

Our Priorities and Performance

Each year we publish a Best Value Performance Plan, to tell you what our priorities are and how we are performing. A summary of our priorities and performance is set out in this leaflet. We will produce our next performance plan in June 2006 and you can obtain a copy by:

Writing to us at: Epping Forest District Council, Civic Offices,
High Street, Epping, Essex, CM16 4BZ
Phoning us on: 01992 564471
Faxing us on: 01992 578018
E-mailing us on: bestvalue@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Copies of the Best Value Performance Plan will also be available at our information centres, or from our website (www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk). We can provide a copy of the plan in large print or on audiotape if required.

Our Customer Charter

We have developed our Customer Charter to let you know the overall standards that you can expect from the council and how we will work to provide the best services for the district that we can. We will:

- Consult with our customers, listen to what they say, and respond in the best way we can;
- Be open in all financial matters, and always remember we are spending public money;
- Constantly search for ways in which we can improve our services;
- Respond to changes which affect our customers;
- Be open and honest in all our dealings, and treat everyone equally and fairly;
- Strive towards excellence in all our services, and provide the best value available;
- Invest in our staff through training and development so we can provide the best service; and
- Do our best to care for the environment for today and for the future.

Our Priorities

Our Medium Term Priorities are the foundations of our services and contribute to everything that we do. Our priorities for 2003 to 2007 are:

Policy Theme One	A safe, healthy and attractive place
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain the special character and advantage of the District, and address local environmental issues • To address key housing need • To create safer communities • To encourage sustainable economic development • To address leisure need
Policy Theme Two	An organisation that listens and leads to resolve local issues.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure political leaders give clear direction • To communicate with the public about service delivery • To prioritise objectives and services • To co-operate and plan with partners
Policy Theme Three	Accessible, affordable and improving services
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify and target resources; realise capacity and manage performance • To procure services in the most beneficial and cost effective way • To develop services, staff and working environment

Our Performance

Our work is organised into nine portfolios each allocated to a councillor who serves on the Cabinet, which is where the council mainly makes decisions about services. The nine portfolios are:

- Community Wellbeing
- Housing
- Leisure

- Planning and Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Civil Engineering and Maintenance
- Finance and Performance Management
- Information and Communications Technology, and Corporate Support Services
- People First

For each portfolio we set out in this leaflet what we achieved during 2005/06 and our aims for 2006/07. We hope that you will find this useful.

Community Wellbeing

Our Community Wellbeing responsibility includes a range of services to make sure that the district is a safe and healthy place. We work with our partners such as the Police and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to tackle crime, and with the Epping Forest Primary Care Trust to promote health and wellbeing.

Last year we

- implemented the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 in partnership with other agencies who have an emergency response role;
- funded the provision of six additional Police Community Support Officers for the district, jointly with Essex Police;
- appointed an Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator to develop an operational and strategic response to anti-social behaviour issues;
- invested £55,000 to enhance the existing scheme for concessionary travel into London and increased the number of passes issued;
- began to integrate the Epping Forest District Local Compact and Codes of Practice that set out the commitments of the council.
- began the implementation of targets in the Community Strategy;
- implemented a three year funding agreement with Voluntary Action Epping Forest as part of a review of voluntary sector assistance.

This year we aim to

- implement a system for issuing bus passes by post, in order to reduce inconvenience to users;
- implement an enhanced scheme of free travel for users of bus passes.

Housing

We oversee and co-ordinate the provision of new housing in the district (especially affordable housing for rent and housing for those with special needs), deals with homelessness, assist with the improvement of privately owned properties, and manage and maintain our own housing stock.

Last year we

- completed the installation of PVCu window frames in all council houses;
- doubled the number of properties covered by our fresh START scheme for housing associations to lease private accommodation to homeless families;
- consulted on the use of introductory tenancies for all new tenants, allowing us to evict tenants in they engage in anti-social behaviour ;
- undertook a Private Sector House Condition Survey;
- enabled 77 new affordable homes to be built; and
- consulted residents of our sheltered housing scheme at Wickfields in Chigwell, on transferring to Warden Housing Association, to enable a major improvement scheme to convert bed-sits with shared bathrooms into self-contained flats.

