



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

B567

Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee 26 April 2011

Council Improvement Plan

SUMMARY

In April 2010 Cabinet approved the Council Improvement Plan for 2010/11. This Plan brings together a range of actions to help the Council achieve further improvements in its performance. Attached as Appendix A is an end of year progress report on the implementation of the Council's Improvement Plan for 2010/11.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to consider the progress made against the key actions in the Council's Improvement Plan for 2010/11.

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Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

26 April 2011

Council Improvement Plan

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Consider the progress made against the key actions in the Council's Improvement Plan for 2010/11, as contained in Appendix A to this report; and
- 1.2 Note that an Improvement Plan for 2011/12 may be developed by the new administration following the elections in May 2011, if this is considered appropriate.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Council first introduced an Improvement Plan in 2003 following its Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Over the years the Improvement Plan has provided a focus for the Council to raise its level of performance and to monitor key projects or new statutory duties. It also provided an opportunity to respond to any areas of improvement identified by the Audit Commission, prior to the abolition of external inspection in 2010.
- 2.2 The Improvement Plan is recorded as a key driver for the Council in the Corporate Plan. In fact, the chapter of the Corporate Plan which deals with the corporate priority of 'Corporate Standards and Efficiency' is organised under the Improvement Plan themes to emphasise its importance.
- 2.3 Following the abolition of external inspection, the emphasis is now on local authorities self-assessment and self-regulation. The Local Government Group (LGG) will shortly be producing a self-assessment template which will support councils' improvement. The LGG will also provide free peer reviews for each council over a three year period.

3. Monitoring the council's performance

- 3.1 The Improvement Plan is monitored by Management Team throughout the year and by this Committee twice a year. The Committee last received an update in October 2010 (paper B265 refers). Each theme within the plan includes a series of actions which need to be completed in order to achieve the overall improvement. The plan also includes an update of progress against each delivery action.

4. Progress during 2010/11

- 4.1 Over the last year significant progress has been made against the Improvement Plan. Good progress has been made against each objective. In some cases, the change in government in May 2010 resulted in a significant change in national policy. This has meant that some objectives are no longer relevant. Where this is the case, it is indicated in the 'progress made' column in Appendix A.

5. Improvement plan for 2011/12

- 5.1 Usually at this stage, the Performance and Audit Committee considers a draft Improvement Plan for the coming year. However, as Borough Council elections are being held on 5 May 2011, it seems sensible for an Improvement Plan to be developed with the new administration following its election.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Council is continuing to respond proactively and positively by delivering improvements in line with identified priorities.

Appendix A

Improvement Plan 2010/2011

There are links between each of these themes, for instance, the need to improve value for money by creating shared services (theme two), will require citizen involvement in the future shape and delivery of these services (theme three).

Theme 1: Place and partnership

Rationale: There is increasing emphasis on looking at local places in a holistic way, rather than through the lens of the individual agencies working within them. This inevitably puts greater emphasis on multi-agency working and the overall needs of each local community. There are greater demands for accountability for local public services.

| Key outcome: To ensure that council works effectively with its partners to deliver services and meet the needs of different communities | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------|---|--|
| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
| 1. | Work effectively as part of the Suffolk Collaborative | Chief Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of the Total Place concept across Suffolk | <p>A review of the effectiveness of the Collaborative was held on 22 September 2010. It was agreed to proceed with the venture and also review the objectives of the Community Strategy. Some of the themes of the Community Strategy (Greenest County and Skills Agenda, in particular) will continue to be priorities for the county as will children's attainment levels.</p> <p>Some of the "place agenda" items of the New Strategic Direction will be addressed by the Collaborative. For example, high demand families.</p> <p>The Council and its staff will continue to play their part in the development of the Collaborative and the programmes of work within its jurisdiction.</p> |

