

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: ALL

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES: ALL

1.0 WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO COMMITTEE

- 1.1 To apprise the Scrutiny Committee of the proposals for the Strategic Planning Process 2010/2011 and the role of all Scrutiny Committees in the Process.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Strategic Planning Process must remain fit for purpose and:
- Focus on priorities, improving performance, value for money and meeting local needs
 - Communicate improvement objectives and priorities
 - Focus on budget planning and service planning activities – supporting the alignment of resources to priorities
 - Ensure outcomes are customer focused.
- 2.2 The Process is of particular importance in respect of:
- The integration of the Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP) with the Sunderland Strategy 2008-2025
 - Linking the Sunderland Strategy to individual work plans
 - Supporting the council's response to the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)
 - Sunderland Way of Working
 - Community Leadership Programme
 - Economic Development and Regeneration
 - Business Improvement Programme
 - Directorate Improvement Programmes

3.0 CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 Council improvement planning is based on the identification, for a three year period, of improvement actions in respect of the Corporate Improvement Priorities (the Strategic Priorities of the Sunderland Strategy and the Corporate Improvement Objectives):
- CIP1: Prosperous City
 - CIP 2: Healthy City
 - CIP 3: Learning City
 - CIP 4: Safe City
 - CIP 5: Attractive and Inclusive City
 - CIP 6: Customer Focused Services
 - CIP 7: One Council
 - CIP 8: Efficient and Effective Council
 - CIP 9: Partnership Working

- 3.2 In the past, the Strategic Planning Process commenced in September each year with completion in March of the following year with the publication of the CIP. Completion of Service Plans and the CIP takes place via a template based approach involving Executive Directors, Heads of Service, Team Managers and Portfolio Holders, with the compilation of the CIP undertaken by the Policy and Performance Improvement Team and the Director of Financial Resources' Accountancy Division.
- 3.3 Services (of which there are 61 as the Process is aligned to Portfolio responsibilities, with service headings reflecting budget headings) identify contributions to the achievement of the Corporate Improvement Priorities in the form of "Actions for Service Improvement". These are included within the relevant Service Plan with those of the greatest importance to achieving the Corporate Improvement Priorities included in the service's content for the CIP as "Key Actions For Service Improvement".
- 3.4 During the course of the financial year Heads of Service and Team Managers should monitor and update their Service Plans to ensure the achievement of the "Actions For Improvement" and, if necessary, re-prioritise actions in the light of service requests and changing resources.
- 3.5 The "Key Actions for Service Improvement" are also used to form the basis of "Key Actions for Portfolio Improvement" for each Portfolio. "Key Actions for Portfolio Improvement" identify "Areas For Improvement" each Portfolio will address to contribute towards achieving the Corporate Improvement Priorities. They reflect the main themes that the relevant Director and Portfolio Holder consider to have emerged from all of the "Key Actions for Service Improvement" contained within the CIP service content for the Portfolio. Progress towards the achievement of the "Key Actions for Portfolio Improvement" should be monitored during the course of the financial year by the relevant Director and Portfolio Holder, in line with the monitoring of the "Key Actions for Service Improvement".
- 3.6 In addition to the publication of Service Plans and the CIP the 2009/2010 Strategic Planning Process required each directorate to produce a Directorate Improvement Plan. Directorates were encouraged to ensure these did not comprise information contained within Service Plans, but presented information at a directorate level to create a link in the improvement planning hierarchy between the CIP and Service Plans.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 The Strategic Planning Process seeks to achieve a "top-down" approach to the identification of actions to deliver the Corporate Improvement Priorities.
- 4.2 The Process has a number of strengths including:

- A consistent approach, with all services considering the same factors in their service improvement planning
- All services undertaking improvement planning at the same time
- A cyclical approach using the each year's process and outputs to inform the next year's
- The alignment of policy and budgetary planning to ensure that improvement actions are financially appropriate and that provision is made for them
- Mapping objectives and actions in support of priorities.

4.3 Shortcomings with this approach have proven to be:

- A lack of ownership of, commitment to and understanding of the Corporate Improvement Priorities
- A lack of engagement with the Process amongst some Heads of Service and Team Managers
- The use of the Corporate Improvement Priorities too strategically, resulting in a "bottom-up" approach to improvement planning
- A lack of understanding of the difference between service improvement activity and "business as usual" activity,
- The questionable value of the CIP in its current format.

