

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*)

Law & Democracy

2007/08 - 2009/10

Service Improvement Plan (*abridged*) – Law & Democracy 2007/08- 2009/10

Theme: Service Delivery (Enhance Local Democracy)		
Development Priority: D1 To 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
Development of Improvement Plan	June 2007	Improved policy review and development arrangements
Review of Scrutiny toolkit	June 2007	Increased communication between service deliverers and non-executive councillors
Publish Annual Report	June 2007	Improved community representation by councillors Improved awareness and knowledge of public services Improved response to community issues

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Theme: Service Delivery (Enhance Local Democracy)		
Development Priority: D2 To review the Council's scrutiny arrangements taking into account legislative changes		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Develop process to deal with Community Calls for Action (CCfA)	March 2008	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
Introduce arrangements with Patient Forums and Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) (when constituted) to determine health scrutiny review topics	December 2007	
Strengthen links with external partners and agree arrangements to input into selection of scrutiny topics	March 2008	
Deliver member training on new scrutiny requirements and CCfA	April 2008	

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Theme: Liveability		
Development Priority: D3 Implement the measures of the electoral Administration Act		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Self assess against the 'Quality Electoral Services' performance framework and produce improvement plan for implementation during 07/08	April 07	Electoral performance indicators nos EC PI 1-11 (see Law & Democracy Service Improvement Plan performance information pg 43 for details)
Improve access and engagement in the democratic process	April 07 – March 08	
Improve confidence in the electoral system	April 07 – March 08	
Maintain professional delivery of elections	May 07	
Implement Electoral Commission Performance Framework	April 07	

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Theme: Liveability		
Development Priority: D4 To review and revise the procedure for production of the Register of Electors		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Review and update the 2006 annual canvass project plan	June 07	Annual Register of Electors produced 1 December Annual canvass target response 95% All statutory rolling registration deadlines are met Electoral performance indicators nos EC PI 1-11 (see performance information pg 43 for details)
Produce and implement revised project plan for 2007 annual canvass	April 07 – March 08	
Review and update the 06/07 publicity strategy	July 07	
Implement the revised 07/08 publicity strategy	August 07	
Review community engagement target activity 06/07	June 07	
Develop community engagement strategy and implement target activity for 07/08	August 07	
Review working procedures for rolling registration	April 07	

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Theme: Liveability		
Development Priority: D5 To deliver an efficient and effective election service		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Implement election project plan for May 2007 Local Government Elections	May 07	Meet the requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 secondary legislation. Completion of the balloting process and the counting of the votes. Declaration of the results to create the Administration for Stockton Borough Council to enable decision making to be delivered.
Conduct a review of May 2007 Local Government Elections	July 07	
Implement a Press and Public Relations strategy	April 07	
Implement training programme for core and temporary election staff	April 07	
Review outcomes/results of training programme for core and temporary election staff	June 07	

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Theme: Liveability		
Development Priority: D6 Develop a Community Engagement Strategy		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Self assess against the framework 'Take Part and 'Together we can'	April 07	Raised awareness leading to increased registration and participation in the Democratic processes Increased registrations to E-genda Electoral performance Indicators EC PI 1, EC PI 2, EC PI 4, EC PI 5, EC PI 6, EC PI 8, EC PI 9, EC PI 10 (see Law & Democracy Service Improvement Plan performance information pg 43 for details)
Review and update 2006 community engagement plan taking into account all development opportunities that result from the self assessment of the service against the above frameworks and the framework for 'A quality Electoral Service' produced by the Electoral Commission.	April 07	
Produce and implement revised community engagement plan	May/June 07	
Implement Electoral Commission 'Do Politics' toolbox	April 07 – March 08	

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Theme: Liveability		
Development Priority: D7 To improve democratic engagement		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Review provision of information in public buildings	March 08	Increase awareness & raise profile within the community of democratic decision making and other processes – more informed & participative community
Review & raise awareness of all electronic democratic information	October 07	
Make general public more aware of their right to attend public meetings	October 07	
Increase awareness of the role of the Councillor in the community and provide the necessary support for Councillors in their community role	December 07	
Promotion of Topic Alerting function on Egenda	December 07	

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Theme: Liveability		
Development Priority: D8 To further develop and expand E-Genda		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Develop action plan to raise awareness amongst Members, officers and public	April 07	<p>Raised awareness of the need to engage with the system to carry out democratic procedures, resulting in more democratic information being easily available to more people and less resources spent on producing hard copy information</p> <p>Increased participation by officers; maximising the efficiency benefits of the system and increasing the extent and value of information provided</p> <p>Introduction of enhanced Forward Planning module/CMT work programme; increasing the transparency and efficiency of their preparation; allowing for a more effective Forward Plan process</p> <p>Introduction of modifications to system to improve its effectiveness – increased use</p>
Work with Renaissance Board administrators & Corporate Group Secretariat with regards to utilising the Egenda system	September/October 07	
Identifying and reporting on a continuing basis of the required systems modifications & disseminate improvements to Members, officer & public	April 07	
Assess the suitability of enhanced Forward Planning proposals & introduce within the authority	April 07	