Key outcome: To ensure that council works effectively with its partners to deliver services and meet the needs of different communities

| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
|----|--|---|---|--|
| 2. | Ensure an effective contribution to the Suffolk Strategic Partnership and Delivery of the Local Area Agreement | Chief Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the SSP/LAA structure (including any restructure of the delivery partnerships) is fit for purpose and includes appropriate representation and involvement by St Edmundsbury | Objective no longer relevant due to change in government policy. |
| 3. | Influence the County Constitutional Convention (CCC) to ensure the needs of West Suffolk communities are addressed | Chief Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial paper published in March 2010 The convention is likely to be developed following the General Election. Working group of Chief Executives established to explore new approaches to service delivery and political management arrangements. | Objective no longer relevant due to change in government policy. |
| 4. | Develop 20 year masterplans for Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and rural areas. | Head of Planning and Economic Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the master plans for Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and rural areas express a long term vision for the area. | Work has commenced on the vision events and drop in sessions have been held across the Borough. The masterplans will be known as Vision 2031 and will be developed throughout 2011/12. |

Key outcome: To ensure that council works effectively with its partners to deliver services and meet the needs of different communities

| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
|----|--|--|---|--|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A council-wide working group has been established to project plan this work. | |
| 5. | To contribute to the ongoing development of the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership (WSLSP) while keeping an overview on potential changes to the partnership | Head of Neighbourhood Management and Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To update the WSLSP's community strategy – by November 2010 Target the distribution of the final round of Performance Reward Grant (PRG) funding to bring forward innovative partnership projects across the WSLSP priorities – by September 2010 If changes to the partnership occur as a result of objective 3 (CCC -listed above) or changes to government policy, ensure a smooth transfer to new working arrangements. (Action no longer relevant due to change in government policy) | <p>Consultation was undertaken in 2009/10 and the results reflected in priorities outcomes agreed by the Board in May 2010 for the purpose of distributing PRG funding.</p> <p>Officers and Board members held a workshop session in December 2010 to consider the future role of the WSLSP. It was considered too early to set a specific direction but the Board was clear that value was added by leading members of the education, business, local government, health, police and voluntary sectors meeting together. Further work is being undertaken by officers to develop options for the role and structure of the LSP in future for Board consideration in May 2011.</p> |

Key outcome: To ensure that council works effectively with its partners to deliver services and meet the needs of different communities

| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
|----|--|--|--|---|
| 6. | To agree with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), and other partners, the priorities for future investment in the borough. | Head of Environmental Health and Housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a working group, including key partners, to identify investment required. • Develop a Local Investment Plan (LIP). • Consult with all partners to determine priorities. • The Investment Agreement has been superseded by the Framework Agreement following the government's change of housing funding. | <p>The Local Investment Plan (LIP) was completed and signed off with the HCA and agreed by Cabinet in July 2010. Regular monitoring meetings are in place to monitor the delivery of the LIP.</p> <p>Funding from the HCA to housing partners in the borough was extremely successful in 2010 based on the completed LIP, and it will be used as the basis for the next four years affordable housing development plans with the HCA. Staff and Councillors held a 'masterclass' for other Local Authorities in Suffolk to share our good practice in developing the LIP.</p> |

Theme 2: Value for money

Rationale: It is likely that the financial climate for local public services will be severe in the next few years. The scale of financial constraints is such that significant restructuring of services will be required. This reinforces the need to look at value for money.

| Key outcome: To ensure that the council provides value for money and increases efficiency whilst maintain or improving services | | | | |
|--|--|-----------------|--|--|
| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
| 1. | Deliver the shared services programme with Forest Heath as preferred partner | Chief Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a 'visioning session' with Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council - May 2010 • Identify and introduce work streams • Detailed project plan to be implemented. • Joint Committee to be established. | <p>A visioning session resulted in an agreed phase one programme. Phase one is nearing completion with consideration of a number of business cases including learning and development and property. Future shared services include communications, policy and performance and planning.</p> <p>A Joint Steering Group established to oversee the progress of the shared service project and a joint member event held across both Councils to update members on progress. Press briefing held which resulted in positive publicity on outcomes and achievements.</p> <p>A number of joint protocols and policies have been agreed to guide the Shared Service work including areas of people management, policy development and cost / benefit share.</p> <p>GOLD intranet established to keep staff and members informed of the programme.</p> <p>Joint Vacancy Management process in place which has contributed to savings and provided a flexible approach to the deployment of staff.</p> |

