

Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 April 2016



Council Plan 2016-2019 - Refresh of the Work Programme for the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide members with information contained within the Council Plan 2016-2019, relevant to the work of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This allows the opportunity for members to refresh the Committee Work Programme to reflect the 4 objectives and associated outcomes and action areas identified within the Council Plan for the Council's Altogether Better Council priority theme.

Background

2. The current Overview and Scrutiny Committees work programmes focus on the priority areas identified within the context of the Council Plan, Cabinet's Notice of Key Decisions, Sustainable Community Strategy, Partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in Government legislation.
3. In relation to the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee, Members will recall that the Work Programme for 2015-16 agreed to focus on the Medium Term Financial Plan. Further areas of focus for the Committee were added to reflect changing Government policy and at the request of Members relating to performance concerns.

Council Plan 2016- 2019

4. The Council Plan is the overarching high level plan for the County Council, which covers a three year period and is updated on an annual basis. The plan sets out the corporate priorities for improvement in delivering the long term goals in the Sustainable Community Strategy (2014-2030). Attached at Appendix 2 is the Altogether Better Council section of the Council Plan for members' consideration.
5. The Council's Altogether Better Council priority theme links to the work of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee containing the enablers that allow the council to effectively manage change and deliver improvement across the other themes within the Council Plan. It is imperative that delivery is made against these objectives which are increasingly important in times of significant change.

6. To help improve the performance of the Council, there are 4 objectives for an Altogether Better Council, underpinned by 11 outcomes:

- Putting the customer first:
 - A range of access routes to services
 - Responsive and customer focused services
 - People are treated fairly and differences respected.
- Working with our communities:
 - Communities and stakeholders are engaged and communicated with
 - Effective partnership working
 - Responding to effects of poverty and Welfare Reform
- Effective use of resources
 - A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities
 - Making the best use of our assets and managing information
 - Efficient and effective services.
- Support our people through change:
 - Employee and member well-being
 - A strategic approach to organisational development.

Current Work Programme

7. During 2015/16, Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee has undertaken budgetary and performance monitoring, in-depth Scrutiny Reviews, and overview presentations in relation to the following areas:

In depth Scrutiny Reviews

- Budget and MTFP process
(Objective: Effective use of resources: A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities ABC 7)
- Attendance Management
(Objective: Support our people through change: Employee and member wellbeing ABC 10)
- Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS)
(Objective: Putting the Customer First – A range of access routes to services ABC 1; Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2)

Areas of Overview Activity

- Fairness of Local Government Funding
(Objective: Effective use of resources – A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities ABC 7)
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
(Objective – Effective use of resources)
- Overview of Creditor Payment Performance (via performance reports)

(Objective: Effective use of resources – Efficient and effective services ABC 9)

- Overview of Sickness Absence Performance (via performance reports)
(Objective: Support our people through change – Employee and member wellbeing ABC 10)
- Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Reports
(Objective: Putting the Customer First – Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2; People are treated fairly and differences respected ABC 3)
- CAS Service Statutory Annual Representations Report
(Objective: Putting the customer first – Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2; People are treated fairly and differences respected ABC 3)

Budgetary and performance monitoring

- Quarterly budgetary monitoring for ACE and Resources.
(Objective: Effective use of resources - A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities ABC 7)
- Quarterly performance monitoring for Altogether Better Council theme.
(Objective: Effective use of resources – Efficient and effective services ABC 9)

Areas for consideration in the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

8. Having considered the Altogether Better Council section of the Council Plan for 2016 - 2019 it is suggested that the following action areas could be considered in the update of the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee work programme (where they already link to the current work programme this is highlighted):

Putting the customer first:

- A range of access routes – the ongoing review of the Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS) will ensure functionality of the system for both Members and customers, including more online options and self-service facilities.
- Responsive and customer focused services - Customer feedback - CIOSC receives quarterly Customer Feedback reports, and the annual CAS Representations report.
- Treat people fairly through ensuring that any changes to the way we do things are properly assessed (equality and diversity) – CIOSC has input into the overall MTFP planning process including equalities impact assessment.
- ICT Strategy 2016/19 – annual update.

Working with our communities:

Support the Durham Ask Programme - to transform the delivery of services through supporting organisations interested in running local facilities. In 2015-16 DCC received £1.4million from the Government's Transformation Challenge Award fund to help achieve the Durham Ask ambition.

- CIOSC received regular County Durham Partnership updates.
- Responding to the effects of poverty and welfare reform – review the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme – CIOSC already monitor performance quarterly, but may wish to consider this review in relation to their work programme.

