

Spotlight on TMBC's 2004/05 Improvement Priorities



Guide for Staff

Dear Colleague,

In recent years, understandably, some staff have found it difficult to relate their work to the Council's overall aims and improvement priorities. We know this from the 2003 staff survey. This Guide should help to overcome this difficulty.

For this financial year our overall aims and improvement priorities are set out in the 2004/05 edition of Spotlight, our Corporate Performance Plan. Spotlight is based on themes rather than Services so identifying the contribution of your Service may not be straightforward.

This Guide sets out our 2004/05 improvement priorities by Service so you will be able to see directly which improvement priorities, and associated actions, your Service is responsible for. Some improvement priorities are the responsibility of all Services, so it is important that you look at these as well.

For most priorities one or more Services have a direct responsibility for achieving improvement. However, for some priorities, particularly those affecting all Services, one or more Services has a co-ordinating role. These are identified separately.

Finally, it is quite possible that some staff will still not be able to relate their own work specifically to our 2004/05 improvement priorities and associated actions. This is not surprising given that many of our services have been independently recognised as high quality and are not priorities for improvement this year.

We hope that you will read those parts of this Guide that are relevant to you and keep it to refer back to during the remainder of this financial year. We also welcome your feedback and show on the back cover how you may provide comments.

Mark Worrall
Leader of the Council

David Hughes
Chief Executive

	Page
1. Our Overall Aims	4
2. Our Key Improvement Priorities KP	5
3. All Services	6
4. Central Services	13
5. Environmental Health & Housing Services	17
6. Educational Services	22
7. Financial Services	27
8. I.T. Services	29
9. Leisure Services	32
10. Planning & Engineering Services	37

Our Overall Aims

Our Overall Aims are to:

	CPP Pages
➤ Continuously improve our services in terms of Value for money	5
➤ Improve the public's access to, and influence over, services provided by the council and the council's role in representing the public	11
➤ Protect and enhance the built and natural environment	17, 37, 40, 48
➤ Improve the availability and quality of housing for people most in need	23
➤ Provide financial assistance through the timely and accurate processing of claims for housing and council tax benefit	29
➤ Develop leisure and cultural services for local people and visitors	31
➤ Promote an ordered traffic environment	43
➤ Protect and improve public health	48
➤ Promote the well-being of the local economy and enhance the viability and vitality of population centres	53
➤ Deliver, with others (partnerships etc), benefits beyond those possible from the Council's resources	56
➤ Provide Leadership on community issues that are beyond the remit of a single agency.	59
➤ Improve the well-being of communities in Tonbridge and Malling	59
➤ Reduce crime and disorder and the fear of crime	61
➤ Promote and improve public safety	61
➤ Recruit, develop and retain well-informed, qualified staff who also take responsibility for developing themselves.	67
➤ Improve health and safety in Council premises and activities.	68
➤ Manage the Council's financial affairs to support its service delivery objectives.	68
➤ Maintain the Council's high standards of financial management and probity .	68
➤ Identify and exploit cost-effective opportunities for external funding .	69
➤ Improve management of information within the council.	70
➤ Continue improving the match between the Council's property holdings and its service delivery, organisational and financial needs.	71
➤ Improve the Council's ability to achieve its strategic and operational objectives through our Organisational structure and Performance Management System	72
➤ Deliver greater efficiency, transparency and accountability in the way Councillors, staff and the council as a whole carry out their business.	72

For more information turn to Spotlight, our Corporate Performance Plan (CPP) - page numbers are shown in this guide. 4

Our Key Improvement Priorities

We seek to achieve our Overall Aims (opposite) by sustaining and improving on the delivery of high quality services.

Our Key Improvement Priorities:	CPP Pages
➤ Better target our resources to reflect priorities.	6
➤ Progress preparation of the Local Development Plan/Framework.	17
➤ Seek new ways to increase the supply of new affordable housing following the abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant and the establishment of the Regional Housing Board.	27
➤ Give priority to involving and meeting the needs of young people.	36
➤ Achieve a cleaner, smarter and better-maintained 'Street Scene' and open space environment.	37
➤ Reduce:	
- Levels of crime	
- Drug and alcohol abuse	
- Anti-social behaviour	61

For more information turn to Spotlight, our Corporate Performance Plan (CPP) - page numbers are shown in this guide. 5

Delivering Our Priorities

Improvement Priority	Responsible Service	CPP Page
Better target our resources to reflect priorities.	Finance (C)	6



During 2004/05 we will continue to develop and implement the Medium Term Financial Strategy, including the need to identify Base Revenue Budget Savings of £100,000.

