

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*)

Law and Democracy

2008/09 – 2010/11

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: Identify further improvements to the scrutiny function following the review of the implementation of the Council's new scrutiny co-ordination arrangements		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Scrutiny Improvement Plan 	March 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved policy review and development arrangements Increased communication between service deliverers and non-executive councillors Improved community representation by councillors Improved awareness and knowledge of public services Improved response to community issues

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: To review the Council’s scrutiny arrangements taking into account legislative changes		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce arrangements with Patient Forums and Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) (when constituted) to determine health scrutiny review topics • Strengthen links with external partners and agree arrangements to input into selection of scrutiny topics • Develop process to deal with Community Calls for Action (CCfA) • Deliver member training on new scrutiny requirements and CCfA • Develop Scrutiny process to accommodate review of LAA outcomes • Explore arrangements necessary to accommodate scrutiny of MAA 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet requirements of legislation (Local Government White Paper, Health Act, Police and Justice Act) • Increased external scrutiny of key public bodies • Improved public accountability of key public bodies • Establish process for checking CCfA

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: Examine ways to enhance public and stakeholder involvement in Scrutiny.		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine how scrutiny can reach / involve the public and stakeholders in the:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping and planning of scrutiny reviews • Conduct of the review – including vulnerable groups and experts • Communication and feedback 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened involvement equals better services • Strengthen scrutiny equals better results under CAA • Improved awareness of the Councils Scrutiny activity

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: Implement the Electoral Services Performance standards framework – integrity		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is a secure process for registration and voting 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electors can expect:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to know information about them is accurate and to be clear how it is used • their vote is confidential and they can make it free from pressure • to know their vote is counted • Candidates and parties can expect:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • processes which are transparent and checked • accurate results

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: Implement the Electoral Services Performance standards framework – user focus		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is an easy and accessible process for candidates and electors 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electors can expect:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a voting process that is easy to understand • to have a choice of ways to vote • to be able to vote in a way that suits their lifestyle and needs • information and advice which is accurate, prompt and easy to understand • Candidates and parties can expect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to know how to stand for election • consistency of approach and realistic timescales • clarity and impartiality in the process

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: Implement the Electoral Services Performance standards framework – professionalism		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a clear and consistent approach to delivery 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electors can expect:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to know if they are eligible to register and vote • to know how and when to register and what to do if they move • to know where to get information and advice • to know who and what they are voting for • young people to be educated about registering and voting • Candidates and parties can expect:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • those involved in administration of the process to be fully conversant with electoral law • consistent application of electoral law and processes • clear and timely information, advice and guidance • an appropriate balance between speed and quality in the process

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: Implement the Electoral Services Performance standards framework – value for money		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure efficient and effective service delivery	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Electors can expect:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">• effective use of public money• Candidates and parties can expect:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">• electoral administrators to have the right skills• timely quality checks to be carried out

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: Seek to promote opportunities for public involvement within the various democratic processes through the delivery of an inclusive community engagement strategy		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Services in delivering this strategy will promote/ensure- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral registration and voter turnout. • Development of a voting habit through working with young people and hard to reach groups. • Little voters become big voters and active citizenship • The community have access to a range of information that enables them to engage with the councils decision making processes • The use of E-Genda facilitating democracy for all • Opportunities for participation in the scrutiny process by the local community and service users • The role of the Civic Mayor encouraging civil renewal through active citizen engagement • The use of e-Democracy to inform consult and engage with the community using a variety of channels. 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of the democratic process thereby encouraging participation in decision making. • Enhanced opportunities for all sections of the community to engage in the local decision making process. • Choice in community engagement activities. • Activities dovetailed with others to avoid duplication and ensure consistency and quality. • Elected Members, Officers and Partners fully supported so they are able to fulfil their responsibilities. • learning from ours and others experience of engaging communities in the decision making process evaluated

