
Executive

26 May 2009

Report of the Assistant Director of Resources (Customer and Governance)

Single Improvement Plan Refresh 2009/10

Summary

1. This report sets out proposals for the workstreams within the refreshed version of the Single Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2009/10, together with the basis for their inclusion. This report does not include a detailed action plan, as the work will be scoped with timescales and milestones set in consultation with the relevant CMT leads responsible for each workstream.

Background

2. The Single Improvement Plan forms a core element of the Corporate Strategy's eighth theme, that of being an Effective Organisation. It is intended to cover corporate continuous improvement of internal processes and governance frameworks, which in turn support effective service delivery. These processes and governance frameworks are laid down in the council's Code of Corporate Governance and internal Business Model for officers.
3. An improvement programme was originally agreed in June 2008, in response to the Audit Commission's corporate assessment, which was presented to Executive on 30 June 2008 as the SIP. Twelve individual areas for improvement were identified, and progress against milestones monitored. The achievements to year end 2008/09 were reported to Executive as Annex 3 to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Report on 17 March 2009.
4. The SIP will continue to be led and owned by Corporate Management Team members who will take individual leadership of SIP workstreams.
5. Earlier this year, a review of corporate governance was carried out to compare current practice against CIPFA standards for best practice and a number of potential further areas identified for possible inclusion in a refreshed SIP. The early findings from the review were reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on 31 March 2009. In addition, the staff survey was undertaken between February and early March 2009, and further key findings that were suitable for inclusion in the SIP were identified.
6. CMT received an interim report on 8 April 2009 to inform decisions regarding the 2008/09 SIP workstreams which should continue into the 2009/10 year.

This report presents draft proposals for a combination of workstreams carried forward from the previous year, together with new elements introduced as a result of either the review of corporate governance or the staff survey.

7. Scoping work is currently under way to determine the key milestones to be achieved, and consultation in the proposed areas will be carried out to ensure that stakeholders have input into the improvement process.

Consultation

8. Individual officers responsible for each workstream have been consulted on their respective areas of work, and CMT as a group have been consulted on the elements to be carried over from the previous year. The Marketing and Communications team have been consulted on the findings from the staff survey. The Audit & Governance Committee have received and noted the early outcomes of the Governance Review.
9. Once key milestones have been developed, consultation in the proposed areas will be carried out to ensure that stakeholders have input into the improvement process.

Options

10. Nine areas for suggested inclusion in the SIP have been identified, either through the governance review, the staff survey, or from previous audit or inspection reports and the previous year's SIP. In addition risk management was specifically requested for inclusion by Executive on 31 October 2008.
11. The originating sources of proposed workstreams are shown in the table below:

Source			
SIP Workstream	Governance Review	Staff Survey	Other audit/inspection reports
HR	✓	✓	✓
Equalities			✓
Health & Safety		✓	✓
Member Training	✓		✓
Project Management	✓		✓
Code of Conduct awareness	✓	✓	✓
Partnership governance	✓		✓
Internal Communications	✓	✓	
Risk Management	Executive		

12. The results of the staff survey are being reported separately to Executive, and further detail will be available in that report which support some of the suggested workstreams (26 May 2009).
13. The suggested workstreams and proposed coverage are set out below:

(i) Human Resources

This was originally identified in the Corporate Assessment of 2008 as an area for further improvement, and the original work identified in the 2008/09 SIP covered a multi-year programme. The elements to be worked on this year were agreed last year as part of the overall programme, building on the previous completed actions.

Issues around outstanding pay and grading appeals were raised in the staff survey (under the “Any other comments” section).

Among the areas for improvement are the completion rates of Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) to assist with workforce development planning, the continued implementation of Pay & Grading including the outstanding appeals to be heard, and the continuing work of the HR Transformation Programme.

Lead Officers: Ian Floyd/ Angela Wilkinson

(ii) Equalities

This has been identified in a number of reports, including the Corporate Assessment of 2008, as an area requiring additional work to meet the council’s statutory duties, and work is continuing from the previous year’s SIP. The new Equality Framework for Local Government, which took statutory effect from 1 April 2009, places on local councils a duty to reduce social inequality, and therefore an ongoing programme of equalities work is required.

This programme is to include working towards meeting all the requirements of the “Developing” level of the new Equality Framework, [working on a joint approach with LSP partners for access to services](#), and delivering training on equalities and human rights.

Lead Officers: Bill Hodson / Evie Chandler

(iii) Health & Safety (H&S)

This was identified in reports from the Health & Safety Executive, and work now needs to build on the milestones achieved in the previous year’s SIP.

A report was presented to CMT on 11 February 2009 outlining the main issues facing the Health & Safety team, making extensive recommendations for further action to improve the Health and Safety culture within the council. In addition, the staff survey showed that only half (50.9%) of staff believed that H&S recommendations were followed up on and only 20.9% of staff were aware of the council’s new Safety Management system.

