

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
24 JULY 2018**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: A NEW APPROACH TO SERVICE PLANNING

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
EXECUTIVE MEMBER : N/A
COUNCIL PRIORITY : RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In May 2018, the Council published a four year Service Delivery Plan managed by the Senior Management Team, which outlines the high level work programme and priorities for the Council, taking into account the Council's vision for the next four years. It describes how objectives will be achieved within a robust monitoring framework and in the context of the Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 1.2 The Service Delivery Plan is a four year plan, but it will be updated annually and reviewed every six months. Also published are individual Service Area Action Plans, which form the basis of each department's work programme for the coming years. This new approach replaces the previous annual service area Service Plans.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the new approach to service planning be noted.
- 2.2 That the interim review of the Council's Consultation Strategy be noted and the Committee requests that it be taken into account by the Task and Finish Group which considers the subject of Consultation.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the new approach to service planning adopted by the Senior Management Team (SMT), so that they are aware of the processes in place within the organisation.
- 3.2 In response to the District Wide Survey results regarding consultation, an immediate interim review of the Consultation Strategy was undertaken, intended to be a light touch review prior to the Task and Finish Group on consultation which will of course produce its own recommendations in due course.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The previous approach to service planning could have been continued, however the Senior Management Team felt that a fresh approach would be beneficial, for the reasons set out in section 7 below. The approach of other authorities to service plans was considered, which showed numerous alternatives, however the approach chosen was considered to be the best fit for the organisation, the staff, the members and the public.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 As the service planning process is internal to the Council there is no requirement to consult. The Political Liaison Board were briefed on the new approach on 23 April 2018 and all members were informed of the new approach via MIS note on 11 May 2018.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The Service Plan is an important document, providing a link between the Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy and the targets set with staff during Regular Performance Reviews. It is part of the 'golden thread' that links the Council's priorities with the work on individual members of staff.

- 7.2 The approach to Service Plans which has been in place for a number of years can be summarised as:-

- Single year plans
- 11 service plans across the Council, each with action plan, assurance statement and budget information appended
- Overly bureaucratic and formulaic approach
- Little ongoing in year benefit to the plans except for the action plans and SWOT/PESTLE analysis

- 7.3 SMT on 28 November 2017 discussed the existing service plan process and agreed the need for change. The principles agreed were:-

- A single, streamlined, SMT led service plan
- The service plan would be for a four year period, updated annually and reviewed every six months
- A single managers' assurance statement, agreed by SMT
- Individual action plans for service areas to be appended to main plan
- Retain the use of SWOT/PESTLE analysis, potentially including the Senior Management Group (SMG) in that discussion

- 7.4 SMT on 6 February 2018 agreed the structure of the new renamed Service Delivery Plan (including Assurance Statement), the approach to the Service Area Action Plans and the timetable for completing the service planning process. Following that meeting the revised Action Plan template was circulated as was the questionnaire to inform the Service Delivery Plan and Assurance Statement discussions.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Service Delivery Plan has been published on the Council's website at www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/service-delivery-plan . For Members ease of reference the Service Delivery Plan is attached at Appendix A, however the Service Area Actions Plans have not been attached and can be viewed online. Please note the Action Plans will be realigned to the new Service Director areas of responsibility as part of the implementation of the new senior management structure. Once these realigned Action Plans are available they will replace the current plans on the website. The process followed through the service planning process is set out on the first page of the Plan.

Service Delivery Plan

- 8.2 The plan was deliberately renamed in order to differentiate it from the previous approach and to emphasise that it is about the delivery of services, rather than a policy document setting a framework for our approach. A four year period was chosen for the plan so that it was consistent with the Corporate Plan and MTFS. Recognising the difficulty in forecasting beyond the immediate period for the purposes of the key activities and project years 3 and 4 are combined into one entry. Where there are overlaps with other documents these are linked to, rather than their content repeated. Included within the Service Delivery Plan is the Assurance Statement which identifies areas which require improvement.
- 8.3 SMT agreed that in order to inform and populate the Service Delivery Plan and Assurance Statement a questionnaire would be circulated to all Heads of Service/Corporate Managers to ensure views were properly canvassed. The template questionnaire is attached at Appendix B. The completed questionnaires were discussed at SMT and relevant points included within the Service Delivery Plan. The completed questionnaires will not be published.
- 8.4 One of the key issues identified during the service planning process was the results of the recent District Wide Survey, which were reported to the 20 March 2018 Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. Officers are aware that a Task and Finish Group on Consultation is on the work plan, however with no date yet set for that work it was felt that an interim review of the Consultation Strategy should be undertaken. That interim review is attached at Appendix C and includes a number of recommendations which have been endorsed by SMT.
- 8.5 As with the previous approach to Service Plans the Service Delivery Plan has been published on the Council's website, together with the Service Area Action Plans, as explained in paragraph 8.1 above. It is hoped that for those members of the public who are interested, this new approach is easier to read and understand than the previous approach.

Service Area Action Plans

- 8.6 The Action Plans have stayed in a broadly similar format to the previous template, albeit a streamlined version to focus on the most important information. All Action Plans were reviewed and discussed at SMT and the key matters highlighted for inclusion in the Service Delivery Plan. Due to the timing of the service planning process in relation to the outcomes of the senior management restructure, the Action Plans were prepared based on the old service area structure. As stated above as part of the handover arrangements from the old senior management structure to the new structure the Action Plans will be reviewed and edited so that they match the new structure. This will assist the Service Directors and their managers as they embed the new structure and undertake RPRs with staff.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Committee's terms of reference include at paragraph 6.2.7(s) "To review performance against the Council's agreed objectives / priorities and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or service areas." The Service Delivery Plan is part of the processes for setting and monitoring objectives and performance.
- 9.2 The Service Delivery Plan includes all activities of the Council, therefore it covers executive, non-executive and local choice functions. The specific legal implications of individual projects/work streams are considered as required and can include a range of legal issues including (but not limited to) planning, property, contracts, procurement or employment law issues.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Corporate Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) will determine the key projects to be undertaken by the Council, on top of delivering business as usual. The MTFS and the resultant revenue and capital budgets will reflect the cost implications of these plans. The Service Delivery Plan details how the Corporate Plan will be delivered so the financial implications are therefore already covered. However the Senior Management Team will prioritise what can be delivered within the staffing establishment to ensure that staffing costs are kept within budget.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 A robust service planning process helps to mitigate the risk of services failing to achieve their targets. In particular the Assurance Statement appended to the Service Delivery Plan identifies a number of key areas for improvement which, if addressed, will also reduce risks to the Council.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2 There are no equalities implications directly related to the service planning process, however impact assessments will be needed for specific service changes/projects as they progress.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The service planning process is an important part of SMT’s work and is factored in to existing work plans. As stated earlier in the report the Service Delivery Plan and Service Area Action Plans are important documents used to inform discussions and set targets during the Regular Performance Review process with all staff.

15. APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix A – Service Delivery Plan

15.2 Appendix B – template questionnaire

15.3 Appendix C – Interim Review of Consultation Strategy

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

16.1 Anthony Roche, Deputy Chief Executive
anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4588

16.2 Sarah Kingsley, Communications Manager
sarah.kingsley@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4552

16.3 Reuben Ayavoo, Senior Policy Officer
Reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4212

16.4 Ian Couper, Head of Finance, Performance and Asset Management
ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4243

17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 The Service Delivery Plan and Service Area Action Plans - www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/service-delivery-plan

17.2 NHDC Consultation Strategy 2015 – 2020 - www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/publications-and-consultations/consultation-strategy-2016-2020