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: To improve the use of e-Democracy to support community leadership and citizen participation in the democratic processes		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximisation of functionality of E-Genda system to:- -improve public awareness & participation; -improve operational efficiency for officers engaging with system; • On-going development of Casework Management System to assist members to improve their management of constituency casework; • Increased use of both public and internal E-Genda alert facility demonstrating informed elected membership & community; • Participate in review of Councillors Information Needs, in partnership with NE Connects, with a view to identifying future needs, including new e-tools/techniques; • Increased use of Cllrs personal web pages/blogs providing enhanced information to constituents; • Adoption of E-Consultation techniques to obtain feedback from public regarding democratic activities (eg scrutiny review consultation) 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved information provided to general public • Greater awareness and evidence of public knowledge of democratic information/opportunities for citizen participation; • Increased use of e-technology as communications tool; • Enhanced capability of elected members to engage with communities ;

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: To empower Members through capacity building		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Member induction to reduce intensity and include community leadership and dealing with issues within the ward. • Train Members to enable them to participate in the induction process and in training in general. • Implement quarterly evaluation reports to MAP to focus and inform decisions regarding the next training cycle. • Use the evaluation of the Development activities to inform future activity • Following annual service planning and budget setting implement an all member consultation exercise through MAP to highlight links between Member Development and the Council Plan and allowing MAP to influence the Member development budget • Continue to develop our approach to dissemination of learning. 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced member capacity • Greater ownership of trading and development by members for members • Increased awareness of the value added by Member development • Stronger links between the Council Plan and Member Development priorities • Increased sharing of learning.

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: Improve Corporate and Ethical Governance		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<p>Improve standards and probity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop the profile of the Standards Committee and its work • Continue to improve standards and ethics information on the intranet and website • Regularly review the registers of interests and gifts and hospitality of both Members and Officers, and regularly report new items to the Standards Committee. • Review and refresh the provision of training and information on standards and ethics (including the Code of Conduct) to Town and Parish Councils • Continue to monitor and review the constitution. • Introduce revisions and updates to the constitution on an ongoing basis. • Provide ongoing training and guidance for Members (including co-opted members) and Officers in connection with the new Member Code of Conduct. 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of the Standards Committee's role and work. • Improved awareness of areas of risk. • Improved understanding of practices, protocols and procedures. • Improved awareness and understanding of the ethical framework • Improved governance at a local parish level. • Improved council constitutional and governance Arrangements. • Improved awareness and understanding of the new Member Code of Conduct.
<p>Establish an enhanced Standards Committee role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement revised procedures:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ for dealing with referrals of misconduct allegations and for the review of the Standards Committee decisions. 	Mar 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised procedures in operation to enable the Standards Committee to deal effectively with misconduct allegations, reviews of the Committee's decisions and the grant and supervision of exemptions from political

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to enable the Standards Committee to deal with the grant and supervision of exemptions from political restriction. ● Provide ongoing training and guidance on the Standards Committee's new role for:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Standards Committee Members ○ Officers ○ non-Committee Members; and ○ Town/Parish Councils ● Monitor, review and as appropriate revise the procedures for dealing with referrals of misconduct allegations; the review of Standards Committee decisions and the grant and supervision of exemptions from political restriction. 		<p>restrictions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training and guidance provided for the Standards Committee, Officers, non-Committee Members and Town/Parish Councils regarding the revised/new procedures and the Committee's enhanced role. ● Increased awareness of the Committee's enhanced role amongst Officers, Members and Town/Parish Councils. ● Improved procedures for dealing with misconduct allegations; review of Standards Committee decisions and the grant and supervision of exemptions from political restriction.
<p>Introduce new Executive Arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Produce draft proposals regarding the form of executive proposed, including details of appropriate revisions/additions to the Constitution. ● Submit the new draft executive proposals for consideration and approval by Cabinet and full Council. ● Publicise and implement the approved proposals (eg on the intranet and internet). ● Provide guidance regarding the new, approved proposals for Officers, Members and Town/Parish Councils. 	<p>Mar 09</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New executive arrangements introduced in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requirements. ● Members, Officers and the public made aware of the new, approved executive arrangements.

