ANNUAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW

POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS: APRIL 2006

Purpose

What is the purpose of your service?

Our purpose is to support the Council in identifying, delivering and reviewing community priorities. Our work falls into the following broad categories:

  Council and community planning
  Responding to national and local initiatives
  Information management
  Organisational review and improvement
  Corporate support
  Democratic support
  Managing change through coordinated mainstreaming
  Working with partners

What does the service contribute to corporate objectives?

The team has carried out an integrated impact assessment, which indicates that we make a significant contribution (typically 'medium') across all four priorities. This results from the involvement of the team in the planning and delivery of key activities across all Business Units, as well as responsibility for mainstreaming, and involvement in a range of internal working groups. In particular the team…

  Helps people to make links, and see how they align to community and council priorities
  Enables people to make informed decisions
  Act as agents for change
  Offers information, guidance and advice
  Encourages and facilitates cultural change, helping others plan ahead;
  Brings people together, encouraging cross-cutting work; focussing on outcomes and disseminating best practice
  Offers positive challenge, seeking better, relevant solutions
  Helps develop clear messages

What are the key issues you are trying to address?

There are some statutory requirements on the team…

- The 1998 and 2001 Local Government White Papers provided a collection of more than 20 policy initiatives designed to modernise and improve performance in local government. These included political reform, and e-government.
- The Local Government Act 1999 specifies the need to undertake Best Value Reviews, to produce an annual Performance Summary and to include performance data in the Annual Report.
- The Local Government Act 2000 requires that every local Council produces, through consultation with key stakeholders and partners, a Community Strategy for promoting and improving the economic social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. In addition Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is part of this Act.
- Although not legislation, the Gershon Review was completed in July 2004 and complimented the ODPM's strategic objectives about improving delivery and value for

money in local services through annual improvements in cost effectiveness of 2% or more.

In addition the team is seeking to…

- Ensure the Council's operations are aligned with Council and Community priorities, so that we can be sure we are meeting national and community expectations, and are reflecting national shared priorities and local area agreements
- Integrate service planning within a corporate planning process and within the policy and budget framework, so that we can ensure resources are properly allocated and can assess delivery of the council plan
- Support the drive for efficiency, including the Gershon agenda, with the need to achieve and demonstrate value for money, to ensure the Council's efficiency target is met
- Facilitate a culture of improvement through effective engagement and performance management, so that we can meet, and where possible exceed, Government and customer expectations
- Support and influence partner organisations, so that the benefit to community wellbeing can be optimised through effective and efficient joint work with the Council
- Provide specialist advice to support the work of the Council, e.g. demographics, coordinating and developing policy briefing papers, external funding opportunities, so that informed decisions are made, and opportunities exploited
- Mainstream corporate themes, e.g., equality, efficiency, sustainability and older people, so that they become embedded in the culture of the organisation.

Have there been any changes in the issues that you faced in the last year?

There is an increasing national context governing the work of the team, the way we work, and the role we play in the organisation. In particular this includes the emerging Local Government White Paper, the Lyons Inquiry, the Gershon agenda, Children's Act, changes to the CPA framework, and Climate Change.

The Local Public Service Agreement has now been signed, and £1.8 million rests on the ability of the Council to demonstrate a real impact on the targets.

<u>Achievements and Priorities</u>

What were your key achievements over the last year?

- Engaging Cabinet in the Council Plan development through innovative workshops and scenario planning. The outcome has been an informed Council Plan, designed to meet community need. The approach is considered good practice by the External Auditor
- Facilitating the Council's involvement in the Local Public Service Agreement with Hampshire County Council. The targets support the Council Plan and Community Strategy priorities and the potential for reward funding of £1.8 million, will enable the delivery of various projects that will have a direct impact on the community
- Development of the Integrated Impact Assessment tool, and its application both internally and externally, and launching the corporate alignment process. This is designed to ensure that front-line and support services are in line with the Council Plan and Community Strategy priorities
- Coordinating the e-government programme to achieve 98.6% e-enablement. In total this has attracted grant funding in excess of £900,000 which has enabled the Council to develop a wider of customer access routes to services and information. E-government is

a good example of how corporate programmes can be embedded and mainstreamed within the organisation, and its success shows effective programme management in practice

- Supporting the LSP, and effective engagement with partners, which helps to ensure added value in projects and best use of information, skills and resource. In addition an audit of partnerships has been completed and a draft Strategy and toolkit developed, which will help to ensure effective and equitable partnership arrangements are in place.

Are there other achievements that you would also like to mention?