Key outcome: To ensure that the council provides value for money and increases efficiency whilst maintain or improving services

| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
|----|--|--|--|---|
| 2. | Deliver the Revenues and Benefits Partnership | Chief Finance Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and develop, with appropriate partners, the business case for a shared revenues and benefits service. • Consult and maintain two-way communications with staff and councillors at all potential partner organisations. • Take the business case and recommendations through the democratic process for approval by all potential partners. | In September 2010, Full Council approval was given to become a full partner of Anglia Revenues Partnership from 1 April 2011. An estimated savings of £325,000 to be delivered in 11/12. The new partnership was fully operationally from April 2011. |
| 3. | Continue to deliver the joint waste partnership with Forest Heath District Council | Head of Waste and Street Scene Services and Projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the agreed work programme, including implementation of the round review. | Round Review Completed. Cleansing review underway Seeking to move from the current interim management structure to a fully merged management structure (from two Heads of Service to one). |

Key outcome: To ensure that the council provides value for money and increases efficiency whilst maintain or improving services

| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
|----|--|--|---|--|
| 4. | Increase intelligence on performance, satisfaction and costs of council activities | Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development/ Performance Management Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide analysis of benchmarking information currently available – by May 2010 • Undertake research and analysis on those areas where no information is currently available – ongoing • Identify what data and information is needed to support decisions about shared services - ongoing | <p>Information has been gathered to understand what benchmarking data used by services. Benchmarking is also a key part of the business case stage of shared services.</p> <p>Benchmarking opportunities are being explored across the county, particularly as National Indicators have been abolished by the government.</p> <p>ICT, Finance and HR have joined the CIPFA VfM benchmarking clubs. Planning has joined the Planning Advisory Service benchmarking group.</p> |
| 5. | Continue to deliver efficiency savings | Chief Finance Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency target to be identified once spending announcement is made following the General Election – June 2010 onwards. | <p>Efficiency savings and increased income of £1.9m have been identified as part of the 2011/12.</p> <p>Work continues to address the 30.1% reduction in central government funding.</p> |

Theme 3: Sustainable communities and citizen involvement

Rationale: Local communities have, and will continue, to come under pressure from the economic downturn. This places increasing emphasis on 'softer' outcomes such as community cohesion, social capital and well-being. Citizens expect more choice and voice, particularly about public services. The scale of financial constraints and the restructuring of local services, point towards citizens being more informed, consulted and involved than ever before, especially in priority-setting and budget decisions.

| Key outcome: To ensure that the council provides opportunities for citizen involvement to shape and deliver services and support at a local level | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
| 1. | Implement the Place Survey and explore opportunities to increase citizen involvement | Policy, Performance and Customer Service Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place Survey to be in the field September 2010 to early January 2011 | <p>The Place Survey element of this objective no longer relevant due to change in government policy.</p> <p>The Place Survey has been abolished by the Government. Councils across Suffolk have identified that there was some good information contained in the survey, particularly satisfaction measures and priority setting.</p> <p>It has been agreed that survey work could be carried out in 2011/12 provided that (i) funding is available; and (ii) new political administrations in the districts support the concept of public surveys. Any such survey would not be on the scale (and cost) of the Place Survey.</p> <p>Whilst the implementation of the Place Survey is no longer relevant, the need to improve citizen involvement remains relevant.</p> |
| 2. | Follow up on actions agreed at the Haverhill Performance Clinic | Chief Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor progress of projects – ongoing Explore the arrangements within delivery partnerships in | <p>The Performance Clinic was organised by Suffolk County Council and took place in January 2010. Initially progress was to be monitored via the Haverhill Partnership. This approach has now been replaced by the ONE Haverhill Board. The Board is a group of Councillors (Town, Borough and County) working with the</p> |

