

TITLE OF REPORT: PRIORITIES FOR THE DISTRICT 2011-2012

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC OF DIRECTOR, FINANCE, POLICY & GOVERNANCE
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR MRS C.P.A. STRONG

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform Members of the work undertaken by the Corporate plan review group comprising Councillors Claire Strong, Lynda Needham, Steve Jarvis, David Levett and Deepak Sangha to streamline the Council's Corporate Plan for 2011 -12 onwards.
- 1.2 To propose that the document be renamed "Priorities for the District 2011-12."
- 1.3 To inform Members of the intention to make a further report to Cabinet in June 2011 to set the Council priorities for the Corporate Business Planning process 2012-13.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report contains recommendations on a key decision and was first referred to in the Forward Plan in March 2011

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As members will be aware the Council's Corporate Plan covers a 10 year period from 2005-2015. The plan is reviewed on an annual basis and this report refers to the review of the plan which has provided the policy foundation throughout the 2011/12 budget setting process
- 3.2 Members will be aware of that it was agreed at the Cabinet meeting in June 2010 that the priorities for 2011/12 would remain as Town Centres, Green Issues and Sustainable Development and this set the policy context for the work on budgets as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.
- 3.3 The Council's Corporate Plan gives us the opportunity to set out what we want to achieve for our community and sets the policy context for our subsequent budget decisions. It is the over-arching strategic document which sets the direction for the Council.
- 3.4 The context in which we set our Corporate Plan has changed. CAA has been abolished and inspection, regulation and monitoring reduced. We now have an opportunity to review the amount of effort and resources we put into the plan for the future.
- 3.5 Against this background, the Portfolio-holder for Policy has outlined that she wishes to see a stream-lined plan for 2011-12 and then a focus on a review of the plan for 2012 onwards to reflect emerging legislation and policy direction in the Localism Bill and Health and Social Care Bill.

4. CORPORATE PLAN 2011/12

- 4.1 We confirmed at Cabinet on 15th June 2010 that the three priorities for 2011/12 would remain as Town Centres, Green Issues and Sustainable Development and the budget agreed at Council on 10th February reflects these priorities.
- 4.2 The Policy portfolio-holder met with the Strategic Director, Finance, Policy & Governance, the Head of Policy, Partnerships & Community Development and the Performance & Risk Manager to commence work on a draft document (Appendix A) and as in previous years, this was then presented to a small working group of Members (Councillors Strong, Needham, Levett and Steve Jarvis and Sangha) to agree the final wording.
- 4.3 In many ways, 2011/12 is a transition year. We do not yet have enough detail about the full impacts of the Localism Bill or the Health and Social Care Bill but we know that there will be some impact. We do not yet know which areas of the Council will be most affected/involved in its development. Members have therefore agreed that the Plan will refer to the emerging legislation and tie in localism and the economic situation.
- 4.4 In terms of content, having reviewed the reduced requirements placed upon us, it is proposed that we produce a more stream-lined document which will be less resource intensive, particularly as we are planning to reduce resources in both the Policy and Performance teams in response to the abolition of CAA, inspection and reduced formal reporting requirements. Our contribution to partnership activity is also reducing, with the LSP at both county and district level under review to streamline and reduce the action plans to reflect the reduced resources which we and our partners have available going forward.
- 4.5 It is proposed that the plan focuses on the key project work we are leading on for 2011/12, where we can directly influence the delivery timescales and be held accountable for delivery. Major capital programme works will be reflected in the plan and linked to one of the three priorities. Whilst reference will be made to other work being done in partnership to maintain the links to the revised SCS, our Plan will focus on the things the Council is doing and how we are making ourselves more efficient and seeking to drive costs down.
- 4.6 The proposal is to focus on new or varied things rather than the “business as usual” which should be covered in the individual service plans which Heads of Service produce and which are management tools rather than strategic Member-driven documents.
- 4.7 The Plan would have a smaller number of high-level actions under each of the priorities instead of a separate action plan. We would then report back on progress at 6 months and year end, making use of the Council Tax leaflet and possibly an edition of the Outlook magazine to tell the public what we have achieved.
- 4.8 Members are keen that we change the name of the plan to signify the change from the previous requirements and the attached document at Appendix A is entitled “Priorities for the District 2011/12”.

5. PRIORITIES FOR THE DISTRICT 2012/13 AND ONWARDS

- 5.1 Work will start soon to review priorities for 2012/13 so that they can lead the Corporate Business Planning process. The first high level report to confirm the priorities for 2012/13 is due at Cabinet in June.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is another important step in the annual Corporate Business Planning process and completes the cycle for the 2011/12 process. The high level priorities identified in the June cycle of meetings provide the policy foundation for the Council's medium term financial strategy. The narrative and actions included here are those made in the light of available financial resources, and within the context of setting the Council's budget for 2011/12. The Council always seeks to move its limited resources towards delivery of its priorities.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The terms of reference for Council confirm that it is responsible for approving or adopting the policy framework which includes the Corporate Plan.
- 7.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, albeit individual actions identified within the Plan may be subject to specific legal requirements or constraints and will be subject to more detailed consideration at the appropriate time.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct Human Resources or Equalities Implications arising from this report. However, the Council's priorities and actions as set out in the document provide the starting point for much of the work we do. Matching staff resources with areas of priority is a key task, particularly important in the light of the ongoing restructure and financial constraints.
- 8.2 The Council has a Corporate Equality Strategy and the document sets out the importance of Equalities as one of the core values defining the way we work, both within and external to the organisation.
- 8.3 As an Investor in People, an aim is to maximise the potential and contribution of our staff through appropriate learning and development opportunities to enable delivery of the plan and the Council's priorities.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The draft document has been prepared through consultation with a small Member working group comprising representatives from all political groups on the Council.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 It is recommended that Council approve the Priorities for the District – 2011/12 as attached at Appendix A.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The Council is required to have a suitable, high level strategic planning document and Council is required to approve the final plan as the formal policy framework for the authority.

12. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Priorities for the District 2011/12 – **[TO FOLLOW]**

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

Author: Norma Atlay
Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance
01462 474297
norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk

Liz Green
Head of Partnerships, Policy and Community Development
01462 474230
liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk

Kerry Shorrocks
Corporate HR Manager
01462 474224
kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk

Andy Cavanagh
Head of Financial Services
01462 474243
andrew.cavanagh@north-herts.gov.uk

Katie White
Corporate Legal Manager
01462 474315
katie.white@north-herts.gov.uk