Council and community planning…
- Actively supporting the LSP in engaging partners in a review of the Community Strategy covering the vision and performance monitoring framework (including described outcomes and a set of quality of life indicators)
- Raising the profile of and confidence in the Local Strategic Partnership

Responding to national initiatives…
- Member engagement in the Lyons Inquiry
- Raising profile and reputation through representation at a regional and national level, (examples including the e-government showcase, support to the Beacon Council Programme, and speaking at conferences on LSP development), and at a district level on various networks and groups

Information management…
- Publication of the Borough Profile and Research and Information Newsletter
- Launch of the data information web pages
- Improving the Policy Briefing Process, launching the database on Sinbad and raising awareness, to ensure that the Council is fully appraised of emerging initiatives

Organisational review and improvement…
- Progress on business process improvement with completion of the purchase-to-pay project
- Coordinating the corporate improvement programme and efficiency agenda
- Achieving sign-off on the BVPI's with no qualification by the External Auditor
- Submission of the CPA Use of Resources and Value for Money self assessments
- Further development of the Gershon process, including production of Annual Efficiency Statements
- Integration of the Policy and Performance Teams into one Business Unit which will enable close links between forward planning and policy development, and subsequent performance management to ensure that outcomes are achieved

Corporate support…
- Development, training and implementation of the new report format
- Offering facilitation expertise to support other Business Units, examples including work on the Rural Strategy, Popley Project, and Town Centre
- Coordination support for work on the Children's Act
- Progress on campus sustainability, commitment to FairTrade and climate change
- Initial work on establishing the key contact role
- First phase corporate toolkit on Sinbad
- Establishing a policy and strategy listing on Sinbad

Democratic support…
- Have now started a review of Overview Committee work programmes

Managing change through coordinated mainstreaming…
− Development of the equality impact assessment framework, corporate equalities strategy and associated schemes, including race, disability, gender and other emerging equality strands

Working with partners…
− Support to partnerships, examples including the LSP, Older Persons Forum, Diversity Forum, Natural Environment Forum, the Children and Young Persons Group, the H&IOW Partnership and Efficiency Group, and the South East Forum for e-government
− Research support for the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
− Helping the voluntary sector to raise external funding
− Publication of the 55+ guide

What are your top 5 key priorities for the next 3 years?

(1) Responding to six themes of the Local Government White Paper…
      Community and neighbourhood empowerment
      Economic growth for cities and regions
      Local government structure
      Local leadership
      Central / local performance management framework
      Public service delivery

(2) Implementing and mainstreaming major cross-cutting initiatives, in particular equality and diversity, climate change, and rural proofing

(3) Ensuring, through the corporate improvement programme, performance management framework, and business process improvement, that the Council meets its obligations under the Gershon agenda, and is able to maintain an 'excellent' Corporate Performance Assessment status

(4) Supporting organisational change by developing and establishing the key contact role, facilitating the corporate alignment process for all business units, and providing on-line help guides through the corporate toolkit and policy briefing process

(5) Ensuring equitable and effective partnerships by completion of the Partnership Strategy, supporting toolkit and agreeing a programme of partnership evaluation

Context Information

The following information will be used by the Performance Board in the next financial year, as helps to set Business Unit performance in the context of your resource, workload and targets -

Staff Resource	Operational Data
13.25fte : Total establishment 1.6% : Sickness total % absence 0% : Current turnover **Financial Resource** £542,915 : Business unit revenue spend 97.24% : % revenue budget spent The team has no capital budgets	246 : Policy briefing items logged of which 54 resulted in a briefing paper 33 : Events given facilitation support

Performance against Targets	Customer Survey Results
99% : Calls answered in 15 seconds 90.30% : Invoices paid on time No letters were sampled, or complaints were received 100% : E-Government compliant Annual Audit Letter: No qualification on performance management	98% : satisfied with the service we provide 84% : say we give understandable and practical advice and services 89% : say we carry out their requests within the time needed/requested 93% : said we are helpful and professional

What are the main challenges facing your service - what influences your service delivery?

The main challenges are already referred to under the key issues and priorities shown above. In terms of influences these include…

− Government expectations, leading to constantly changing demands, and new initiatives - balancing national priorities with local need and applying it to Basingstoke and Deane
− Generating understanding and ownership of cross-cutting and corporate issues, and maintaining effective communication across the organisation to ensure key linkages are achieved
− Balancing supply and demand in terms of an often unpredictable work programme, the consequent demand on staff resources, the need to remain flexible and developing capacity to adopt a proactive rather than reactive approach
− Raising the awareness of the Team role and its functions within the wider organisation.
− The lack of predictability and control we have when working with partners and the extent of dependence on the team
− Increasing flexibility of approach and a culture of positive thinking to drive toward greater efficiency, considering overheads, processes, contracts, earnings and partnerships to achieve economies of scale

What are your key risks?

