



# **Chester-le-Street**

## **District Council**

**REPORT TO:** Council Meeting

**DATE OF MEETING:** 28 June 2007

**REPORT OF:** Assistant Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** Adoption of Chester-le-Street Corporate Plan 2007/2010 featuring the Best Value Performance Plan for 2007/2008

**ITEM NUMBER:** 8

---

### **1 Purpose and Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for the Council to consider the general principles and content of the Council's Corporate Plan 2007/2010. The plan incorporates the Council's Best Value Performance Plan 2007/2008. the draft text version of the plan is attached in Appendix 1 with the Performance information included as Appendix 2.
- 1.2 This is the third year that we have completed the corporate plan and incorporated the Best Value Performance Plan within it. However this year has been a more inclusive process with better engagement of scrutiny, partners, resident groups and staff. This years plan also takes advantage of the results of the impending Corporate Performance Assessment result which was published on published 12<sup>th</sup> June. The Plan proposes that we maintain the current priorities for the current year but re-assesses these during the course of the year as a result of change. The plan must be published by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007.
- 1.3 Members are recommended to agree to:
1. The general principles and content of the Plan set out in Appendix 1 and 2.
  2. Delegates Authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to make final changes and amendments to the Plan in order to publish the plan by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007

## 2. Consultation

- 2.1 The Chief Executive, Directors, Service Team Managers, Performance and Improvement Plan Programme Manager, the Council's Risk Manager and Scrutiny employees have been engaged in the process of developing the Plan. Consultations have also been made with all key partners. As a result of consultations, contributions and views have been incorporated into the Plan.
- 2.2 Executive Members have considered the plan informally and suggestions incorporated into the document
- 2.3 The Corporate Plan consultation document has been considered by all three Scrutiny Panels and feedback incorporated into the final plan design.
- 2.4 Staff were invited to contribute through an article in *Team Talk*.
- 2.5 All key partners were contacted and asked for comments and suggestions. No one has replied. The consultation posed a question as to whether partners would like to see the council publish an annual report as prompted by the Audit Commission Use of Resources judgement last year. As no responses have been received clearly no desire for this has been expressed
- 2.6 The communities' views were requested in *District News*, through the website, with a downloadable questionnaire and through a questionnaire to all the Districts Residents and Tenants Associations. No responses were received to the first two. There was a 26% (6 respondents) response rate to the following summarised as follows:
- 67% are happy with the current format of the plan;
  - 83% felt the plan was a useful document;
  - 100% felt they understood the council priorities;
  - 0% felt they would find a separate Annual Report useful;
  - 50% felt the corporate plan would suffice if it produced more year end information; and
  - 50% would prefer the council to focus resources on service delivery rather than producing any more documents.
- 2.7 Comments made by the Residents and Tenants Associations are mixed and included:
- A year end financial report would be an asset to members of the community provided that it was totally transparent and showed all incomes and all outgoings;
  - The plan is very comprehensive
  - It is a useful document if it is adhered to and it works

- People have a right to know where the money is going to and that it is being used properly;
- The plan is too bulky and difficult to digest, costly to produce, its too bulky and the format is wrong – it should be condensed, easier format, and use plain English;
- Flash, slick, costly to produce, sterile;
- Some problems have not been addressed
- Would like to see council tax non payment on bills; and
- Need more detail of the how- perhaps a subsequent action plan.

### **3. Corporate Plan Priorities**

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan sets out the councils priorities. It has already been agreed, and supported by the Executive and Scrutiny Panels, that the current priorities will be retained for the purposes of this years plan. The Plan however, makes it clear that during the year the council will re-address its priorities and decide upon new ones in order to develop next year's budget. This is in the light of change in the district and within the organisation.
- 3.2 The plan significantly takes into account the recently publicised Comprehensive Performance Assessment result.

### **4. Implications**

#### **4.1 Financial and Value for Money**

The Corporate Plan has clear financial implications for the Council. In effect it is the Council's strategic work plan for the next three years which will be updated annually. It is linked to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy as will help to inform subsequent Service Plans, priority setting and budgeting.

There is also a cost to the production of the Plan and this will be achieved through existing budgets. Some of the responses to the consultation on the plan suggest that the plan is flash and costly to produce. There is a cost of production of the plan in the region of £6,000 for paper copies. There is no significant cost to the production of the plan. The format of the plan has served the council well. Despite some negative feedback from a relatively few people the document is of crucial importance to the council. It has been a significant part of the council's improvement programme and generally feedback received from all stake holders has been positive. It is bulky but it includes the statutory document, the Best Value Performance Plan. In addition not only does it set out clearly the council's priorities, it in includes information on achievements, financial performance and risk management. The council could separate the Best Value Performance Plan, the statutory

document although there could be an increased cost of providing two documents. The council could also choose to simply publish the document electronically to reduce expenditure. This would make the document less accessible. On balance, and in view of the importance of the document to a full range of stakeholders it is considered that the format of the plan offers very good value for money and ought to be produced in the same format as previous years. Members and the public can be assured that every effort is being and will be made to reduce costs to the minimum.

