for illustrative purposes only and will require the input of all Heads of Service who have yet to formally contribute to the draft document, to ensure that focus is concentrated on relevant issues and that actions are appropriate and achievable. Whilst members are encouraged to review the document in its present form, they are asked to note that at this

stage it is intended only that the format and structure of the Plan should be agreed, and that some areas of the Plan are currently blank and where text is included that this should not be regarded as being in a finalised form and subject to thorough scrutiny.

4. Through consultation previously undertaken by both the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership, officer awareness of current matters and the analysis of socio-economic and demographic data from sources such as the 2001 Census and the 2004 Index of Deprivation, the main issues facing the district in the forthcoming years have been identified, all of which fall within the medium-term priorities established by the previously adopted 'Safe, Healthy and Attractive Place' policy theme. The format of the new Council Plan has therefore been developed on the basis that this theme will constitute the Council's vision and overall strategic aim for the district for the next four years, with the remaining current policy themes of ensuring that the council is an 'organisation that listens and leads to resolve local issues' and provides 'accessible, affordable and improving services', acting 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.
5. 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, specific aims included in the new Council Plan will be developed in line with the following themes of the Community Strategy. All aims included in the new Plan will be referenced to one of these themes and will be supported by appropriate detail obtained from credible evidence sources:
  - Green and Unique;
  - Homes and Neighbourhoods;
  - A Safe Community;
  - Fit for Life; and
  - Economic Prosperity.
6. It has been accepted by members and officers that 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. The new Council Plan will therefore contain far fewer actions than previous editions, although these will be more closely focused on priority issues. The Plan will be a rolling four year document that will be updated annually.

### **Consultation**

7. The new Council Plan and its aims and objectives will be subject to appropriate consultation with residents, partner agencies and other organisations, so as to ensure that actions and resources are targeted at those areas of greatest importance. In considering consultation arrangements, it will be important to ensure that the level of consultation undertaken is proportionate to the benefit

that will be obtained, particularly also bearing in mind the existing limited resources of the Performance Management Unit, who are responsible for the production of the new Council Plan. The following direct consultation approaches have been identified:

- Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership (the statutory and voluntary agencies operating in the district);
  - Epping Forest Local Councils Liaison Committee (a representative group of all local councils in the district);
  - Local Youth Parliament; and
  - Representative groups for older people, minority ethnic communities and other hard to reach groups resident or active in the district.
8. Consultation in respect of the new Council Plan could also be promoted by articles in the 'Forester' magazine and 'Grapevine' staff newsletter, and through the local press and the Leader of the Council's regular media briefing. Although the Scrutiny Panel will be formally asked to consider consultation arrangements for the new Plan at its meeting in January 2006, members may wish to give some thought to this issue at the present time.

#### **Timescale**

9. Subject to the agreement of the Scrutiny Panel to the proposed format and structure of the new Council Plan at this meeting, detailed issues, aims and targets will be incorporated within the draft document in consultation with Management Board and Heads of Service. Concurrently, a review will be made of progress against each of the actions contained in the previous Council Plan (2003-2007) in order that any appropriate outstanding issues can be brought forward into the new Plan.
10. The text of the draft new Council Plan, the results of the review of the previous Plan and consultation arrangements for the new Plan, will be considered at the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel to be held on 16 January 2006, and by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 February 2006. It is intended that the content of the draft Plan will then be reported to the meeting of the Cabinet on 16 February 2006, with a recommendation of overview and scrutiny that it be approved for consultation purposes.
11. The results of the consultation undertaken in respect of the text of the draft Council Plan will be reported directly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 6 April 2006, with the document then being referred to the Cabinet on 10 April 2006 and the Council meeting on 28 April 2006 for adoption. Once adopted, the Council Plan will be professionally designed and printed in accordance with the Council's corporate identity guidelines.