▪ Unexpected changes in legislation or arising from Government guidance would affect the capacity of the team and the ability to deliver the 3-year action plan; ability to respond could be hindered by insufficient skills and knowledge
▪ Failure to respond to and deliver the equality and diversity agenda would have an adverse impact on the local community. In addition it could lead to government intervention, resulting in damage to the council's reputation and the team's credibility
▪ Withdrawal of contributions from partners to support the LSP management and individual projects would have an adverse financial impact on the council
▪ Failure to deliver key statutory requirements around CPA and BVPI's would lead to adverse comments in the annual audit letter, potential qualification and ultimately intervention
▪ Failure to produce key strategies – Community Strategy, Council Plan, IEG 6, Corporate Equality Strategy and associated equality schemes – would lead to adverse comments in the annual audit letter, potential qualification and ultimately intervention
▪ Failure to engage on wider policy issues at a corporate level would impact on the reputation of the council and would be an ineffective use of resource

- Failure to raise external funding would impact on the deliverability of the Council Plan

Learning

Did anything go wrong, and if so what did you learn from it?

Whilst nothing actually went wrong, the team has learned that…

- There is a need for more effective and consistent project management across the team to ensure projects are delivered on time, and that adequate forward planning takes place, in particular allowing sufficient lead-in times, and engaging the right people at an earlier stage.
- Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure information is shared effectively across the team, using team meetings and Sinbad.
- The team is very willing to engage in more corporate activity and take on new roles, but there is apprehension about the capacity to do so. This will be helped by better work planning now being put in place, and also by team training and briefings on specific topics

How have you gone about learning from others?

The team continues to have active involvement in various practitioner networks that enable information and best practice to be shared. In addition…

- One team member (Irene) has been accepted as an accredited Peer Review by the IDeA, and will be able to both challenge efficiency in other councils, and help the council to apply best practice learned from elsewhere
- By working with external consultants we now have experience on 'rough cut activity based costing' and business process methodology, and will be able to assist in coordination of future projects and skills transfer
- We have been gathering best practice in service planning and performance management from various councils through the IDeA PMMI toolkit
- Involvement in the ODPM Action Learning Set on Older People

If you have you been able to share best practice internally / externally please state what and with whom?

- The Integrated Impact Assessment was presented at the Forum for the Future Local Authority Partnership Annual Conference
- The E-Government Showcase was an opportunity to share innovative projects in place in the council
- The ODPM has expressed interest in a best practice case study on our work on business process improvement and rough cut activity based costing
- The team has been invited to speak at conferences on LSP development and was involved in the ODPM working group developing consultation on LSP's
- The team was actively involved in the Affordable Housing Beacon Council events, in particular relating to partnership working
- The team is involved in a national working group with CIPFA on sustainability reporting across public sector
- The e-government programme has been an opportunity to share project management expertise across a number of business units

Efficiency and Value for Money

What are you doing to ensure that you can demonstrate that you are delivering value for money?

Internally the team is now engaged in time-recording to allow a critical assessment of the level of work the team is involved in, and the time spent on ongoing activities and particular projects. This in turn will enable the team to establish the cost of each activity and to explore how best to prioritise work and build capacity.

An external benchmarking exercise is currently being developed based on a tool from Redbridge Council. This will assess how other councils are structured to deliver the work of the team, associated staff levels and costs, standards and quality in terms of a grading matrix for each activity.

What progress have you made in identifying and delivering efficiencies under the Gershon agenda?

The team has not offered any Gershon savings for the currently financial year. However there are non-cashable, but unquantified savings arising from the provision of facilitation support to other units (which would otherwise have incurred a cost for Business Units in the region of £1,000 a day for external facilitator/consultants).

Improving

Can you see any opportunities for improving the service in the next year?

- Better workload and project management to ensure the team meets deadline targets set and engaged the right people at the right time
- Development of clear business cases and terms of reference for any new projects undertaken
- Introduce project reviews to establish 'lessons learnt' and to identify team strengths for effective future work load management
- The introduction of formal agreements with other Business Units on specific support activities to ensure expectations are understood and met
- Continue to raise the profile and/or reputation of the team and awareness of its role amongst staff and members
- Where the team is asked to support an initiative, to encourage business units to involve the team at a much earlier stage
- To develop the team with team training exercises and briefing sessions, to ensure all team members have the confidence, a solid awareness of all corporate issues, and the appropriate skills to support other units