#### 4.2 Legal

The principle legal implications are in ensuring that the Plan complies with Legislation. In particular the Plan ought to include the Best Value Performance Plan requirements and, in particular, the following summarised requirements set out in current government advice for 'good' councils:-

- A brief summary of strategic objectives and priorities for improvement, reflecting corporate/business planning process
- Details of performance on the past year and targets for the next year on all Best Value Performance Indicators
- A brief summary on contracts (TUPE compliance)

The Plan complies with these requirements. It needs to be published by 30<sup>th</sup> June to meet statutory timescales. It is proposed that the plan will be published on the website and electronic versions made available to key partners by this date. Subsequently hard copies will be produced in July including year end financial information to act as an 'annual report' in view of the lack of any desire by stakeholders to prepare an issue a separate document.

#### 4.3 Personnel

There are specific personnel issues as a result of this report.

#### 4.4 Other Services

The Plan clearly relates to all Services within the Council and has implications for improvement in Service Delivery. These are identified within the draft of the Plan.

#### 4.5 Diversity

The Plan is critically important to the Council in terms of quality and diversity. There is a specific chapter (Chapter 9) in the Plan which in effect is the Annual plan required as part of the council's Equality Plan. In addition there is clear performance information and proposals on diversity improvements

within the council. In the It is not felt that the Plan will disadvantage any specific group and the Plan is made available in different formats.

#### 4.6 Risk

The key roles associated with the production of the Plan have been assessed. It is not felt that there are outstanding issues which would require action plans to be produced. More importantly the plan specifically addresses risk as the key strategic risks related to the delivery of the Council's vision and aims are set out in the Plan. These risks have been developed as part of corporate procedure and the Council's Risk Manager has been engaged in this process. Action Planning will result. It is also important to note that the plan embeds Risk Management as part of the Council's performance management framework and corporate planning cycle. A risk assessment forms part of the background papers.

#### 4.7 Crime and Disorder

The Plan responds to past and future performance in addressing the Council's responsibilities for Crime and Disorder. While it is not felt there are any specific implications of the report on Crime and Disorder, the implementation of the Plan will improve the Council's response through the Local Strategic Partnership and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

#### 4.8 Data Quality

Every care has been taken in the development of this report to ensure that the information and data used in its preparation and the appendices attached are accurate, timely, consistent and comprehensive. The council's Data Quality Policy has been complied with in producing this report. This is of particular relevance to the Corporate Plan as it features the Best Value Performance Plan. It is vitally important that the performance information is accurately collated, analysed and reported. The Best Value Performance Indicators in particular have been subject to an internal audit as part of tests for accuracy. In terms of timeliness the Plan needs to be published by 30<sup>th</sup> June to meet legal requirements.

#### 4.9 Other Implications

All other corporate implications have been taken into account. It is considered that the Plan is a matter of policy and ought to be agreed at Full Council. This report does not therefore refer to a key decision. The Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan is ultimately aimed at all our Customers, Partners, Members, Staff and other Stakeholders. As a result it should be widely communicated. It is envisaged that a public summary will be provided. Copies ought to be made available on the Council's web-site and paper

copies distributed around the District in libraries and other Community locations. The Plan will assist in the review of existing Service Plans. Finally the Plan itself sets out formal proposals for its implementation, monitoring and review.

## **5. Background, Position Statement and Options Appraisal**

### **5.1 The Corporate Plan:-**

- sets out the Council's vision, aims and values;
- links the Council's principle activity to the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement;
- clarifies the Council's performance management framework;
- details the Council's priority planning process;
- links future work to the Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- includes proposals to review the Improvement Programme;
- sets out Council performance during 2006/2007, including financial performance;
- provides a delivery plan for key proposals, and targets, over the next three years;
- sets out the council's approach to risk management; and
- provides an annual report to meet the requirements of the council's Equality Plan.

5.2 Account has been taken from best practice in developing the plan, the results of consultations and the value of the plan to the council in its current format. It is proposed that, as previously a summary version of the plan will be made available to supplement the Best Value Performance Plan Summary published at the end of March. That document was sent to all households in the district. It is not considered that the nature of the Plan requires an options appraisal.

## **6. Recommendations**

### **6.1 It is recommended that:-**

1. The general principles and content of the Plan set out in Appendix 1 and 2.
2. Delegates Authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to make final changes and amendments to the Plan in order to publish the plan by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007

7. **Background Papers/ Documents Referred to**

- 7.1 Corporate Plan 2005/8 and 2006/9
- 7.2 Chester-le-Street Improvement and Recovery Plan.
- 7.3 Best Value Performance Plan Summary 2007/2008 March 2007.
- 7.4 Responses to consultations from Directors and Service Team managers.
- 7.5 Responses to consultation from Partners and Stakeholders.
- 7.6 Reports to Scrutiny Panels in April 2007/2005.

**Ian Forster**  
**Assistant Chief Executive**

**Version 1.0 30 May 2007**