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Theme: Liveability		
Development Priority: D9 To empower members through capacity building – casework manager, Member Learning and Development		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Deliver an induction programme to new Members & provide a comprehensive Members' handbook to all Members	June 07	Implementing action plan to achieve aims of the strategy & chartered status for elected Member Development – provides Members with support to equip them with the necessary skills, information and knowledge required to fulfil their roles effectively Deliver Member Casework Manager – improve/more efficient administration procedures for dealing with constituents casework
Coordinate the delivery of Member Personal Support Plans Assess & identify support needs	July 07	
Implement, develop & review Casework Database	October 07	
Continue to implement action plan to achieve chartered status	June 07	

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Theme: Operational Efficiency		
Development Priority: D10 Examine opportunities to drive efficiency savings		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Review distribution lists for all committees	June 07	Reduced costs - printing Improved outputs – maximise value added of Scrutiny outcomes Invest for results – maximise functionality of Egenda system
Consult all Members on electronic hard copy	September 07	
Continue to identify modifications to Egenda	March 08	
Implement discussions to roll out Egenda	September 07	
Implement recommendations from Review of Scrutiny Arrangements	May 07	

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Theme:		
Development Priority: D11 Provide opportunities for all to participate in public life		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Cabinet & delegated decisions to reflect Equality Impact Assessments	May 07	Decision making process considers EIA All Members completed Equality & Diversity Training Community engagement plan delivered, resulting in increased participation in public life
Constitutional changes made to accommodate Single Equality Plan	June 07	
Equality & Diversity training delivered to all Members	March 08	
Community engagement plan developed targeting hard to reach groups	May 07	
Consult relevant advisory groups in relation to Scrutiny reviews as appropriate & necessary	March 08	
Review & revise electoral practices as appropriate to encourage participation by all	March 08	

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<p>Theme: (Organisational and Operational Effectiveness – Service Delivery) Enhance Local Democracy.</p>		
<p>Development Priority: DLD1 Implement recommendations of Ethical Governance Audit and IDeA Light Touch Health Check.</p>		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Raise the profile of the standards committee and its work	April 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	<p>Ethical Governance Audit (“Audit”) and IDeA Light Touch Health Check (“Health Check”) produced:</p> <p>Improved understanding of ethical governance arrangements; Improved awareness of areas of greatest risk; Improved understanding of practices, protocols and procedures.</p> <p>Audit and Health Check report (“Report”) implemented:</p> <p>Review of implementation of report completed Improved practices, protocols and procedures; Improved constitutional framework; Improved governance arrangements; Improved awareness and understanding of the constitution; Improved awareness and understanding of the ethical framework</p>
The deputy leader to become the ethics champion on the executive.	June 2007	
Improve standards and ethics information on the intranet and website.	April 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	
Rationalise protocols and provide a route map/flow chart.	April 2008	
Build greater confidence in the planning committee.	April 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	
Review the number of councillors needed to effect a call in.	April 2008	
Clarify rules and guidance on gifts and hospitality for both councillors and officers.	July 2008	
Review the register of interests and gifts and hospitality of both councillors and officers, and regularly report new items to the standards committee.	July 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	
Ensure statutory obligations are met in relation to parish councils and parish councillors receive adequate training and information on standards and ethics.	April 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	
Share own good practice more widely within the local government sector.	April 2008	

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Implement any additional recommendations relating to the ethical governance audit surveys of officers, Members and key partners	July 2008	
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<p>Theme: (Organisational and Operational Effectiveness – Service Delivery) Enhance Local Democracy.</p>		
<p>Development Priority: DLD2 Improve corporate and ethical governance</p>		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Continue to review the constitution.	April 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	Improved Constitutional Framework. Improved constitutional and Governance Arrangements. Improved Awareness and understanding of the new model code of conduct.
Introduce revisions and updates to the constitution on an ongoing basis.	Throughout 2007/8, 2008/9 and 2009/10	
Establish appropriate decision-making and governance arrangements for the Council's partnerships.	July 2008	
Ensure that the new Model Code of Conduct for Members is adopted.	June 2007	
Provide training and guidance for Members (including co-opted members) in connection with the new Model Code of Conduct for Members.	June 2007 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2007/8, 2008/9 and 2009/10	