5.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS 2010/2011

5.1 In the light of the above the Strategic Planning Process has been developed to ensure:

- The council identifies a clear set of Corporate Improvement Priorities for 2010/2011 which is used by EMT as the basis for corporate planning and delivery
- The Corporate Improvement Priorities reflect the council's new phase of improvement activity
- The Corporate Improvement Priorities are articulated to better enables services to focus their improvement planning activity
- Improved ownership of and responsibility for the Corporate Improvement Priorities
- Heads of Service are supported to be empowered and accountable for the delivery of improvement activity
- Improvement planning reflects service delivery
- Improvement planning, performance management and improvement programme delivery are more closely aligned
- The purpose and role of improvement planning is understood as an annual process that responds and adapts to changing circumstances during the course of the year
- Improvement planning reflects and links to the council's area arrangements via the Local Area Plans
- Improvement planning takes account of the contents of the Local Area Agreement 2008-2011 Thematic Delivery Plans and is able to influence the council's contribution to the Delivery Plans via the annual refresh process

5.2 The developments comprise:

- Reconsideration of the Corporate Improvement Priorities to ensure they support the council's improvement agenda and the issues impacting on it. The Sunderland Strategy Strategic Priorities are retained and the cross-cutting priorities added, the Corporate Improvement Objectives are retained and the three Corporate Improvement Programmes and Directorate Improvement Programmes are incorporated
- The identification of priority themes for each Corporate Improvement Priority based on improvement actions identified in the CIP 2009/2010, local issues, known areas where improvement is required, external inspection and assessment including CAA, and new and emerging policy; to provide greater focus on the issues that the council needs to address, reinforcing a strategic approach to improvement planning and removing the opportunity for services to interpret council priorities
- The allocation of responsibility for each Corporate Improvement Priority to lead officers, to promote ownership and establish accountability
- The development and publication of a Corporate Improvement Planning Framework at the commencement of the Process to describe the council's key improvement and change actions for each Corporate Improvement Priority
- The publication of a new form of CIP, to achieve greater understanding, strategic corporate ownership of and direction to the council's improvement priorities. The Revenue Budget and Capital Programme (aligned to Portfolio responsibilities) will continue to be produced and will be cross referenced with the Service Plans. This will result in the same detail contained within the current CIP being published across a suite of related documents. The council's key improvement and change actions will also be included in the Portfolio sections of the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme
- Service improvement planning will take place on the basis of Head of Service designations, to promote understanding, ownership, and accountability in respect of the delivery of improvement actions
- Service planning by Heads of Service will be informed by a self-assessment to determine the key issues affecting service improvement and the issues for service redesign based on information about the service and its customers
- The establishment of an ongoing process of the review and updating of improvement activity during the course of the year to ensure that it remains responsive to needs and challenges, and informs the production of future Service Plans
- The engagement of Portfolio Holders and Scrutiny Committees throughout the process to ensure their participation in the development and monitoring of the council's improvement priorities
- The production of Portfolio and Directorate Improvement Programmes to detail how the actions identified in the Service Plans will be delivered and to support existing budgetary and improvement planning links.

6.0 ROLE OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

6.1 It is proposed that the Scrutiny Committees are engaged as part of the preparation of Service Improvement Plans during the Strategic Planning Process 2010/2011 and in their monitoring and review during the course of 2010/2011 as follows:

January 2010

Reports to each Scrutiny Committee detailing:

- Overview of the Strategic Planning Process 2010/2011
- Contents of self-assessments of relevance to each Scrutiny Committee, including main issues and impacts identified for each service
- Next steps in respect of reporting improvement planning details to Scrutiny Committees

February/March 2010

Reports to each Scrutiny Committee, detailing:

- Service specific improvement planning details of relevance to each Scrutiny Committee
- Next steps in respect of reporting completed Service Improvement Plans to Scrutiny Committees

April 2010

Report on the CIP 2010/2011 to Management Scrutiny Committee, detailing:

- Development of the CIP
- CIP contents
- Purpose and role of the CIP within the new improvement agenda
- Details of role of Scrutiny Committees in respect of monitoring progress and performance in respect of delivery of key actions contained within the CIP

April 2010

Reports to each Scrutiny Committee detailing relevant Service Improvement Plans.

June, September, December 2010, March 2011

Reports to each Scrutiny Committee reporting progress and performance (on an exception basis) in respect of service improvement actions of relevance.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The new approach in respect of the council's improvement planning process will be adopted for the 2010/2011 Strategic Planning Process, with the view to its refinement and adaptation in due course.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report and approve the proposals in respect of the engagement of Scrutiny Committees in the Strategic Planning Process 2010/2011.