
REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Cabinet met on 10 March 2009. Attendances:-

Councillor Jones (Chairman)
Councillors Bentley, Elkin, Glazier, Kirby, Lock, Reid, Mrs Stroude and
B Tidy.

1 Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

1.1 The Cabinet has considered the Audit Commission's draft Annual Audit and Inspection Letter (previously circulated to all members).

1.2 The letter provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the findings and conclusions from the financial audit of the Council, the various inspections that took place last year and from a wider analysis of the Council's performance and its improvement in 2008/09, as measured through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The letter states that the Council is rated as a four star authority under the 2008 CPA framework. The letter identifies a range of improvements across all services and sets out the Direction of Travel report which concluded that the Council is improving well.

1.3 The letter highlighted that outcomes for people are getting better in priority areas. There has been significant progress in adult social care services, improved economic prosperity in the most deprived areas and Ofsted has concluded that the Council is delivering a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people with outstanding capacity to improve. Educational attainment is improving well but the most recent results for key stage 4 remain below the national average. Significant progress has been made in agreeing a strategic approach to managing waste and that the Council recognises that more needs to be done to increase recycling. The condition of the county's roads has improved slightly but the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads remains high. Partnership working is strong and improvement plans are implemented well. All services are now rated at 3/4 or above under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment giving the Council an overall "four star" rating. The Council received a 4 out of 4 score for both the Use of Resources and the Environment block.

1.4 The Cabinet has welcomed the four star rating but acknowledged that there are areas where the Council can improve in all service areas and these will be addressed through the Council Business Plan targets. The key areas for action highlighted in the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter are:

- build on waste management arrangements and further develop partnership working to ensure buy in to a joint approach to maximise efficiency and increase recycling;
- remain focussed on the partnership road safety agenda;
- build on the strengthened corporate approach to the equalities and diversity agenda to embed processes, harness good practice and further improve outcomes;
- focus on improving educational attainment at key stage 4; and
- build on steps being taken to further integrate value for money considerations into the Council's Reconciling Policy and Resources process.

1.5 The Cabinet has welcomed and noted the Audit and Inspection letter and there are no matters which the Cabinet wishes to draw to the Council's attention.

2 Council Plan 2008 - 09 Monitoring

2.1 The Cabinet monitors performance against targets in the Council Plan. As previously agreed, performance measures are scored in the quarter after which delivery is due. Therefore, the performance measures considered by the Cabinet in March are those that were planned to be completed by the end of December 2008. The Cabinet has also considered detailed commentaries on the Local Area Agreement reward targets for which the County Council is the Lead partner (Appendix 2 of the report to the Cabinet)

Council Plan Achievements

Portfolio for Strategic Management and Economic Development

2.2 In Quarter 3, 15,126 online forms, documents and feedback were submitted or downloaded. This makes a total of 57,439 for the first three quarters, so the full year target of 57,000 has been achieved by Quarter 3. A detailed action plan to respond to the recession has been agreed.

Portfolio for Corporate Resources

2.3 The SAP system has been reconfigured in compliance with the new VAT rules on change of rate to 15%, which came into effect on 1 December 2008. All Sussex councils, Sussex Police and East Sussex Fire Authority have signed-up to the next stage of the SIP Shared Services for Procurement Project. The Corporate Asset Management Plan/Capital Strategy 2008-13 has been completed and terms for surrender and renewal of the lease of the Pebsham waste site have been agreed.

Portfolio for Community Services

2.4 The new Intranet was launched during Quarter 3, helping councillors and staff to be more productive by providing quick and easy access to up to date information, and featuring an improved search facility. A cumulative total of 5,101 new volunteers have been tracked to date. This represents 98% of the target (5190) for 2008/09. Of the 5,101 new volunteers, 800 are defined as being 'hard to reach'. This exceeds the target for the year of 460. There have been 50 new 'Buy with Confidence' members since 1 April 2008, with a further 37 applications in progress. The target for 2008/09 is 60 additional members. The result of this year's Archives assessment for East Sussex showed the Council as having achieved a three star rating overall. Our overall score increased by 2.5% and our direction of travel is "likely to improve further".