Involving The Public (Best Value Review)

Improvement Priority	Responsible Services	CPP Page
Improve the public's awareness of and access to Council services.	Central (C), IT (C) and Executive	11



During 2004/05 we will:

- Continue to implement agreed Improvement Plans.
- Complete this review and produce further Improvement Plans by Autumn 2004.

Contacting The Council

Improvement Priority	Responsible Service	CPP Page
Respond better to letters from the public.	Central/IDU (C)	11



During 2004/05 we will complete the Involving The Public Best Value Review (ITP BVR) covering the public's operational contact with the Council, including an assessment of the style and content of our letters to the public, and formulate an Improvement Plan. We anticipate that this will also help in reducing the proportion of our public that see the Council as remote and impersonal.

E-Government (www.tmbc.gov.uk)

Improvement Priority	Responsible Services	CPP Page
Increase the availability of electronic information and transactions to help make local services more accessible, convenient, responsive and seamless.	Executive (C) and IT (C)	12
Enable the public to respond to statutory consultations electronically.	IT (C)	12



During 2004/05 we will commence implementation of our E-Government Strategy including:

- Further development of our website and increase the types of interactions between the public and the Council that are available electronically (BV157).
- Making statutory consultations and response forms available on the website.

Responding From Complaints From The Public

Improvement Priority	Responsible Service	CPP Page
Respond better to complaints from the public.	Central/IDU (C)	13



During 2004/05 we will:

- Complete the updating and launch of our corporate complaints system. This will include applying a user-friendly design style to the public complaints booklet, staff training and public promotion.
- Investigate fully, and learn from, the result of the latest (2003/04) satisfaction survey covering complaints handling. This showed a significant, as yet unexplained, fall in public satisfaction compared with three years ago.
- Complete this part of the Involving The Public Best Value Review and (if warranted further to the updating of the corporate complaints system) produce an Improvement Plan by Autumn 2004.

Central Services

E- Government (www.tmbc.gov.uk)

Improvement Priority	Responsible Services	CPP Page
Provide public access to committee agendas and minutes via our website.	Central/Administration and IT	12

04/05 During 2004/05 we will commence implementation of our E-Government Strategy including the Committee Management System, enabling the public to access committee agendas and minutes via the website.

Responding to Complaints From The Public

Improvement Priority	Responsible Service	CPP Page
Respond better to complaints from the public.	Central/IDU (C)	13

04/05 During 2004/05 we will:

- Complete the updating and launch of our corporate complaints system. This will include applying a user-friendly design style to the public complaints booklet, staff training and public promotion.
- Investigate fully, and learn from, the result of the latest (2003/04) satisfaction survey covering complaints handling. This showed a significant, as yet unexplained, fall in public satisfaction compared with three years ago.
- Complete this part of the Involving The Public Best Value Review and (if warranted further to the updating of the corporate complaints system) produce an Improvement Plan by Autumn 2004.

Contacting the Council

Improvement Priority	Responsible Service	CPP Page
Respond better to letters from the public.	Central/IDU (C)	11

04/05 During 2004/05 we will complete the Involving The Public Best Value Review (ITP BVR) covering the public's operational contact with the Council, including an assessment of the style and content of our letters to the public, and formulate an Improvement Plan. We anticipate that this will also help in reducing the proportion of our public that see the Council as remote and impersonal.

For more information turn to Spotlight, our Corporate Performance Plan (CPP) - page numbers are shown in this guide.

Central Services

Tonbridge Town Centre

Improvement Priority	Responsible Services	CPP Page
Commence a review to bring forward proposals to enhance the vitality of Tonbridge town centre.	Central/Property and Planning & Engineering	18

04/05 During 2004/05 we will:

- Prepare briefs and programmes for identifying improvement and development opportunities.
- Engage external expertise.
- Formulate a comprehensive consultation programme.
- Undertake initial general public consultation in association with the Local Development Framework (LDF) process.

Facilities and Activities for Young People

Improvement Priority	Responsible Services	CPP Page
Give priority to involving and meeting the needs of young people.	Leisure (C), Central/IDU, EH&H and Executive	36

KP

04/05 During 2004/05 we will complete a pilot survey to quantify the views of young people, working with at least one willing school.

Resources - Information Technology

Improvement Priority	Responsible Services	CPP Page
Improve Land Searches performance.	Central/Legal and IT	70

04/05 During 2004/05 we will enhance the functionality and effectiveness of the Land Charge Searches IT system.

(C) indicates the service has a co-ordinating role, rather than direct responsibility. Where co-ordinating / direct responsibility is shared between services we show this.

Improvement Priority

Improve the public's awareness of and access to Council services.

During 2004/05 we will:

- Continue to implement agreed Improvement Plans.
- Complete this review and produce further Improvement Plans by Autumn 2004.

