

Report of the Director of Resources

Corporate Strategy Refresh

Summary

1. This report provides information on the corporate strategy refresh process. It gives details of the initial stages, future stages and communication plans.

Background

2. Corporate Management Team (CMT) decided to refresh the Corporate Strategy to ensure greater alignment with the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 placed upon local authorities the duty to co-operate with partners, and the subsequent revisions to the local government performance framework have made it a statutory duty for local authorities to demonstrate how they are working with their partners to deliver local services (via the LAA).
3. Additional influences to this decision were strong views from the Corporate Leadership Group that there were too many strategic elements within the original strategy, which made it difficult to monitor. CMT also highlighted the need for the strategy to be measurable and achievable, to allow for an objective measure of the progress that is being made in delivering priorities during the year. The strategy also needs to include the major project/improvement activity in which the Council is involved, in particular major investment areas. One of the problems we face with the current strategy is producing evidence of change for our residents, and performance managing not only the priorities, but also the other elements of the strategy.
4. Completing this work is also a priority within the Single Improvement Plan.
5. A series of workshops have been and are planned to identify priority areas for **improvement** under the seven themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy (our 20-year blueprint for partnership working). These themes are: the Sustainable City, the Learning City, the Thriving City, the Inclusive City, the Healthy City, the City of Culture and the Safer City. In addition, there is an 8th theme, the Effective Organisation, that looks at our internal processes and how they enable us to deliver on the seven citizen-focused themes.

6. The format of the Corporate Strategy will therefore change from April 2009. The vision for the city from the SCS will be recognised as an overarching element of the strategy. Instead of the existing ten priorities, there will be eight themes, and under each theme there will be medium term (three year) improvements, as well as one year actions, that can be completed and measured within that year. During the year, and at the end of the year, quantifiable measures of overall progress made on the Council's priorities will be produced. This performance monitoring will be a key element of the Finance and Performance reports that come to the Executive. The existing Corporate Values remain unchanged, while the Direction Statements will no longer be shown as a strategic element in their own right.
7. Please see Annex A for a demonstration of the elements of the strategy.
8. Under each of these themes, Members and officers have already met for the first round of workshops to discuss one-year actions for 2009-10. Further work is continuing on these actions to consider delivery arrangements and measurements. The second round of workshops, which will consider the medium term planning, will take place in January. Invitations to Members to participate in the second round of workshops will follow shortly.
9. The one year actions have been considered at this point in time to ensure that Assistant Directors and Service Managers take them into account within the Council's service planning process. The medium term planning has been postponed until the results of partnership action planning against the LAA has been completed.
10. In future years, the one-year actions will be considered using the medium term planning for focus, in time for inclusion within the budget cycle. This will ensure that our corporate strategy and budget cycle are fully aligned. Our aim is to show a clear golden thread running from strategic long-term priorities to annual service plans, with budget processes supporting priorities.

Next steps

Content and structure

11. The next step with regard to the content of the strategy is to confirm the medium term element of the strategy (next three years) in workshops planned for January.
12. In conjunction with this we will have the results from the partnership boards' LAA action planning sessions. It is crucial that the council's medium term planning considers the decisions made at a partnership level, to ensure that we have integrated the outcomes into our delivery mechanisms. We will also identify Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) at this stage.
13. A report detailing the whole strategy will be brought to Executive for consideration when the second round of workshops are complete.

Alignment of resources

14. It is important the Strategy sets out the Councils priorities and contributes to the investment decisions the Council makes. The Strategy will incorporate major existing programmes which are already planned to deliver a significant contribution to Council priorities, and will also serve as a basis for future decisions on investment. The development of the Financial Strategy will seek to ensure that capacity is created to ensure investment in key priorities.
15. The corporate strategy proposals were outlined in the budget consultation event held in mid November 2008.

Communication

16. There is a major piece of work to be undertaken with regard to the internal and external communication and 'marketing' of the strategy. The strategy is due to be launched in April 2009, and time has been allocated with the Communications Team after the Christmas break to focus on this important stage.

Follow up work

17. When the strategy is launched, there will be an important facilitation role for the Performance and Improvement Team to ensure that progress is being made against the targets set, that monitoring arrangements are working well and that reporting mechanisms are fit for purpose.
18. As indicated there is an important piece of work that will be needed to make further improvements the alignment between the refreshed strategy and the evolving budget setting arrangements, in time for the next budget round.

Consultation

19. The process of the refresh the corporate strategy has been discussed at Corporate Leadership Group, and Corporate Management Team. The first round of workshops involved a combination on Members, Officers and partners.

Options

20. Option 1) The current corporate strategy remains unchanged.

Option 2) The corporate strategy refresh process described in this report is endorsed.

Analysis

21. Option 1)
Advantages – Continuity is maintained with the strategy of previous years.

Disadvantages – The current strategy makes it difficult to demonstrate progress. Its focus is on the Council's work alone, and in the future we will be judged on how the Council's work contributes to the city wide agenda.

22. Option 2)

Advantages – The new strategy will enable progress to be reported, and improvements to be focused on priorities. It will be clear how the Council is contributing to the LAA and the SCS, and the golden thread will be improved from a strategic planning level down to individual workplans. The budget process will be able to be aligned to the corporate strategy process in future years. The Council will also be demonstrating its leadership role within the city by endorsing the partnership agenda.

Disadvantages – There will be changes made to the strategy that will need to be communicated effectively if staff are to accept them as positive changes.

Corporate Objectives

23. The refreshed corporate strategy will improve the Council's position with regard to the new assessment framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

Implications

24.

- **Financial** If Option 2 is endorsed then the further work with regard to budget alignment will have implications in future years, with resources supporting the strategy.
- **Human Resources (HR)** There are no HR implications
- **Equalities** If Option 2 is considered, action regarding the Council's internal processes will be identified at a corporate level through the organisations effectiveness theme. Outward facing equalities actions will be prioritised within the Inclusive City theme. The refreshed strategy will be considered by the Social Inclusion Working Group during its development.
- **Legal** There are no legal implications
- **Crime and Disorder** Crime and Disorder issues will be prioritised under the Safer City Theme
- **Information Technology (IT)** There are no IT implications

Risk Management

25. If the corporate strategy does not align to the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement, the council will have great difficulty demonstrating how we are working towards the vision of the city. This forms a fundamental element of the CAA inspection regime, and therefore future positive inspection judgements will be put at risk.

Recommendations

26. Members are asked to approve:

Option 2) The refresh process described in this report is endorsed.

and Members are requested to participate in the relevant second-round workshops.

Reason: To give the corporate strategic planning of the council greater coherence, and improve the council's position under future inspection frameworks.

Contact Details

Author:

Janna Eastment
Corporate Planning & Development
Officer
Performance and Improvement Team
01904 551019

Co-Author's Name:
Helene Nowell
Programme Manager
Performance and Improvement Team
01904 551746

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Ian Floyd
Director of Resources

Report Approved

Date 18th November
2008

Pauline Stuchfield
Assistant Director of Resources - Customer Service
and Governance

Report Approved

Date 19th November
2008

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Annexes

Annex A – Example format of the refreshed corporate strategy