

# **Information/Discussion Paper**

## **Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 18th October 2004**

### **Business planning and work programme**

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

#### **1. Why has this come to scrutiny?**

- 1.1 The Council approved its corporate business plan last November following which the council's work plan was approved in December. The council needs to review the business plan and work programme to identify whether there are new issues, which need to be included for the coming year. The updated action plan will be considered by Council at its meeting in December in order to inform the budget debate, while the work programme will be considered in February once the budget had been set. It is important that as many members as possible are involved in the review process and the overview and scrutiny committees have a key role in identifying issues and reviewing their own workplan. Comments from the CPA inspectors indicated that members of overview and scrutiny committees felt that they wanted more involvement in setting the forward plan and this should give members an opportunity to be more involved. An officer will facilitate this item on the agenda so that members have an opportunity to participate in a way that is not normally associated with the formality of committees.

#### **2. Summary of the Issue**

- 2.1 The CPA review considered the council's corporate business plan to be a clear document, which identified the council's priorities for the coming years. Like any plan it needs to be monitored and updated and the review of the document also gives the council an opportunity to revisit the council work programme. A series of events have been held to help with the review process and the involvement of the overview and scrutiny committees form part of this. Employees have been involved through sessions at the town hall and depot; the cabinet, group leaders and chairs of O&S committees were invited to meet informally with the Board of Directors to discuss issues and the senior management team as part of the service planning process have had an opportunity to identify issues for consideration.

#### **3. Summary of evidence/information**

- 3.1 From the sessions held so far it is clear that affordable housing, crime and the environment are still considered to be priorities for this council. Indeed given that the business plan was approved only 12 months ago it is unlikely that these areas would change. At appendix A is a review of progress against the current corporate business plan actions.

- 3.2 The council has indicated in its values that it aspires to be excellent and there is a clear message from everyone that this is an ambition that the council should continue to pursue. The CPA improvement plan will identify a number of issues that will need to be addressed so that the council can meet this ambition.
- 3.3 Members of the public, councillors and employees have indicated that they believe that effective service delivery is paramount. The council faces budget pressures over the next few years, which will require the council to think about providing services in different ways if it is to match this expectation with the available budget and other resources.
- 3.4 A report went to cabinet on 28 September setting out the budget strategy and process and indicated the role that overview and scrutiny committees could play by identifying service reviews in their work programmes.
- 3.5 The overall Council work programme has progressed well. Progress against the particular items relating to this Committee, including the additional topics added during the course of the year, is summarised in Appendix B.
- 3.6 In reviewing the business plan and work programme members need to remember that the major part of the council's activities are undertaken to continue with "business as usual", to meet government requirements and guidance or to meet new legislation.

#### 4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Considering the current business plan actions, the committee may want to identify any specific actions, which they feel are missing from the current corporate business plan or those actions which should be given a relatively lower priority.
- 4.2 In light of the business plan and budget situation the committee will want to consider its own work programme and identify any changes or areas for review for the coming 12 months in order to achieve a balanced work programme for the committee allowing for flexibility. Members will need to think about the capacity they have as a committee to undertake the work and indeed the capacity of the organisation to respond to the work programme.
- 4.3 Identify any ideas on how the format of the current business plan document could be improved to assist members with their overview and scrutiny role.

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#### Background Papers

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<b>Scrutiny Function</b>	All O&S committees