Responsible Services
Central (C),
IT (C) and Executive

CPP Page
11

Improvement Priority

Give priority to involving and meeting the needs of young people.



During 2004/05 we will:

- Re-brand and re-launch, with Kent Youth & Community, the Youth Together programme aimed at crime reduction.
- Promote and further develop our youth website, www.tmyouth.org.uk, in the light of feedback.

Responsible Services
Leisure (C)
Executive, EH&H
and Central/IDU

CPP Page
36

Improvement Priority

Increase the availability of electronic information and transactions to help make local services more accessible, convenient, responsive and seamless.



During 2004/05 we will commence implementation of our E-Government Strategy including:

- Further development of our website and increase the types of interactions between the public and the Council that are available electronically (BV157).

Responsible Services
Executive (C)
and IT (C)

CPP Page
12

Improvement Priority

Work with other agencies to improve people's health in the poorest areas of our Borough.



During 2004/05 we will:

- Further develop joint working with our health partners.
- Further develop the multi agency partnership for East Malling to address specific community needs, including health.

Responsible Service
Executive (C)

CPP Page
48

Improvement Priority

Reduce the potential for unfair discrimination in any of the Council's activities.

Improve access to Council services and facilities in accordance with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements.



During 2004/05 we will continue to progress the Diversity Policy Action Plan. This will include:

- Providing diversity training for all staff.
- Undertaking disability access audits of public areas of council offices.
- Undertaking further diversity monitoring in key services.
- Reviewing access to our services to identify any barriers for people with physical or mental impairments.

Responsible Services
Executive (C) and
Central/Personnel (C)

CPP Page
14

Responsible Services
Executive (C) and
Central/Personnel (C)

CPP Page
14

Leisure Services

Facilities And Activities For Young People

KP	Improvement Priority	Responsible Services	CPP Page
	Give priority to involving and meeting the needs of young people.	Leisure (C) EH&H, Central/IDU and Executive	36

Early in 2004/05 we completed and opened, a skate park at Tonbridge Farm Sportsground, in partnership with the Longmead Skate Park Association.

During 2004/05 we will also:

- Extend the range of activities on the summer Activate programme, in a new partnership with West Kent College.
- Introduce Activate Plus, an extension of the playscheme for children with special needs.
- Increase the number of playscheme venues run in partnership with childcare providers.
- Re-brand and re-launch with Kent Youth & Community, the Youth Together programme, aimed at crime reduction.
- Develop a youth action plan through the Tonbridge & Malling Youth Forum.
- Financially assist Borough Green, Wrotham and Platt parish councils to provide a skate park.
- Develop a soft play area at Larkfield Leisure Centre.
- Complete a pilot survey to quantify the views of young people, working with at least one willing school.
- Promote and further develop our youth website, www.tmyouth.org.uk, in the light of feedback.

Street Scene

KP	Improvement Priority	Responsible Services	CPP Page
	Achieve a cleaner, smarter and better-maintained 'Street Scene' and open space environment.	Leisure, EH&H, Planning & Engineering and IT	37

During 2004/05 we will we will introduce litter picking on Public Open Spaces during the Winter as well as the Summer months.

For more information turn to Spotlight, our Corporate Performance Plan (CPP) - page numbers are shown in this guide.

Leisure Services

Encouraging Healthy Living Through Leisure Services

	Improvement Priority	CPP Page
	To promote, encourage and provide opportunities for "healthy Lifestyles"	49

During 2004/05 we will:

- Review and extend the Healthy Walks programme.
- Pilot 'prevention of fall' classes for the elderly in Autumn 2004.
- Continue to develop course and programmes at our leisure facilities to promote healthy life-styles and tackle child obesity.

Tourism

	Improvement Priority	CPP Page
	Increase tourism within the Borough.	54

During 2004/05 we will:

- Implement educational and access improvements to Tonbridge Castle Gatehouse with a grant of over £82,000 from the European Interreg III scheme.
- Publish a new "walking the Walls" leaflet for Tonbridge as part of the Historic Fortifications Network.
- Develop the Council's website to include some foreign language pages where appropriate.
- Develop a Borough wide Living History programme.
- Increase public access to the computerised destination management system.

Grants

	Improvement Priority	Responsible Services	CPP Page
	To develop the Council's role as an enabling authority by the distribution of grants to assist community groups to lever in external funding.	Leisure and Executive	57

During 2004/05 we will review the grant applications system and look most favourably at those projects with potential to contribute to achieving the Council's key priorities.

(C) indicates the service has a co-ordinating role, rather than direct responsibility. Where co-ordinating / direct responsibility is shared between services we show this.