

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 2007 and you will be able to obtain a copy by:

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

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 foundation steps of our services and contribute to everything that we do. Our priorities are:

Policy Theme One Aims

A safe, healthy and attractive place

- 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 Aims

An organisation that listens and leads to resolve

- 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 Aims

Accessible, affordable and improving services

- 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 Thematic Approach

In this summary of the Best Value Performance Plan we have linked the way in which we provide services to the following themes of the Community Strategy for 2004 to 2021. The Community Strategy sets out the major challenges facing the Epping Forest District over the long-term and how these will be addressed by statutory and voluntary agencies:

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

This leaflet shows what we have achieved so far during 2006/07 within each theme, and our aims for 2007/08. We hope that you find this useful.

Green and Unique

One of the key objectives of the Community Strategy is that the district will maintain a unique, green and sustainable environment in which communities prosper. This vision is reflected in our medium-term priorities, which seek to maintain the special character and advantage of the district and address local environmental issues. Our Environmental Protection and Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolios, and the planning functions of the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio, are included within this theme.

Last year we

- completed the introduction of a new wheeled bin waste collection and recycling service throughout the district;
- commenced the remediation of Bobbingworth Tip;
- implemented the Licensing Act 2003 in respect of all premises and persons involved in the sale of alcohol and/or the provision of public entertainment;
- implemented parking schemes for Buckhurst Hill and Epping;
- commenced a programme of enhancements to some of the Council's public car parks;
- commenced parking reviews in Loughton and Waltham Abbey and agreed proposals for local parking controls;
- implemented a restructure of our planning services to improve service delivery;
- continued to implement a new planning information technology system;
- improved and maintained local land charge and planning application turnaround times; and
- achieved and maintained top quartile performance for our development control function.

This year we aim to

- develop a new waste management contract to further improve recycling and diversion from landfill, and meet residents wishes for the nature of the service;
- develop and adopt the Council's statutory policies on gambling to ensure the protection of the public and young people;
- complete the remediation of Bobbingworth Tip and undertake further assessments of potentially contaminated land within the district;
- protect the environment of the district through the use of statutory powers, education and the adoption of good environmental practice;
- develop further internal and external links with other local authorities, agencies and the Primary Care Trust through the Essex Local Area Agreement;
- review our parking policies and re-let a parking enforcement contract;
- provide free parking on Saturdays throughout the year;
- reduce the risks of localised flooding through the maintenance and enforcement of controls relating to watercourses;
- seek to ensure that the highway infrastructure in the district is adequately maintained and improved through formal liaison arrangements with Essex County Council;
- complete the implementation of the new planning information technology system to its full specification; and
- re-establish a professional team within Building Control.

A Safe Community

A second key objective of the Community Strategy is for the Epping Forest District to be an area where people will be reassured that criminal and disorderly behaviour is unusual and, where it does occur, that the police, other agencies and members of the community will do their utmost to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. This vision is reflected in our medium-term priorities, which seek to maintain the district as a safe, healthy and attractive place. The Community Wellbeing Portfolio is included in this theme.

Last year we

- implemented a system for issuing bus passes by post, in order to reduce inconvenience to users;
- implemented the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 in partnership with other agencies with an emergency response role;
- implemented an enhanced scheme of free travel for users of bus passes; and
- developed an operational and strategic plan to respond to anti-social behaviour issues.

This year we aim to

- increase the number of Service Level Agreements for community groups in receipt of long-term funding;
- implement a '2 Smart 4 Drugs' scheme in schools, to provide education about drugs, alcohol and staying safe;
- implement a training programme for town and parish councils explaining the law in respect of anti-social behavior; and
- develop a strategy with Essex Police on the deployment of Police Community Support Officers.

Homes and Neighbourhoods

Another of the key objectives of the Community Strategy is that the district has safe, decent and attractive housing that meets the needs of those who want to live in the district. This vision is reflected in our medium-term priorities, which seek to address key housing need. The Housing Portfolio is included within this theme.

Last year we

- commenced the implementation of a choice based lettings scheme for council housing vacancies and housing association nominations;
- introduced an 'Empty Homes' Strategy and associated initiatives to reduce the number of empty private sector properties;
- commenced the use of introductory tenancies for all new tenants, in order to reduce anti-social behaviour; and
- transferred the Wickfields sheltered housing scheme at Chigwell to Home Housing, to enable an improvement scheme to be undertaken.