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Theme: Stronger Communities		
Development Priority: Further develop the Local Land Charges Service		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Systems Co-ordinator post of all CAPS systems. • Complete data transfer for industrial land • Assess true cost of local land charges search and review fees and charges. • Benchmark fees and service with the five Tees Valley Authorities. • Work with Northumbrian Water Limited to retain and increase the use of the local authority service. • Prepare a joint marketing strategy with Northumbrian Water and the five Tees Valley Authorities. 	March 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved use and management of the CAPS system. • Reduce risk of claims for errors and omissions in replies to searches. • Full on-line LLC Register. • Improved access to services. • Increased use of local authority service. • Minimise loss of income as a result of legislative changes. • Facilitate joint working and sharing of best practice. • Reduce the number of enquiries and complaints about personal searches.

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Organisational Development – Performance and Resource Management, Focus on Residents and Customers		
Development Priority: Complete Customer First Programme Stage 2 for Legal Services		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete each of the five criteria:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Service Delivery ○ Service Responsiveness ○ Organisational Culture and Attitude ○ Accessible Services ○ Service Equality 	January 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver excellent customer service • Achieve Customer First accreditation

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Organisational Development - Performance and Resource Management		
Development Priority: Procure and Implement a case management system for Legal Services		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a scoping document and procure a system • Review current records management system and agree retention periods • Appoint a temporary Systems Administrator • Identify interfaces • Implement system and transfer data • Provide training for Officers 	March 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved efficiency and records management • Electronic index and search facilities • Improved access to precedents and information • Workflow processes • Improved performance management information

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Community Strategy : Children and Young People		
Development Priority: Building Schools for the Future		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement and appointment of Legal, Financial and Technical Advisors • Contribute to the development of the Strategy for Change following the outcome of consultation (Parts 1 and 2) including advice on procurement options, LEP, planning and title advice, consultation requirements. • Contribute to the development of the Outline Business Case. • Attendance at Project Board; Project Team; Task Group Lead; liaison with external advisors; advice in respect of land, planning, procurement, education and other related issues, consultation and decision-making requirements. 	March 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required advisors appointed • Cabinet/PfS/DCFS approval to Strategy for Change and progress to next stage of project • Necessary approvals in place eg planning • PfS/DCFS approval and progress to procurement stage of project

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Organisational Development – Performance and Resource Management		
Development Priority: Implementation of Single Status		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing advice in respect of Single Status strategy; proposals; outcome of consultation; arrangements for implementation. Advice in respect of the review and appeals process and impact on pay and grading structure including equality issues. Manage industrial relation issues, including responding to any grievances or other claims Respond to ongoing equal pay/ Single Status litigation and monitor decisions involving other LAs and consider impact on terms and conditions. Advice in respect of organisational reviews and similar issues impacting on pay and grading structure eg application of market forces policy 	<p>April 08</p> <p>March 09</p> <p>March 09</p> <p>March 09</p> <p>March 09</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New package of terms and conditions in place Equality checks confirm new pay and grading structure is fair and equitable Fair and equitable procedures Robust and equitable pay and grading structure Reduced risk of Employment Tribunal Claims Improved industrial relations Compliance with legislative requirements

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Children and Young People		
Development Priority: Implement Public Law Outline		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with CESC to identify resource pressures • Consultation with authorities in regional pilot • Develop procedures with CESC to implement PLO • Participate in training/project planning with local courts and court users • Identify training needs of Legal Child care team and undergo training • Consultation with CESC to identify their training needs and deliver training as required • Improve systems for monitoring completion of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apr 08 April 08 Apr 08 Apr 08 Apr 08 Oct 08 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of knowledge/experience gained by participating authorities to development of procedures • Procedures in place which meet requirements of Children Act 1989 Guidance Vol. 1 Court Orders to be issued January 2008 • Attendance at local training to be arranged by Family Justice Council and attend Family Court Business Committee regarding implementation of PLO • Completion of relevant training • Training developed and provided • Effective system in place and utilised • Increase in percentage of care proceedings issued under PLO completed under 40 weeks

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proceedings	May 08	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor and Review effective operation of revised procedures	Mar 09	

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Organisational Development – Performance and Resource Management		
Development Priority: Establish a dedicated Procurement and Contracts Legal Advice Service		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appoint a Principal Solicitor (Procurement)• Review standard contract documentation• Provide advice on commissioning of services	March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved governance of entering into contracts and limit Council liability.

