

**Report to: Finance and Performance
Management Scrutiny Panel
Date of meeting: 30 January 2006**



Portfolio: Finance and Performance Management

Subject: Draft Council Plan 2006-2010

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Committee Secretary: S G Hill (Ext 4249)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (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 the Panel consider and agree proposals for consultation on the new Council Plan; and**
- (3) That the Panel recommend accordingly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

Report:

1. (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management) At its meeting in November 2005, the Scrutiny Panel agreed the proposed format and structure of the new Council Plan for 2006 to 2010. A full draft version of the new Council Plan has been circulated separately to all members.
2. The 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. 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. As previously agreed by the Scrutiny Panel, 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.

4. 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, the majority of the specific aims included in the new Council Plan have been developed in line with the following themes of the Community Strategy:
 - Green and Unique;
 - Homes and Neighbourhoods;
 - A Safe Community;
 - Fit for Life; and
 - Economic Prosperity.
5. The Council Plan recognises that to deliver its priorities the Council needs to have a range of high quality support services. An additional Council Plan theme entitled 'Improving Our Performance' has therefore been developed to address the importance of the processes and people that go towards meeting community needs. Although this theme is not directly linked to the Community Strategy, it will ensure that all aims included in the new Plan are referenced to an appropriate theme and supported by detail obtained from credible evidence sources.
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 therefore contains far fewer actions than previous editions, although these are more closely focused on priority issues and have been fully cross-referenced with other strategic documents such as the CPA Improvement Plan, the Capital Strategy and the adopted Key Performance Indicators for 2005/06, so as to link priorities by the principle of the 'golden thread'.
7. The Plan will be a rolling four year document that will be updated annually. A review has been 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, and these details will be circulated to the Scrutiny Panel in advance of the meeting.

Consultation

8. 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. As a consequence of the development of the Council's new Public Consultation and Engagement Policy and Strategy to be found elsewhere in this agenda, the following direct consultation approaches are proposed:
 - 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, where it is possible to access these groups given resource constraints.

9. It is also proposed that consultation in respect of the new Council Plan also be promoted by articles in the next edition of the 'Forester' magazine and the Council's website, through the local press and the Leader of the Council's weekly media briefing, and through the Council's information centres. Full member consultation will be undertaken in respect of the draft Council Plan.
10. In considering consultation arrangements, it is important to ensure that the level of consultation undertaken is proportionate to the benefit that will be obtained. Bearing in mind the existing limited resources of the Performance Management Unit, who are responsible for the production of the new Council Plan, Management board has indicated that it does not consider it appropriate for any form of 'consultation forum' to be held in relation to the Council Plan.

Timescale

11. The attached draft version of the new Council Plan will require the incorporation of additional detail in relation to the Council's four year financial forecast, as this issue will be important for the purposes of evidencing that actions and priorities to be achieved over the next four years can be fully resourced. This addition will be completed once the budget for 2006/07 has been agreed.
12. Subject to the agreement of the Scrutiny Panel to its proposed content at this meeting, 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 Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 February 2006. It is intended that the content of the draft Plan will then be reported to the meeting of the Cabinet on 6 February 2006, with a recommendation of overview and scrutiny that it be approved for consultation purposes.
13. 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 24 April 2006 for adoption. Once adopted, the Council Plan will be professionally designed and printed in accordance with the Council's corporate identity guidelines.

Reason for decision:

14. To identify the Council's key priorities for 2006 to 2010, and to address an area for improvement identified in the Council's first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in 2004, in preparation for the next round of second-tier CPA due to commence during 2006/07.

Options considered and rejected:

15. None. The Council is expected to identify its key priorities and the content of the previous Council Plan was highlighted as a weakness in the first round of second-tier Comprehensive Performance Assessments.

Consultation undertaken:

16. Consultation in relation to the issues and priorities contained in the draft Council Plan has been undertaken with Management Board and the Senior Management Team. Full member and public consultation will be undertaken in relation to the draft document.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: The development of the new Council Plan can be met from within existing budget provision

Personnel: None

Land: None

Council Plan/BVPP reference: The Council's Customer Charter sets out a commitment to consult service users and residents

Relevant statutory powers: None

Background papers: None

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: None

Key Decision reference: (if required) None