

Information/Discussion Paper

Economy and Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 25th January 2010

Draft Corporate Strategy

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 Cabinet on 8th December 2009 approved a draft corporate strategy that would go out to consultation until Tuesday 26th January 2010. To ensure that the formal views of elected members are captured in the consultation process, the draft strategy is being considered by the three overview and scrutiny committees.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council's current business plan was agreed in March 2007 and set out our three year aims and their supporting ambitions. The aims were informed by Cheltenham's Sustainable Community Strategy, which was itself informed by community consultation and the Gloucestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA).
- 2.2 Since then the council has agreed three annual business plans with milestones, targets and risks and a separate Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which is for a 5 year period and updated annually.
- 2.3 The new strategy will run from April 2010 and elected members and officers have signed up to proposal to produce a joint Corporate Strategy / Medium Term Financial Strategy. This new over-arching long term strategy will provide a framework for the annual budget and action plan and will be reviewed and updated annually.
- 2.4 Given that the new strategy proposes a radical overhaul of how we align our business activities, we are seeking the views of elected members, stakeholders, community groups on the proposed objectives and outcomes.

3. How we have prepared the draft strategy

- 3.1 Our current business plan which runs to March 2010 was agreed back in March 2007 and set out our current framework of 10 aims and 33 supporting ambitions.
- 3.2 Given the need to prepare a new strategy, elected members, officers, key partners, community groups and local businesses have been involved in shaping how the new draft strategy should look and the key issues we need to focus on.

- 3.3** We took advice from the Improvement and Development Agency for local government who told us that we are trying to do too much and that we should use the opportunity of the new corporate strategy to reassure ourselves that we have the financial and staffing capacity to deliver our ambitions.
- 3.4** We have taken into account the latest information about Cheltenham to help us estimate the extent of need in our community so that our services can be planned accordingly.
- 3.5** We have also used information from the place survey which is now the method used to collect information on people's attitudes and perceptions about their local area, and the performance of local public services.
- 3.6** We have also kept an eye on how well we have performed in previous years by reviewing the performance of our services. Overall, we know that we perform well and that we deliver value for money and manage our performance well. But we also know that increasing pressures on our resources and the impact of the recession means that we have been unable to deliver improvements consistently across all of our service areas.
- 3.7** Our conclusions from the information sources described above was that we should we move to fewer high-level objectives to help us be clearer about our priorities and that these objectives must reflect the reality of community needs and provide a framework for community outcomes.

4. Ongoing engagement with elected members

- 4.1** Members will be aware that two elected member's seminar have been held to date; one on 8th July 2009 and the second one on 2 November 2009. Some of the issues emerging from the seminars include the following:
- Clarity on role and purpose of CBC; should we just focus on the efficient delivery of our core services, or should we also be focusing on our wider "community leadership" role – seeking to influence how other bodies deliver services for our residents?
 - The objectives and outcomes framework will need revising in response to member suggestions and to make it sufficiently robust to provide a longer-term framework for the council yet still flexible enough for politicians to make investment decisions according to their manifestos.
 - Within the framework we need to define what is core CBC activity and what we will seek to influence through working with others.
 - We need to set out how performance reporting will work with the new corporate strategy.
- 4.2** In addition, members of this committee discussed the corporate strategy process at its meeting on 30th November 2009. Members identified the following issues:
- How does the draft strategy address potential areas of conflict eg between protecting the environment and strengthening the economy?
 - How will the cross-cutting objectives be scrutinised?
 - How will the draft strategy deal with outcomes that are beyond the control of the council?

5. Proposed objectives

- 5.1 The draft strategy is proposing that the council adopts three community objectives:
- Enhancing and protecting our environment;
 - Strengthening our economy; and
 - Strengthening our communities.
- 5.2 These are supported by two cross-cutting objectives of:
- Enhancing the provision of arts and culture; and
 - Ensuring we provide value for money services that effectively meet the needs of our customers.

6. Proposed outcomes

- 6.1 The outcomes are critical in that they describe the improvements we will make to improve the well-being of whole population of Cheltenham. By putting outcomes centre-stage in the strategy, we are making a commitment that our customers and communities will judge us by how well we are improving their quality of life rather than measuring how many times we do things or how quickly we do them.
- 6.2 Some of these outcomes we will be able to deliver by ourselves, but for many other outcomes we will have to work in partnership with other organisations.
- 6.3 From the consultation activities and the needs analysis we are proposing a set of outcomes the council should be focusing on:

Objectives	Outcomes
Enhancing and protecting our environment	Cheltenham has a clean and well-maintained environment
	Cheltenham's natural and built environment is enhanced and protected
	Carbon emissions are reduced and Cheltenham is able to adapt to the impacts of climate change
	Cheltenham has improved access and travel options
Strengthening our economy	Cheltenham is able to recover quickly and strongly from the recession
	We attract more visitors and investors to Cheltenham
	Unemployed people are able to access employment and training
Strengthening our communities	Communities feel safe and are safe
	People have access to decent and affordable housing
	People are able to lead healthy lifestyles
	Our residents enjoy a strong sense of community
Enhancing the provision of arts and culture	Arts and culture are used as a means to strengthen communities, strengthen the economy and enhance and protect our environment
Ensuring we provide value for money services that effectively meet the needs of our customers	The council delivers cashable savings, as well as improved customer satisfaction overall and better performance through the effective commissioning of services

6.4 For the purposes of this meeting, I have attached the objectives and outcomes that are relevant to this committee:

Strengthening our economy	Cheltenham is able to recover quickly and strongly from the recession
	We attract more visitors and investors to Cheltenham
	Unemployed people are able to access employment and training
Enhancing the provision of arts and culture	Arts and culture are used as a means to strengthen communities, strengthen the economy and enhance and protect our environment
Ensuring we provide value for money services that effectively meet the needs of our customers	The council delivers cashable savings, as well as improved customer satisfaction overall and better performance through the effective commissioning of services

7. Next Steps

7.1 A summary of views from the consultation and any changes needed will be presented to the council's cabinet on Tuesday 9th February 2010. If the cabinet are happy with the updated strategy it will go to a meeting of the Full Council on Friday 12th February for approval.

Background Papers	Draft 2010-2015 Corporate Strategy, Report to Cabinet on 8 th December 2009
Contact Officer	Richard Gibson, Policy and Partnerships Manager, 01242 235 354, richard.gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Leader of the Council
Scrutiny Function	All
Attachments	Appendix A – excerpt from draft Corporate Strategy