| Key outcome: To ensure that the council provides opportunities for citizen involvement to shape and deliver services and support at a local level | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
| | | | Haverhill - ongoing | <p>Voluntary and Community Sector and other public agencies to explore the development of the town and its facilities. The Board will also exploit funding issues consistent with the "place" agenda and New Strategic Direction (NSD) objectives of Suffolk County Council.</p> <p>The work on apprenticeships and reducing the number of young people classified as NEETs (not in employment, education or training) is continuing.</p> |
| 3. | Increase knowledge of communities by expanding the use of data (including equality information). | Chief Executive and Policy, Performance and Customer Service Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the new Suffolk Observatory meets the needs of the council and that it is used by councillors and officers – from May 2010 • Lead the census work across the borough - ongoing | <p>The Suffolk Information System (called the Suffolk Observatory) was available from December 2010.</p> <p>Data is now available on the Suffolk Observatory site, with more being added all the time. The Partnership now has an action plan for further improvements and increasing functionality over the next 12 months. Demonstrations of the new Observatory will be held at West Suffolk House in due course.</p> |
| 4. | Continue to develop the neighbourhood/ place-based focus of council work | Head of Neighbourhood Management and Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore possibility of identifying repeat contacts with families – led by Head of Environmental Health and Housing • Community development work planned in several areas related to the community centre | <p>Identifying repeat contact with families was not an area explored this year. Some work may be undertaken by the Suffolk Collaborative (see Theme 1, Objective 1 above).</p> <p>Work has focussed on Southgate Community Centre which is acting as a pilot for the model of transfer.</p> <p>Howard and Mildenhall Community picnic held on 2 June and attended by well over 300 was organised with the input of a range of partners. Picnic planned again this year with the Residents Association playing a leading role. A second picnic is</p> |

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| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transfer project. Develop local partnership work in neighbourhoods. Initial event by September 2010 Consider how, within existing resources, practical support can be provided for the community leadership role of councillors | <p>planned for Chalkstone.</p> <p>A full programme of induction is planned following the May 2011 elections.</p> |
| 5. | Participate in the county-wide work to increase performance of National Indicator 4 (NI4) - percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality. | Head of Neighbourhood Management and Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the Suffolk-wide programme aimed at improving NI 4 scores in the longer term Specific activities to be identified if funding for roll-out of learning is secured by SCC. | Objective no longer relevant due to change in government policy |
| 6. | Review committee and scrutiny structure to ensure that it is fit for purpose | Chief Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the scrutiny structure as it has been in operation for eight years – ongoing | The scrutiny structure was reviewed through all three scrutiny committees and the Cabinet during late 2010. The new structure, based on the findings of the review, was approved through Full Council in December 2010 for immediate implementation. The Constitution and scrutiny guidance have been updated to reflect the new structure. |

Key outcome: To ensure that the council provides opportunities for citizen involvement to shape and deliver services and support at a local level

| No | Objective | Lead | Delivery actions | Progress made |
|----|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 7. | Promote democracy/ active citizenship | Chief Executive/Head of Neighbourhood Development/ Head of Legal and Democratic Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a campaign to promote awareness of the May 2011 Borough elections • Link to Local Democracy Week activities • Develop a programme of induction for new councillors | <p>We benefited from the EELGA regional campaign, supplemented by local information. Two candidates workshops held in February and March 2011</p> <p>Programme of activity focussing on young people was delivered during local democracy week included councillor sessions in schools, a film on democracy commissioned from a local young filmmaker being screened and a visit to WSH by students from West Suffolk College.</p> <p>Democratic Renewal Working Party commissioned an extensive induction programme of 12 sessions for the period May to July 2011, aimed at enabling new Councillors in particular to quickly gain the essential knowledge needed for their Councillor role. A brochure detailing what Councillors can expect to gain from each session is being produced, linked to the Council's Corporate Priorities.</p> |