

## **Single Improvement Plan 2008-09 Progress Report**

### **Summary**

1. To provide an overall update on progress achieved on the 2008/09 action plans contained within the council's Single Improvement Plan, as part of an ongoing programme of improvements, prior to the refresh process for the 2009/10 year and onwards.

### **Background**

2. In May 2008 a number of corporate areas of improvement were identified as a response to comments made in the Corporate Assessment and other council assessments. These improvement strands were combined to form the Single Improvement Plan (SIP), the focus of the council's corporate improvement activity.
3. As part of the refresh process, decisions will be taken as to which elements of the current SIP can now be regarded as completed, with plans then to ensure they are embedded within the Council's Business Model and that relevant assurance processes are in place to demonstrate this.

#### Progress to Date

4. Progress in achieving the 12 workstreams within the SIP is as follows:

##### **1) Equalities and Diversity**

The current year's milestones have been achieved, but the overall programme of work required to bring the Council's level of achievement to a good standard will require further work over the next one to two years, in light of the new national equality framework that comes into effect in April 2009.

The updated Gender, Disability and Race schemes were presented to members at a meeting of the Social Inclusion Working Group in July 2008.

Of the 19 strategic Equalities Impact Assessments (EIAs), 13 have been completed, three deferred to 2009/10 because the strategies they relate to will be completed in 2009/10, and three are currently in progress with a scheduled completion date of March 2009. The three EIAs deferred to 2009/10 are Choice Based Lettings (HASS), HR Strategy (Chief Executive) and the Corporate Strategy (Resources). The three EIAs in progress to be completed by 30 March 2009 relate to the Customer Strategy (Resources), the Community Safety Plan (Neighbourhoods), and Democratic Services (Chief Executive).

A public consultation conference was held on 5 November 2008, and CMT are to endorse an Equalities (or Fairness) System by late March 2009, being developed due to changes in the Local Government Equality Standard.

## **2) Improving Human Resource (HR) management**

The original milestones have been met, with the exception of e-recruitment, which has been deliberately rolled over into the next financial year in order to allow the team working on the project to assist with the timely completion of the Financial Management System implementation. Finalisation of the restructure of the HR Corporate Development team is under way.

## **3) Health & Safety procedures**

Some key improvements to the Health & Safety management system have already been agreed by CMT for implementation and procedures are under review. Figures for major and minor H&S incidents have declined by 66% and 42% respectively during the current year.

## **4) Attendance management**

An increased emphasis on the quality of data, as well as managerial focus on sickness and absence, has led to an improvement of 16% in the year to date, and average numbers of days lost per employee is down to 6.48 for the period April to December 2008, from 7.72 for the same period in the previous year. The end of year figures are projected to reflect second quartile performance nationally (from bottom quartile).

## **5) Member training**

A report was presented to Executive on 20 January 2009. Members agreed to sign up to the IdeA Member Development Charter and to set up a cross-party Member Development Working Group, which will make decisions about each year's Member Development Programme. Members are to receive regular development appraisals, and a variety of learning opportunities will be made available. The development programme for 2009/10 will be published in May 2009.

## **6) Alignment between community strategy, LAA and corporate strategy**

The refreshed corporate strategy will be presented to Executive on 31st March 2009. The refreshed strategy takes the existing seven themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy and adds an additional internally-focused theme (Effective Organisation). A series of workshops were held in October 2008 to develop priority actions that will help the council to meet its LAA targets and the vision contained within the Community Strategy, and work has been continuing to develop the final wording of the Corporate Strategy.

## **7) Improved budget setting**

Longer term planning for both revenue and capital has been established. In addition stronger links between capital and revenue budgets have been

developed and there is greater alignment with the Councils corporate planning process. Of the milestones initially set, the one which relates to "Spend within 2% of set budget" cannot be finalised until after the end of the financial year but it is anticipated to be achieved. The financial strategy now incorporates efficiency targets which are planned to be achieved through working with our efficiency partner (Northgate Kendric Ash) who are currently reviewing arrangements to help the council deliver on efficiency targets.

#### **8) Budget monitoring**

Extensive work has taken place to reform and improve budget monitoring, as outlined in a paper to the Corporate Management Team on 10 December 2008 on improving service and financial performance reporting. Monthly reporting will be introduced from next financial year to combine the financial and performance status within one document. Reporting to members has been simplified, and summarised at a more strategic level. More timely information will be presented to the Executive from next year and work is ongoing in terms of reporting under the new Scrutiny arrangements. The new financial management system is due to go live at the start of the new financial year in April and whilst this will take some time to embed, in the medium term this will improve reporting.