Some of the main areas for work include carrying out a H&S training needs analysis, delivering training, assessing levels of legal compliance and reviewing new risks entered onto the corporate risk register.

Lead Officers: Director of Neighbourhood Services / Angela Wilkinson/Jon Grainger

(iv) Member Training

Identified in the 2008/09 SIP, work is continuing on the foundations laid last year. Members have agreed to sign up to the IDeA Charter for member development, and a working group is to decide the components of next year's training courses for members.

Key areas for action include developing a Member Development Policy, agreeing the annual training programme and agreeing the implementation plan for achieving charter status.

Lead Officers: Chief Executive / Quentin Baker

(v) Project Management

This follows on from a part of the Capital Programme workstream from last year's SIP to achieve consistency in project management across the council.

Amongst the actions planned are the corporate adoption of common principles of project and programme management, developing an agreed gateway process for project review and delivering a training programme for project management.

Lead Officers: Bill Woolley /Tracey Carter

(vi) Code of Conduct awareness

This workstream in part covers concerns raised in the staff survey about whistle-blowing procedures. Half of all staff were not aware that the whistleblowing procedures existed, and of the staff who were aware, a sizeable percentage (20%) had little confidence in them.

The review of corporate governance also identified the need for all staff to be aware of current conduct standards and procedures. While many people received information on joining the council, procedures are updated on a regular basis, and there is a need to ensure consistency of practice across the council.

For this year, work is to include a revision of current procedures, and the delivery of a training programme on the officer Code of Conduct to increase awareness.

Lead Officers: Ian Floyd / Officer Governance Group

(vii) Partnership governance

The review of corporate governance highlighted areas for improvement in the area of assurance around partnership governance, and this is reflected in a comment made in the previous year's Corporate Assessment.

Work will include a [review of current partnership governance arrangements](#), and the delivery of training on good partnership governance.

Lead Officers: Bill Woolley /Officer Governance Group.

(viii) Internal Communications

This workstream was identified in the staff survey as being an area for further work, but underpins many of the issues identified in the review of corporate governance. In addition, only 39% of staff believe action will be taken on problems identified through the staff survey, so there will be further communication work required to explain what action has resulted from the staff survey, both corporately and through individual directorate management teams.

Areas to be covered will include a fundamental review of the council's internal communication arrangements. Primary focus will be on face to face channels of communication, e.g. systematic team briefings, as well as a review of electronic and paper communications including the implementation of the new intranet (COLIN).

Lead Officers: Pete Dwyer / Matt Beer/ Angela Wilkinson

(ix) Risk Management

This workstream was requested for inclusion by Executive at their meeting on 21st October 2008 after considering the Corporate Risk Management Report 2008/09. The minute states 'That the Director of Resources be requested to ensure that the work of the Risk Management system is worked into the Single Improvement Programme as a prioritisation of officer resources'.

Areas for further work include a fundamental review of the strategic risk register in line with the new corporate strategy, and the integration of risk reporting into the new performance management framework.

Lead Officers: Ian Floyd / Pauline Stuchfield

Next steps

13. CMT leads will scope individual workstreams including deliverables and milestones/timescales by June 2009. The detailed plan will be reported to a future Executive meeting.

Analysis

14. Performance reporting will be made to CMT and Executive on a quarterly basis, although summary information giving progress against the annual target

of 80% of milestones achieved, will be included as part of internal reporting on the Corporate Strategy on a monthly basis

15. As each SIP improvement area reaches completion and to ensure continuity, effective implementation and compliance, appropriate amendments will be made to the council's Business Model for officers.

Corporate Priorities

16. The SIP forms one of the council's key objectives under the theme of "Effective Organisation", and achieving the milestones of the SIP as a whole forms one of the theme actions for the 2009/10 year.

Implications

17. **Financial** None identified at present. All work will be managed within existing service budgets.
Human Resources (HR) HR implications for the HR workstream.
Equalities Equalities implications for the equalities workstream
Legal The SIP should assist the authority in fulfilling some of its statutory duties, particularly in regards to health and safety, and equalities legislation.
Crime and Disorder None
Information Technology (IT) None additional to those already identified, e.g. development of the intranet.
Property None
Other None known.

Risk Management

18. If new SIP areas are not agreed then this could affect the Council's direction of improvement, the quality of the Business Model and the outcome of the Use of Resources Assessment within the Comprehensive Area Assessment process.

Recommendations

19. Executive is asked to:
 - (a) Comment on the draft SIP 2009/10; and
 - (b) Agree the areas for inclusion.

Reason: To ensure the effective management and of key actions to be taken to support on-going development and improvement work at the council critical to the achievement of the Effective Organisation corporate priority.

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Report Approved **Date** 7th May 2009

Ian Floyd

Director of Resources

Report Approved **Date** 7th May 2009

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *N/A*

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Annex 3 to the CPA report presented to Executive on 17 March 2009, reporting the outcome of the 2008-09 SIP.

Annexes: None