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – 2008/2009

Theme: Corporate Health – Organisational Development – All Themes

Development Priority: Organisational Development

Outcomes and success criteria

All services are subjected to a number of Organisational Development objectives. These demonstrate how the service contributes to the achievement of the organisation's 'corporate health'.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

Sickness absence remains high across the Council compared to other local authorities and therefore it is imperative that sickness is targeted for reduction. Sickness absence is measured via ex-BVPI12 and all services need to contribute to the corporate target of a reduction of at least 0.5 days lost per FTE due to sickness.

ON CONTRACT SPEND

All services contribute to making savings via better procurement. Value for money contracts have been arranged for areas of corporate spend such as mobile phones and stationery. In order to maximise savings, services have been set a target of 97% for 'on contract' spend for these contracts.

PAYMENT OF INVOICES

The Council is measured for the time taken to pay invoices. Prompt payment is important to our supply base and helps improve their cash flow, which in turn keeps them profitable and helps economic development of the locality. Payment of invoices is measured by ex-BVPI8 and all services contribute to the corporate target of at least 85% of invoices paid within 30 days, by Q4.

APPRAISALS

Highly trained and motivated employees are necessary for the delivery of modern, effective and efficient services. Consequently the employee appraisal scheme has been revised and improved to ensure staff have the relevant skills and development opportunities. All services have been set a target of undertaking appraisals for at least 90% of employees.

GERSHON EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

The Council is subject to an annual 3% cashable efficiency target and many services contribute in one way or another. Services will set their targets via the forward looking Annual Efficiency Statement (April) which includes both the financial targets and any associated quality cross checks.

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VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEWS

Council services are subject to the requirement to demonstrate value for money in order to show the public that money is spent effectively. The process also feeds into the Use of Resources service block in CPA. Services subject to reviews are those with apparent high costs compared to other local authorities and the initial focus of reviews is to determine why this is the case.

PARTNERSHIP HEALTHCHECKS

New government policies and legislation frequently involve partnership working. The major policy initiatives for local government all depend for their success on effective joint working. There is a growing policy focus on area governance and service delivery at regional, sub-regional and the neighborhood level; this may involve local authorities and a variety of partners at each level. Consequently, well-developed and effective partnerships are becoming an essential feature for Stockton Borough Council's success.

DATA QUALITY

The Council is assessed against its corporate management arrangements for Data Quality. Good quality data is essential in supporting effective decision making at all levels across the organisation. All services are working towards improving data quality further by responding to the recommendations made following the Data Quality Audit 2007 and implementing the actions highlighted within the Data Quality Strategy.

CUSTOMER FIRST

Customer First Stage II launched in June 2007 aims to encourage services to strive for excellence in customer service. The programme requires every service to adopt the latest service standards and compare how it measures up against five key components. All services should aim reach the Stage II standard by March 2009.

DIVERSITY

Equality Impact Assessment

- Ensure all appropriate reports submitted to Cabinet have been subject to Equality Impact Assessment.
- Carry out Equality Impact Assessments of existing services. 50% in 2008/09 and 50% in 2009/10, including Impact Assessments of contracted services where appropriate.
- Include actions developed as a result of Equality Impact Assessment in SIP or BUP as appropriate.

Training

- Ensure all employees attend corporate diversity training in line with Council Plan targets.

Single Equality Scheme

- Achieve all relevant targets within the race, gender and disability equality action plans

Procurement

- Utilise new procurement procedures to ensure equality is embedded in procurement activities.