This year we aim to

- implement a choice based lettings scheme for council housing vacancies and housing association nominations, in partnership with five neighbouring councils;
- commence the development of eight council-owned housing sites to provide about 40 affordable homes;
- commence a major £4m improvement scheme at Springfields Waltham Abbey;
- commence the use of introductory tenancies for all new tenants, in order to assist the Council to reduce anti-social behaviour; and
- transfer the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Wickfields to Warden Housing, to enable a major improvement/conversion scheme to be undertaken.

Leisure

The Council provides and promotes opportunities for everyone to take part in leisure and cultural activities such as sport, play, informal and outdoor

recreation, heritage and the arts. We try to be responsive to the local community by encouraging initiatives and by involving them and other organisations in the planning and provision of leisure and cultural activities. We proactively pursue external funding opportunities in the form of grants or sponsorship in order to extend our services.

Last year we

- undertook a consultation exercise to establish how we can enhance cultural opportunities, tourism and related economic development initiatives in the rural parts of the district;
- entered into an external management contract with Sports and Leisure Management Limited to secure significant additional investment in the provision of new health and fitness facilities at Ongar Leisure Centre and Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool;
- implemented an Active For Life programme in partnership with the local Primary Care Trust, to develop healthier lifestyles;
- secured funding to improve awareness and interpretation of our social history through the collections of our museum; and
- provided an extensive programme of activities for children and young people across the district over the school summer holidays.

This year we aim to

- work in partnership with our leisure management contractor to improve the quality of facilities at the Council's leisure centres and increase participation by people of all ages and abilities;
- with financial assistance from East of England Arts, undertake a Community Arts Project to celebrate the rural character of the district;
- work in conjunction with external funding agencies, the local parish council and the community of, to refurbish local playing fields at Matching Tye into a valuable amenity area;
- increase opportunities for young people in the district to be involved in decisions which affect their lives by promoting citizenship and supporting the work of local Youth Councils and the Essex Young People's Assembly;
- expand the range of accessible opportunities for people to lead a healthier lifestyle through the 'Active Life Programme'; and
- improve access and awareness of the collections of our Museum and through a new Community Outreach Programme.

Planning and Economic Development

We play a part in creating a sustainable and prosperous long-term future for the district, by planning ahead and encouraging or regulating change in a balanced and efficient way. The council recognises the challenge of meeting development needs in the most sustainable manner, and also works to promote local business efficiency and to develop our town centres and the rural economy. Responsibility for town centre enhancement schemes transferred to this portfolio from Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio during the last year.

Last year we

- completed a review of the town centre enhancement scheme for the Broadway at Loughton and developed comprehensive proposals for an area based regeneration scheme;
- completed phase 1 of the Loughton Town Centre enhancement scheme;
- sought the provision of increased levels of affordable housing on development sites in the district, through alterations to the Local Plan;
- further influenced regional planning guidance providing for necessary development and respecting the character of the district; and
- updated the existing Local Plan and commenced preparation for a new Local Development Framework.

This year we aim to

- complete phase two of the Loughton town centre enhancement scheme and commence work on the Loughton Broadway enhancement scheme;
- implement a restructure of our planning services;
- continue to implement a new information technology system;
- continue to improve local land charge and planning application turnaround times;
- take our planning performance into the top performing quartile of district councils.

Environmental Protection

The Environmental Protection portfolio covers a range of services, such as refuse collection, street cleansing, the removal of abandoned vehicles, and recycling services. Less obvious services that we provide include food safety, health and safety, air quality monitoring and energy conservation.

Last year we

- introduced a revised waste management service to increase levels of recycling to 30% by the end of 2005/06, in order to move towards the Council's overall recycling target of 36%;
- further improved street cleansing standards in the district;
- assessed the highest priority contaminated land sites so that land is appropriately treated and made fit for purposes such as recreation, public open space or development; and
- agreed methods for the remediation of the contaminated Bobbingworth Tip site.

This year we aim to

- complete the introduction of the new wheeled bin waste collection and recycling service throughout the district, with the aim of achieving the Council's target of 36% recycling by March 2007; and
- commence work on the remediation of Bobbingworth Tip, with completion by March 2007

Civil Engineering and Maintenance

From 1 April 2005 Essex County Council took the delivery of all highway services and we only now have discretionary powers over local roads and footpaths, although we continue to be able to use our own resources for traffic calming and speed reduction schemes. We also work to ensure that rivers, streams and ditches in the district are not liable to cause flooding.