#### **9) Capital programme**

Current practice has been reviewed, and capital planning has moved to a five-year basis as part of the overall review of financial planning (see sections 7 and 8 above). There has been a review of the capital monitoring group, CAPMOG, and work is now focused on the introduction of project and programme monitoring standards across the council. The Director of LCCS hosted a project management event on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009 to look at best practice documentation and invited representatives from across the council, together with the council's external efficiency partners to provide external challenge. The output from the event is being written up to form the project management module of the council's Business Model, i.e. to set the standards for project management council-wide.

#### **10) Data quality**

A programme of work has been undertaken by the Performance & Business Assurance Team, and promotion of the draft Data Quality Policy undertaken with management teams, key performance officers and the Audit & Governance Committee. The data quality review undertaken by the Audit Commission on BVPI data each year acknowledged the impact of the Data Quality Strategy in a report entitled "Review of Data Quality arrangements" (still at draft stage, sent 22 January 2009). At paragraph 17 the report states:

"The Council now has a clear framework for improving its arrangements for managing data quality which incorporates the key issues raised in our previous reviews."

Work is continuing to ensure that the principles of the Data Quality Policy are adhered to and consistently applied.

### **11) Scrutiny arrangements**

A paper setting out options for revised scrutiny arrangements went before the Scrutiny Management Committee on 17 November 2008, and members agreed to select an option that proposed an increased number of scrutiny committees, whilst taking EMAPs (Executive Member Advisory Panels) out of the decision-making process. The new structure will be implemented in the next financial year and work is currently under way to ensure that reporting arrangements are in place to support the new scrutiny committees.

### **12) Consultation and engagement**

After initial consultation and research into good practice, the Engagement Strategy was presented to Executive on 23 December 2008, and work is currently progressing to develop a toolkit to be attached to the strategy. The toolkit is expected to be ready by the end of March 2009.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, significant progress has been made against the milestones set out in the report to Executive of 30 June 2008, and a summary of this progress is set out in the table below.

This progress will then be evaluated during the refresh process for 2009/10, which will be presented to Executive once results for the staff survey are available.

Theme	Milestone	Achieved	Delayed	On schedule
Equalities	Update Gender Disability and Race schemes	X		
	CMT to endorse and Equalities or Fairness System	X		
	Complete Strategic EIAs	13	3	3
	Hold public consultation conference	X		
	Community engagement strategy for SIWG agreed		X	
HR Management	Recruit Head of HR and OD	X		
	Agree work programme for HR team			
	Move Payroll to HR	X		
	Implement e-recruitment		X	
Attendance management	Develop communications strategy on attendance		X	
	Decrease number of working days lost	X		
	Monitor sickness absence through PDR process	X		
	Develop partnership working with PCT	X		
	Monitor absence via dashboard provision	X		
Health & Safety	Set up Health & Safety groups within directorates	X		
	Continue to develop the H&S team	X		
Member Training	Secure a permanent H&S manager	X		
	Review existing training arrangements	X		
	Meet with Group Leaders to identify member training needs	X		
	Contact excellent rated authorities for best practice	X		
	Hold discussions with IDeA	X		

Theme	Milestone	Achieved	Delayed	On schedule
	Develop Member PDRs to include training needs	X		
	Develop Member training programme		X	
Improve alignment between SCS, LAA and corporate strategy	Approve Sustainable Community Strategy	X		
	Hold communications event for SCS	X		
	Enhance role of WoW Executive Delivery Board in performance management	X		
	Approve LPSA2 bids	X		
	Launch refreshed corporate strategy			X
Improve budget setting process	Spend within 2% of set budget			
	Deliver efficiency plan on schedule			X
Improve budget monitoring arrangements	Appoint strategic consultants to develop high level efficiency review	X		
	Spend within 2% of set budget			
Improve council's capital programme	Deliver efficiency plan on schedule			X
	Review current practice	X		
	Review CAPMOG	X		
	Implement new processes for capital monitoring	X		

Theme	Milestone	Achieved	Delayed	On schedule
	Agree programme management model for council-wide use	X		
Improve data quality	Consult with Performance Officers Group	X		
	Present draft report to CMT	X		
	Consult with Audit Commission	X		
	Present report to Audit & Governance Committee	X		
	Appoint member champion		X	
Improve data quality	Deliver Year 1 Actions from data quality report			X
Review scrutiny arrangements	Consult with political groups	X		
	Report to Council	X		
	Implement new arrangements			X
Improve consultation and engagement arrangements				
	Discuss and identify best practice	X		
	Consult on draft strategy	X		
	Publish strategy			X