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Provide training and guidance for Officers in connection with the new Model Code of Conduct for Members.	June 2007 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2007/8, 2008/9 and 2009/10	
Provide training and guidance for Town/Parish Councils in connection with the new Model Code of Conduct for Members.	March 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	

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<p>Theme: (Organisational and Operational Effectiveness – Service Delivery) Enhance Local Democracy.</p>		
<p>Development Priority: DLD3 To establish an enhanced Standards Committee role</p>		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Produce revised procedures for dealing with referrals of misconduct allegations and for the review of the Standards Committee decisions.	July 2008	Revised procedures in place for the Standards Committee to deal with misconduct allegations and for reviews of the Committee's decisions.
Establish new procedures to enable the Standards Committee to deal with the grant and supervision of exemptions from political restriction.	July 2008	New procedures in place for the Standards Committee role relating to the grant and supervision of exemptions from political restrictions.
Provide training and guidance for Standards Committee Members regarding the revised/new procedures and the Committee's enhanced role.	May 2007 – April 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	Training and guidance provided for the Standards Committee regarding the revised/new procedures and the Committee's enhanced role. Training and guidance provided for Officers regarding the Standards Committee's revised/new procedures and the Committee's enhanced role. Awareness of the Committee's enhanced role amongst Officers and Members.
Provide training and guidance for Officers regarding the Standards Committee's revised/new procedures and the Committee's enhanced role.	May 2007 – April 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	Awareness of the Committee's enhanced role amongst Town/Parish Councils.

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Provide guidance for Members regarding the Standards Committee's enhanced role and the revised/new procedures in that respect.	May 2007 – April 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	
Provide guidance for Town/Parish Councils regarding the Standards Committee's enhanced role.	May 2007 – April 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9, 2009/10	

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<p>Theme: (Organisational and Operational Effectiveness – Service Delivery) Enhance Local Democracy.</p>		
<p>Development Priority: DLD4: Introducing new Executive Arrangements.</p>		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Produce draft proposals regarding the form of executive proposed, including details of appropriate revisions/additions to the constitution.	April 2007 - March 2008	New executive arrangements introduced in accordance with the Local Government White Paper proposals. Members, Officers and the public made aware of the new, approved executive arrangements.
Submit the new draft executive proposals for consideration and approval by Cabinet and full Council.	April - May 2008	
Implement and publicise the approved proposals (eg on the intranet and internet).	June 2008	
Provide guidance regarding the new, approved proposals for Officers and Members.	June 2008 and on an ongoing basis throughout 2008/9	

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<p>Theme: Organisational and operational effectiveness – People Development & Learning, Resource Management and Operational Efficiency</p>		
<p>Development Priority: (Res15) Organisational Development – Corporate Health</p>		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
<p>Sickness Absence Continue the implementation of the new sickness absence process. Monitor performance via quarterly reports and identify areas for improvement.</p>	2007/ 08	<p>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 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</p>
<p>On Contract Spend Monitor performance via quarterly reports and identify areas for improvement. Work with Corporate Procurement Unit to improve performance.</p>	2007/ 08	<p>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</p>
<p>Payment of Invoices Monitor performance via quarterly reports and identify areas for improvement. Work with Corporate Procurement and Payments to improve performance.</p>	2007/ 08	<p>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 BVPI8 and all services contribute to the corporate target of at least 85% of invoices paid within 30 days.</p>
<p>Appraisals Implement new appraisal scheme. Monitor performance.</p>	2007/ 08	<p>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</p>

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<p>Gershon Efficiency Savings Identify targets (both financial and quality cross checks) for the forward-looking Annual Efficiency Statement. Monitor performance.</p>	<p>Apr 2007 2007/ 08</p>	<p>The Council is subject to an annual 2.5% 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.</p>
<p>Value for Money Reviews Undertake value for money reviews (where programmed). Report outcomes and where necessary a cost reduction plan</p>	<p>As per agreed timetable</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Partnership Healthchecks Undertake partnership healthcheck (where programmed). Report outcomes and action plans.</p>	<p>As per agreed timetable</p>	<p>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.</p>

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Theme: Resource Management - Improve Operational Efficiency		
Development Priority: L1 Identify the required level of legal resources for 2007/08 and that they are planned for accordingly.		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Survey and consult Clients on future requirements	30 April 2007	No surprises or last minute instructions. Work is allocated at the appropriate level. Improved responsiveness and client satisfaction. Resources are planned and identified. Improved ability to be pro-active rather than reactive.
Introduce quarterly monitoring meetings with Resources, CESC and DNS	30 June 2007	
Publicise the appointment of external partners	1 April 2007	
Develop a protocol for the use of external partners	1 April 2007	
Continue to develop shared services across the five Tees Valley Legal Teams by regular meetings, sharing of information and using spare capacity.	Ongoing during 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10	

