

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting13th March 2008

1. Title of Item/Report

Council Plan & Service Improvement Plans 2008-2011

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet were reminded that the Council Plan set out how the Council would contribute to community objectives. The plan was based on the objectives and outcomes already set in the Sustainable Community Strategy, but provided focus on the key objectives the Council needed to achieve authority wide, and which needed to be monitored by Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet.

The principle underlying the development of the Council Plan was that it should be a business plan for the organisation, focusing on key corporate priorities for change, rather than summarising all activities that the Council undertook. This approach was vital to ensure a clear focus on improvement, but meant that some significant service areas did not feature in the key objectives and outcomes. The focus of the plan shifted each year as the Council's key improvement priorities altered over time; it was a three year rolling plan which was updated on an annual basis.

It was explained that Service Improvement Plans supported the Council Plan by setting out how key priorities and objectives would be delivered, and their resource implications. The plans also included information about each service area and its achievements.

The 2008-2011 Council Plan contained two main parts. The first was a narrative explaining about the Borough, the Council, its achievements and future plans. This was supported by the second main part – an action plan which set out how the objectives and priorities of the Council would be delivered.

The objectives within the Council Plan had been updated following the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy and consultation with local people and Councillors. The plan had been developed in partnership with:

- Councillors – through seminars on the budget and Council Plan and

through “drop in” sessions for Members to discuss the plan with officers

- Corporate Management Team, Heads of Service and Policy Officers

through joint working to develop the plan

It was noted that as an ‘Excellent’ Council Stockton had the freedom to use its Council Plan to meet the statutory requirement to prepare a (Best Value) Performance Plan. The Council Plan therefore formed the Councils Performance Plan for 2008/9. It would be supplemented by an annex of best value performance indicator information and targets to be published at the end of June, once the data was available.

In line with guidance from DCLG on performance plans, full copies of the plan were provided to members, managers and key partners and the Government. A summary version of the Council Plan would also be prepared for all staff. The Council would also ensure that Council Plan was available in public places and that copies could be provided to the public when requested: full and summary versions would also be available over the Internet.

It was explained that this was the last year that Government would require a performance plan of this type (though the Council may continue to produce such a plan for its own use). The Local Government White Paper, “Strong and prosperous communities” and the ensuing Act introduced a number of changes to the national performance framework.

Members were advised that 2008/09 would be a transitional year for Stockton as implementation of the new performance framework began. The new framework had the Local Area Agreement at its heart. The agreement, which was currently being negotiated, would consist of up to 35 measures which would form a performance contract between Stockton and the Government. The measures had to be chosen from a “menu” of 198 measures known as the National Indicator Set or NIS. The NIS was still in development and Local Area Agreements were unlikely to be signed off before June 2008.

It was advised that at this stage, the measures that were likely to be included in the Local Area Agreement also needed to be included in the Council Plan to provide officers and members with a joined up local performance framework. The Council were able to indicate in the “success measures and outcomes” section of the action plans where there was likely to be a link to the Local Area Agreement and other measures in the NIS. In most cases THE Council were not able to provide targets as data was still being collected against emerging definitions and guidance and targets had yet to be negotiated with Government. The draft Local Area Agreement would be brought to

Cabinet in May/June before submission to government and after that the Council Plan would need to be updated.

Cabinet were reminded that the service planning framework was reviewed in 2005 and a revised framework put into place to focus on changes and improvements and to bring service and resource (finance, human resources, ICT, procurement) planning closer together. SIPs included the key changes, improvements and priorities which would require significant attention from heads of service to deliver. Core business in each service was covered in business unit plans which sat beneath the SIPs.

It was noted that the service improvement plans supported the Council Plan and Community Strategy. Plans had been developed to cover all service areas. In some areas it had been sensible to develop combined SIPs covering more than one head of service's remit.

Members of Cabinet were provided with copies of abridged versions of the draft SIPs, focusing on key elements of the action plans. Full draft SIPs had been placed on the Intranet to enable Members to consider them in detail. Once agreed, plans would be published on cd-rom and on the intranet with a set of hard copy plans lodged in the members' library.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Management Team be authorised to continue to refine the Council Plan and Service Improvement Plans 2008-2011 prior to Special Council on March 26th.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the draft Council Plan and Service Improvement Plans for 2007 – 2010 be approved.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The Council Plan and Service Improvement Plans set out how the Council will improve its services and contribute to community objectives. The plans are based on the objectives and outcomes already set in the Sustainable Community Strategy, but provides focus on the key objectives we need to achieve authority wide, and which need to be monitored by Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet. The Council Plan forms the (Best Value) Performance Plan for the Council, which the Council has a duty to prepare on an annual basis under the Local Government Act 1999.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not Applicable

Proper Officer
17 March 2008