Effective use of resources. It is imperative that we utilise all available resources both efficiently and effectively; this is especially the case when faced with unprecedented reductions in government funding.

- The Council will produce a rolling four year financial plan - CIOSC lead scrutiny on the financial plan every year.
- Robust assurance of detailed saving plans - regular delivery updates on the Medium Term Financial Plan are presented to CIOSC. In addition quarterly corporate performance reports are also presented. These are rolling items on the CIOSC work programme.
- The Office Accommodation Programme – making sure it is supported by more modern ways of working, such as mobile working. Asset Management is one of the CIOSC areas of responsibility,
- Ensure that the highest standards of Information Governance are being adhered to including in relation to personal data and public access to information. CIOSC receive updates on FOI performance.
- Move towards a digital service for archives and the records office.
- Review our Council Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy – CIOSC generally consider any refresh of key corporate plans linked to the scrutiny of the MTFP.

Support our people through organisational change:

- CIOSC have had input into the health, safety and wellbeing of employees in the review of Attendance Management. This provided recommendations and input into DCC's Attendance Management policy.
- Deliver training to the new Councillors following the 2017 elections – scrutiny have involvement in the induction programme for new Members.

Next Steps

9. The current Committee work programme was devised for a two year period, and therefore this provides the ideal opportunity for the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee to consider refreshing its work programme for 2016-2017 within the context of the Council Plan.
10. The Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the appropriate section from the Council Plan, Appendix 2 (copy attached) to inform the Committee work programme for 2016-2017, reflecting on the current work programme detailed in paragraph 7.
11. Members will receive a further report at the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee on 11 July 2015 confirming/agreeing the Committee's work programme for 2016-2017 based on today's discussion and agreement.

Recommendations

12. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the information contained in the Council Plan 2016-2019, Altogether Better Council theme (copy attached at Appendix 2).
13. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee refreshes the work programme for 2016 - 2017 by discussing and considering those actions identified under the Altogether Better Council priority theme of the Council Plan, as in paragraph 8.
14. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 July 2016 receives a further report detailing the Committee's work programme for 2016 - 2017.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - The Council Plan sets out the corporate priorities of the Council for the next 3 years. The Medium Term Financial Plan aligns revenue and capital investment to priorities within the Council Plan

Staffing - The Council's strategies are being aligned to achievement of the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

Risk - Consideration of risk is a key element in the corporate and service planning framework with both the Council Plan and Service Plans containing sections on risk.

Equality and diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty - The cumulative impact of all savings proposals in total has also been presented to Council and will be updated as savings proposals are further developed. In addition a full impact assessment has previously been undertaken for the Council Plan. The Council Plan includes specific issues relating to equality and aim to improve the equality of life for those with protected characteristics. The Plan has been influenced by consultation and monitoring to include equality issues. There is no evidence of negative impact for particular groups.

Accommodation - The Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan is aligned to the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

Crime and disorder - The Altogether Safer section of the Council Plan sets out the Council's contributions to tackling crime and disorder