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Theme: Council Plan - Key Organisational Objectives - People Development & Learning - Improve employment practices and staff involvement		
Development Priority: L2 To manage equal pay issues and implement the Single Status Agreement.		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Advice on implications and implementation of new pay & grading structure/confirm legality and recommend for approval.	31 March 2008	Minimise the number of Employment Tribunal claims. Minimise financial impact of litigation. Minimise the number of appeals against JE outcomes. Maintain and in fact improve industrial relations. Continued engagement of TUs in Single Status process. Implementation of a fair and equality proofed pay and grading structure.
Involvement in TU negotiations and outcomes of Part 3 issues and JE.	31 March 2008	
Keep up to date with litigation involving other LAs and TUs	Ongoing during 2007/08	
Liaison with other Local Authorities in particular in NE	Ongoing during 2007/08	
Advise on impact of the Council's existing and proposed pay and grading structure in respect of associated companies and schools	Ongoing until 31 March 2008	
Management of any equal pay/value claims	Ongoing during 2007/08	
Amend and update the Single Status Strategy to take account of current developments.	Ongoing until 31 March 2008	

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Theme: Economic Regeneration and Transportation (Key Development Project), Liveability (Sustainable Neighbours)		
Development Priority: L3 To meet demands for support and advice for all Regeneration projects (Town Centres, Mandale, Hardwick, Parkfield, SMI, Northshore).		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Recruit vacant posts (Senior Legal Assistant/Assistant Solicitor and Legal Assistant)	1 April 2007 (in post)	All interests in land (either compulsorily or by agreement) acquired within timescale for commencement of development. Compulsory Purchase Orders successfully obtained where necessary. Mutually advantageous partnerships with private and public partners entered into to achieve redevelopment via eg Development Agreements.
Develop partnerships with private sector law firm(s)	Ongoing during each phase of the relevant regeneration project	
Develop skills base in Conveyancing Team	Ongoing during 2007/08	
Liaise with project managers/team to develop programme plan	April 2007	

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Theme: Liveability		
Development Priority: L4 To assist Planning Services to modernise service and meet performance targets.		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Improve communications between Planning Services and Legal regarding early notification of need for 106 Agreement	1 April 2007	100% of 106 Agreements completed before determination deadlines.
Introduce Model 106 Agreement	July 2007	Timeline for submission of LDS documents met.
Recruit to post of Legal Assistant	1 April 2007 (in post)	

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Theme: . Resource Management - Improve operational efficiency		
Development Priority:L5 To review fees and charges and the effect of the Home Improvement Pack legislation on the Local Land Charges service.		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Identify the true cost of the Service	1 April 2007	New fees and charges agreed and implemented. BVPI target of 100% within 10 working days is maintained. Improved access to data for personal search agents. Manage the risk of loss of income due to legislative changes.
Agree fees and charges	1 April 2007	
Research HIP legislation and impact on the service	30 June 2007	
Continue to transfer data to TLC	30 June 2007	
Publicise and market the service	30 September 2007	

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Theme: Healthier Communities and Adults - Promote the independence of older people and adults		
Development Priority: L6 Implement the Mental Capacity Act 2005.		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Participate in Local Implementation Network	Ongoing (until LIN ceases)	Knowledge of content and effect of Mental Capacity Act 2005. Policies and procedures in place which take account of requirements of the Act.
Childcare Team to identify and undergo training.	September 2007	
Delivery of in-house training as required	September 2007	
Develop/amend policies and procedures with Clients.	March 2008	
Build capacity to deliver legal service more flexibly for Social Services (adults and mental health) Clients, via external and in-house training/coaching.	March 2008	

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Theme: . Community Safety - Implement the Licensing Act		
Development Priority: L7 Gambling Act 2005		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Training for Members on Council's Policy Statement and the Gambling Act 2005	June 2007	Smooth transition of functions from the Magistrates' Court to the Council.
Drafting and advice on application forms and guidance leaflets	June 2007	
Receipt of applications and Licensing Committee Hearings	April 2007 - March 2008	
Dealing with any appeals to Magistrates' Court	April 2007 - March 2008	

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Theme: Community Safety - Implement the Licensing Act		
Development Priority: L8 Full review of the Council Transport Licensing Policy (Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles).		
Key actions	By when	Outcomes and Success Criteria
Obtain Licensing Committee approval to consult with stakeholders	April 2007	New policy agreed with Stakeholders.
Draft and advise on consultation document	April 2007	
Undertake full consultation exercise with stakeholders	September 2007	
Introduce Policy changes	Ongoing during 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10	
Deal with any Judicial Review proceedings resulting from Policy changes	Ongoing during 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10	