This year we aim to

- complete the implementation of the choice based lettings scheme;
- complete the first development of Council-owned housing sites, to provide around 35 affordable homes, subsidised by the sale of other properties on the sites;
- commence a major improvement scheme at Springfields, Waltham Abbey;
- implement a licensing regime for houses in multiple occupation to ensure that they provide safe accommodation;
- initiate a 'Finders Fee' scheme to bring at least five private sector empty properties back into use per annum;
- meet, the Government's Respect Standard for Housing Management, giving a public commitment to the Council's approach for dealing with anti-social behaviour; and
- seek re-accreditation of the Charter Mark Award for Excellence, for the whole of Housing Services.

Fit for Life

A fourth key objective of the Community Strategy is that the Epping Forest District will be an area where people of all ages and abilities can lead a healthy lifestyle by having access to effective high quality leisure and cultural services. This vision is reflected in our medium-term priorities, which seek to address leisure need. The Leisure and Young People Portfolio is included within this theme.

Last year we

- worked in partnership with our leisure management contractor to improve facilities at the Council's leisure centres and increase participation by people of all ages and abilities;
- carried out Community Arts Project to celebrate the rural character of the district, with financial assistance from East of England Arts;
- worked in conjunction with external funding agencies, the local parish council and the local community, to refurbish playing fields at Matching Tye into a valuable amenity area;
- increased 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;
- expanded the range of accessible opportunities for people to lead a healthier lifestyle through the 'Active Life Programme'; and

- improved access and awareness of the collections held at our Museum and promoted a new community outreach programme.

This year we aim to

- consider proposals for the future management of the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve and the Dual Use Sports Centre at Waltham Abbey;
- seek to improve opportunities for local people of all ages and abilities to become more involved in arts and community events; and
- enter into a management agreement with an external leisure contractor to manage and improve facilities at Epping Sports Centre,

Economic Prosperity

The final key objective of the Community Strategy is that the district will have a thriving and sustainable local economy, which extends opportunity for local residents and promotes prosperity throughout the district. This vision is reflected in the Council's own medium-term priorities, which seek to encourage sustainable economic development. The Economic Development function of the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio is included within this theme.

Last year we

- completed Phase 2 of the Loughton Town Centre enhancement scheme and commenced work on and enhancement scheme for The Broadway at Loughton.

This year we aim to

- complete the town centre enhancement scheme for The Broadway at Loughton.

Improving Our Performance

This theme is not directly linked to the Community Strategy, but reflects key areas where the Council has recognised that it needs to improve current services on performance. The Leader's Portfolio, the Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio, and

the Customer Services, Media, Communications and Information Technology Portfolio are included within the theme. These important corporate services provide essential support to the work of the Council.

Last year we

- kept the Council Tax increase below 3%;
- investigated the development potential of some Council-owned car parks, whilst retaining adequate public car parking;
- carried out a review of the Council's Recruitment and Retention Strategy;
- completed the sale of the Parade Ground site at North Weald Airfield;
- updated the strategic risk register and involved our councillors more actively in risk management;
- expanded the number of services for which payment can be made via our website;
- introduced the Essex Marketplace electronic ordering system;
- implemented a new performance management computer system, to provide accurate and timely information about our performance;
- carried out a range of customer satisfaction surveys in accordance with Government requirements;
- achieved the independently assessed Lexcel quality accreditation for our legal services, to improve the services that we provide;
- achieved 'good' priority outcomes for E-Government as defined by the Government;
- developed an information technology training programme and implemented electronic services for our councillors;
- developed access to our services through the Directgov website of government information and services;
- introduced new joint arrangements for the provision of information services at Loughton Library;
- reviewed current arrangements for meetings of the full Council;
- improved electoral registration and voting arrangements;
- implemented a staged member Remuneration Scheme;
- introduced a pilot scheme for the web casting of council meetings;
- re-launched the councillor training programme; and
- reviewed arrangements for the funding of civic ceremonial matters.

This year we aim to

- keep the Council Tax increase below the increase in the Retail Price Index;
- commence data conversion and system implementation work on a new Revenues and Benefits IT system;
- introduce mobile working in the Benefits Service;
- **implement a new procurement strategy, and join the Essex Procurement Hub to deliver cost and efficiency savings through collaboration with other District Councils in Essex;**
- develop core elements of our Customer Services Transformation Programme;
- consider opportunities for shared service delivery across Essex, as part of the 'Transformational Government' initiative;
- implement the planned elements of the Corporate ICT Strategy (2006–2008);
- implement the second phase of the Electronic Records and Document Management System;
- fully computerise the Land Tier 1;
- implement an e-Bookings System;
- further develop public access to services through the Government Connect (Direct.Gov);
- review our contract standing orders, financial regulations and scheme of officer delegation;
- carry out a further review of Overview and Scrutiny and the Member Training Programme;
- implement the new statutory requirements for elections and electoral register; and
- respond to legislative changes affecting the Council's governance arrangements and constitution proposed by the Government.

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.

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