Human rights – None

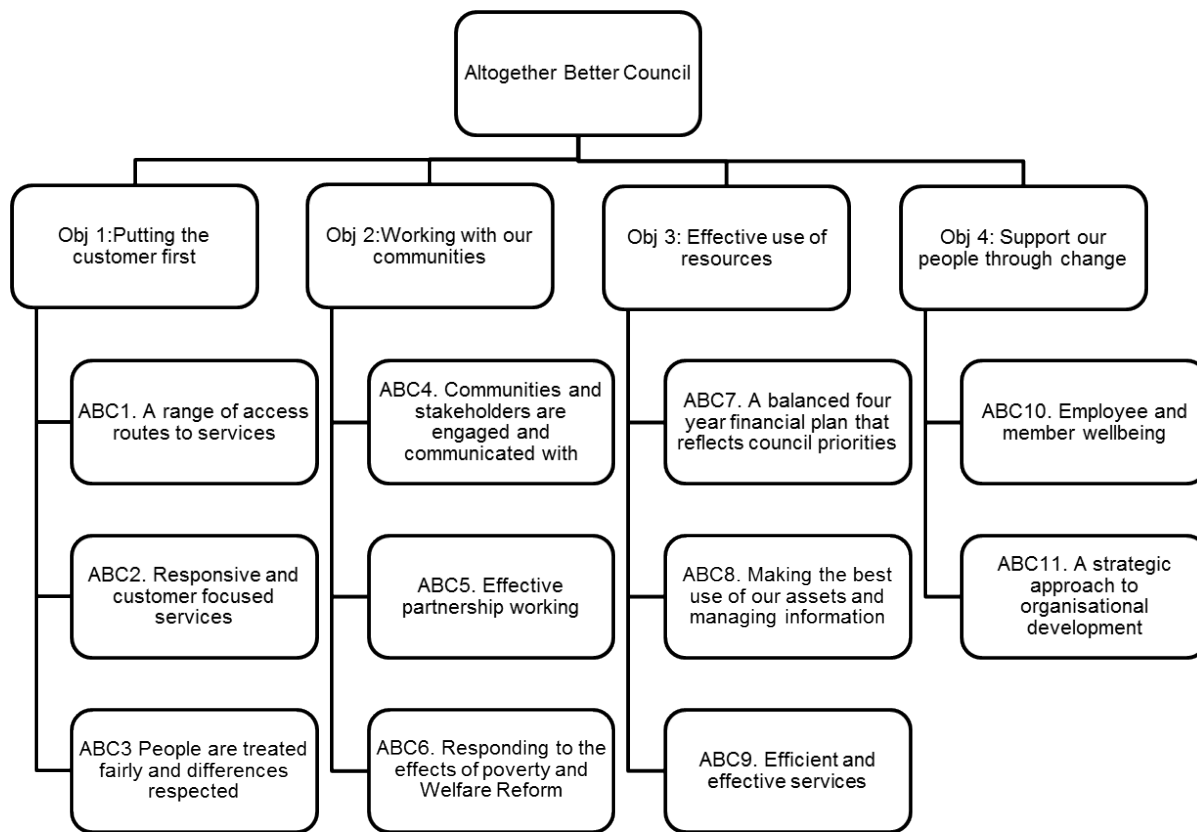
Consultation - Council and partnership priorities have been developed following an analysis of available consultation data including an extensive consultation programme carried out as part of the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy and this has been reaffirmed by subsequent consultation on the budget. Results have been taken into account in developing our resourcing decisions

Procurement - None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications - None

ALTOGETHER BETTER COUNCIL



Priority Theme **Altogether Better Council**

The Altogether Better Council theme is about how we manage our organisation internally. Like much of the public sector, Durham County Council faces two competing problems of rising demand for many of its services but also reducing resources available to help deliver them. The future for local government therefore involves investigating new ways to manage demand such as providing self-service options for some of our simpler services and looking at new models of service delivery, often together with our communities. We also owe it to our taxpayers to ensure that our services are operating as efficiently as possible and that both our service performance and finances are effectively managed. The local authority of tomorrow is likely to look very different to our current arrangements. It is therefore important that we have strategies in place to make sure that our organisation develops and that this transformation is made smoothly.

Achievements 2015-2016

- Delivered £153.2 million of financial savings since the beginning of austerity.
- A new website which is quicker and easier to use was launched last year which is also better to use with tablets and mobile phones.
- Procurement of new customer system to more effectively track and manage communications with and improve the customer experience.
- Improved our customer complaints process to respond to complaints more quickly and efficiently.
- More self-serve facilities have been introduced which allow people to access services through our website on a 24/7 basis.
- Managed a successful Parliamentary election in May 2015.
- Received £1.4 million from the Government's Transformation Challenge Award fund to help achieve the Durham Ask ambition. This is an exciting opportunity we are offering to local communities to take over the management and delivery of council services and facilities by transferring assets to local community control.

- Secured £90,000 of 'Delivering Differently' funding to work with town and parish councils on clean and green services.
- Nearly 11,000 residents and businesses have registered to access and manage their council tax, business rates or housing benefits payment accounts online.
- Community Buildings Strategy, one of the biggest and most ambitious asset transfer programmes in the UK:
 - 97 centres have been maintained for community use through this initiative
 - shortlisted for two 2016 LGC Awards
 - Local management groups have already accessed £639,000 external funding not available to the council and have bid for a further £5.2 million



Priority Theme **Altogether Better Council**

Issues to address

- The county has a very diverse mix of types of community ranging from some of the most sparsely populated rural areas in the country through to the larger towns and Durham city, each area with its own needs and aspirations (Figure BC1).
- The council will need to make a further £104 million savings between 2016/17 and 2019/20 bringing total savings required since the beginning of austerity to almost £258 million.
- To achieve this savings target will require further downsizing of our workforce. We also have an ageing profile of employees (Figure BC2).
- Around 95,000 households are affected by changes to the benefits system introduced by the Welfare Reform Act.
- 46% of the county population live in areas with high levels of income deprivation. 22.5% of children live in low income families¹ in County Durham and it is estimated that around 11.5% of households in the county are in fuel poverty².
- The council decided in principle to free up regeneration opportunities at Aykley Heads and facilitate job creation. Work is underway to explore the potential opportunities, including how we can work differently in a more modern workplace.