Portfolio for Adult Social Care

2.5 The total number of Direct Payment recipients (including carers) is 2459 and exceeds significantly the 2008/09 target of 2033. There are now 767 carers registered on the carers emergency respite service scheme (CRESS). Service user involvement has continued to contribute to successful outcomes with respect to staff recruitment and training, service reviews and action planning in Directly Provided Learning Disability Services, and strategic service development through the Learning Disability Partnership Board. The average weekly number of acute delayed transfers of care has improved from 38 at Quarter 3 of 2007/08, to 33 at Quarter 3 of 2008/09. Acute delays due to Social Services reasons have improved from an average of 4 per week at quarter 3 of 2007/08 to an average of 2 per week at quarter 3 of 2008/09.

Portfolio for Children's Services

2.6 During quarter three the Play Development Service allocated 19 new referrals, making a total of 44 across the first three quarters of the year. A total of 65 children with complex social, emotional, behavioural difficulties are currently receiving this service, exceeding the target of 50. 76% of primary schools are now providing access to the full core offer of extended services; this is a significant increase on the 49% schools in 2007/8. Additionally 100% of secondary schools continue to offer these services. 100% of child protection cases are taking place on time. During January to October 2008 there were 1824.5 days lost through fixed term exclusion from the secondary schools in the Hastings & St Leonards Excellence Cluster. This represents a 19.9% reduction on the corresponding period in 2007, when 2276.5 days were lost.

Portfolio for Transport and Environment

2.7 The prolonged cold period in December was the coldest across the County since 2001. We achieved our target to grit at least 40% of our strategic network which necessitated 29 full turnouts (a full call out to all gritting services) to the end of December. This compares with 30 full turnouts for the whole of the 2007/08 season. Highways maintenance continues to maintain an outturn of 100% for the percentage of reported incidents of dangerous damage to roads and footways made safe within 24 hours and 99% of our highway and utility works were undertaken within the timescales set, minimising disruption to our roads. The Rethink Rubbish Community Challenge project was one of five short listed projects in the Local Government Chronicle Community Involvement category.

Performance Overview

2.8 Of the 236 indicators to be achieved this year 184 (78%) have been scored green (on track to be achieved). Appendix 1 to this report (which has been circulated separately to all members) is the exception report containing the detailed commentary for those targets scored amber and red. There are 31 (13%) indicators scored amber of which one is a request for amendment. The target of for the proportion of adults and older people receiving direct payments was set in error at 272.2, mistakenly reflecting the new, more inclusive NI 130 definition which includes direct payments to carers. It is therefore recommended that the target (excluding carers) be amended to 216. Six of the indicators scored amber highlight that local authorities are now unlikely to receive validated data for Key Stage 3 data as a result of the announcement of the end of national testing for 14 year olds.

2.9 The Cabinet **recommends** the County Council to

☆ approve the recommendation made regarding the target as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

3 Council Business Plan 2009/10

3.1 The Council is now free from the legal requirement to produce a Best Value Performance Plan with its prescribed content and restrictive timetable. As agreed in 2008 the approach adopted has been to integrate the Council Plan and Financial Budget Summary into a single document.

3.2 The Council Business Plan is the Council's main business planning document and is produced as part of the Reconciling Policy and Resources process.

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The draft Plan builds on the portfolio plans agreed by the Cabinet in January and sets the medium term targets required to achieve the Council's Policy Steers and Portfolio Plans. A copy of the Plan has previously been circulated to all members. The Business Plan will continue to evolve until the end of March and the Cabinet has authorised the Chief Executive to make any final changes to the document pre and post publication.

3.3 Later this year the East Sussex County Council Annual Review will be published as a complementary document to the Business Plan. The Annual Review will summarise the Council's achievements, performance and financial outturns for 2008/09.

3.4 The Cabinet **recommends** the County Council to -

✧ approve the draft Council Business Plan 2009-10

PETER JONES
Chairman

10 March 2009