Last year we

- monitored the performance of the Highways Local Service Agreement, to secure the best level of service for the district in relation to matters such as traffic calming, highway repairs, and pot hole reinstatement;
- undertook parking reviews for Epping and Buckhurst Hill;
- provided twenty-four free car parking spaces in Waltham Abbey to provide support to local traders;
- Entered into an agreement with the Environment Agency in respect of the management of watercourses that are liable to flood.

This year we aim to

- implement the agreed parking solutions for Buckhurst Hill and Epping; and
- undertake parking reviews in Loughton and Waltham Abbey and bring forward proposals for local parking controls.

Finance and Performance Management

Finance and Performance Management is about financial and quality control, financial stability and continuous improvement, and the mechanisms to see whether or not these are achieved. This portfolio is also responsible for the collection of Council Tax and business rates, the award of housing and council tax benefit, and the council's (non-housing) building and land assets.

Last year we

- kept the Council Tax increase below 4%;
- began to implement an electronic records document management system in our Benefits Service;
- made interactive Council Tax forms available on-line and introduced a system for other payments to be made through our website;
- introduced quarterly financial monitoring reports to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel;
- conducted a tendering exercise for the Council's insurance portfolio, which should save in excess of £1m over the five years of the new contract;
- completed the accounts closure more quickly and achieved the statutory target.

This year we aim to

- keep the Council Tax increase below 3%;
- investigate the development potential of Council-owned car parks, whilst retaining adequate public car parking facilities;
- complete the sale of the parade Ground site at North weald Airfield;
- update the strategic risk register and involve councillors more actively in risk management;
- expand the number of services for which payment can be made via the website;
- introduce the Essex Marketplace electronic ordering system;

- implement a new performance management database, so that we have accurate and timely information about our performance; and
- carry out customer satisfaction surveys in accordance with Government requirements.

Information and Communications Technology and Corporate Support Services

This portfolio considers ways of using modern electronic methods to improve access to services and service delivery. Corporate Support Services covers the wide range of services that provide support to the work of the council, including legal, payroll and human resource services, secretarial, reprographics and administrative services, democratic and member services, and the provision of depot and office accommodation.

Last year we

- introduced electronic services for councillors.
- continued our participation in the implementation of electronic government funding process to ensure that we receive further government capital grants;
- introduced the electronic delivery of democratic processes such as the publication of agenda and minutes of our committee meetings;
- met the target date for January 2006 for all appropriate interactions with the public to be on-line;
- further developed our recruitment and retention strategy;
- registered 40% of the Council's unregistered titles in advance of the computerisation of our land register to provide greater protection for our land ownership records;
- upgraded our legal services time recording systems to support an application for Lexcel quality accreditation; and
- prioritised the services that our customers and partners tell us they would like to access electronically.

This year we aim to

- to achieve 'good' priority outcomes for E-Government as defined by the Government;
- to develop an information technology training programme for our members;
- to implement electronic services for our members;

- to implement an e-Bookings System;
- to develop public access to services through the Government Connect (Direct.Gov); and
- to achieve the independently assessed Lexcel quality accreditation for our legal services, to improve the services that we provide.

People First

The People First portfolio covers our local democracy role, improving our communication and making our services easily accessible. The portfolio also concentrates on working in partnership with other organisations that provide services for the district.

Last year we

- Implemented our Corporate Communications Strategy;
- participated in the review of parliamentary electoral arrangements;
- continued to develop the interactive elements of our website;
- reviewed and implemented a member remuneration scheme for 2006/07 at agreed levels;
- implemented arrangements for the local investigation of complaints against councillors; and
- introduced new arrangements to improve the effectiveness of our overview and scrutiny function.

This year we aim to

- commence the implementation of our Customer Services Transformation Programme, to improve services to the public;
- review current arrangements for meetings of the full Council;
- re-launch the training programme for our councillors; and
- introduce new joint arrangements for the provision of information services at Loughton Library.

Want to find out more?

If you would like to know more about our priorities and performance, you can write to us or contact our Performance Management Unit on the telephone and fax numbers or email address given earlier in this leaflet.