Figure BC1.

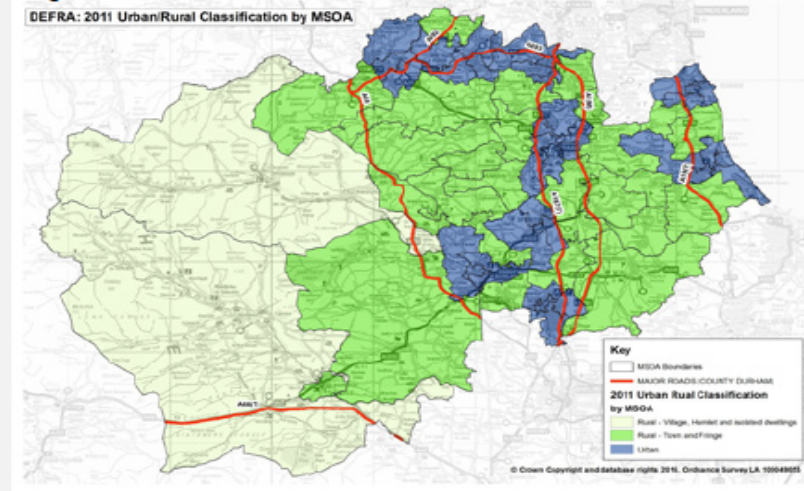
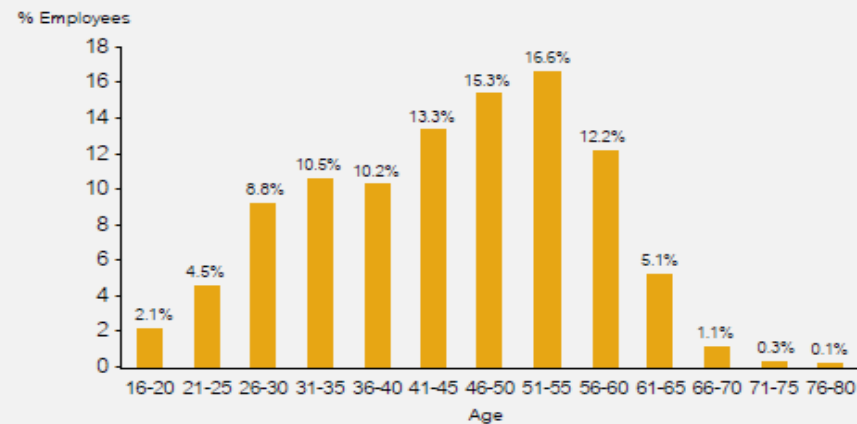


Figure BC2.

Durham County Council Employees - Age profile at 31 March 2015



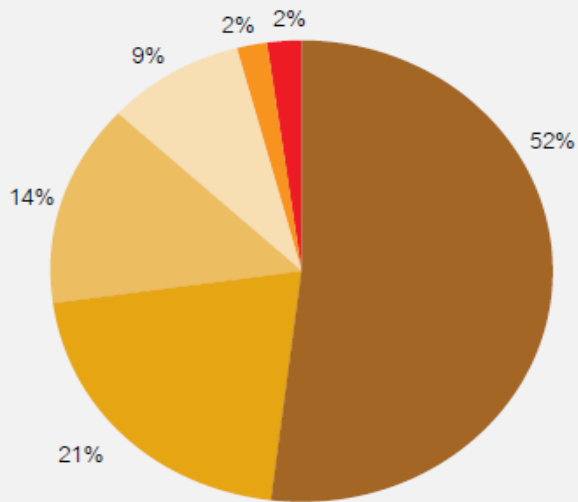
¹ Proportion of children living in families wither in receipt of out-of-work benefits or in receipt of tax credits with a reported income of less than 60 per cent of the national median income

² Households that require fuel costs that are above average (national median level) and were they to spend that amount, would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

Key Facts and Figures

Figure BC2.

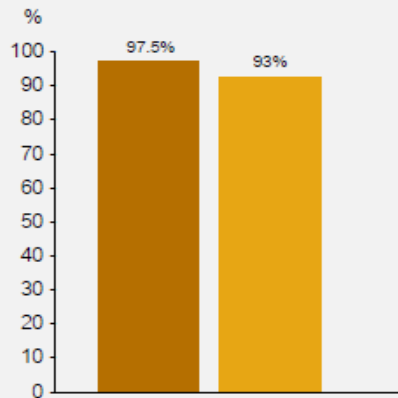
Financing of 2015/16 gross expenditure budget of £862 million



	£million	
Service Income	450	52%
Council tax	185.8	21%
Business Rate Retention	120.1	14%
Revenue Support Grant	77.1	9%
Other Grants	15.7	2%
Use of One Off Funds	13.9	2%

Figure BC3.

Customer Services response times 2014 -2015



Telephone calls answered within 3 minutes	97.5%
Customers seen within 15 minutes at a Customer Access Point	93%



- 219,756**
face to face customer contacts at our Customer Access Points 2014/15
- 989,422**
telephone customer contact 2014-2015*
- 16,886**
web forms submitted for any service area 2014-2015
- 49,827**
e-mails from customers 2014-2015
- 240,317**
domestic chargeable properties in County Durham with a gross Council Tax liability of £280 million and 85% of these are in Bands A to C
- 101**
employers and
- 18,011**
members contributed to the council's pension fund at the end of 2014/15

* for agreed telephone lines

Moving Forward - Key Areas of Focus for 2016-2019



Moving Forward - Key Areas of Focus for 2016-2019

Objective 1 Putting the customer first

A range of access routes

We will:

- Introduce more self-service facilities
- Introduce more online options for customers.
- Make our website easier to use and develop it further.
- Use social media more widely.

Responsive and customer focused services

We will:

- Be clear on how you can expect services to be delivered and by when.
- Take your views into account when you give us feedback on your experience.
- Gather information on your needs to improve the way we deliver services
- Ensure our communications are as clear as they can be; ensuring forms and letters are easy to read.

People are treated fairly and differences respected

We will:

- Treat people fairly by making sure any changes to council policies and the way we do things are properly assessed.
- Publish how we use the information we gather about equality to help us make decisions, provide services and employ people.
- Work with partners to support the UK's response to the Syrian refugee crisis
- Run a referendum on whether or not to remain a member of the European Union.

Objective 2 Working with our communities

Communities and stakeholders are engaged and communicated with

We will:

- Commemorate World War 1 by placing paving stones for Victoria Cross winners in County Durham.
- Support organisations interesting in running local facilities and services through the Durham ASK programme.

Effective partnership working

We will:

- Refresh our Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Continue to maintain our 14 Area Action partnerships to involve local communities in influencing priorities and decision making.
- Review our County Durham Partnership arrangements to improve outcomes for our communities.
- Provide welfare rights advice as part of the County Durham partnership.

Responding to the effects of poverty and welfare reform

We will:

- Work to respond to the effects of poverty in county durham, including child poverty.
- Review the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which helps you pay council tax if you're on a low income.
- Tackle challenges that the welfare reform changes may give our communities through AAPs by working with partners to look at supporting people into employment.

Objective 3 Effective use of resources

A balanced four year financial plan that reflects council priorities

We will:

- Produce a four year financial plan to include council priorities, government funding reductions and budget pressures and the savings we are require to make.
- Carry out robust assurance and monitoring on our detailed savings plans.

Making the best use of our assets and managing information

We will:

- Continue with our office accommodation programme and make sure it is supported by more modern ways of working such as mobile working.
- Make sure we have high standards of information governance through data protection and transparency to keep your data safe and ensure public access to information.
- Modernise our archives and record office services to move towards a digital service.

Efficient and effective services

We will:

- Improve monitoring of performance arrangements to ensure clear progress reporting and high quality information
- Review our Council Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Continue to undertake programme and project management of the MTFP and key corporate projects.

Objective 4 Support our people through change

Employee and member wellbeing

We will:

- Undertake a programme of employee engagement.
- Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees through our policies, practices and systems.
- Review the Local Government Pension Fund in line with national guidance.

A strategic approach to organisational development

We will:

- Make sure our organisational development strategy supports our office accommodation plans and modern ways of working, taking advantage of emerging technology.
- Identify critical roles and occupational groups and put plans in place to make sure that we have more opportunity to recruit in these areas.
- Deliver training to the new Councillors following the 2017 elections.