



Report to Cabinet

Subject: Review of Council Priorities

Date: 4 October 2007

Author: Head of Strategy and Performance on behalf of Senior Management Team

1. Purpose of the Report

- To update members on progress with the review of Council priorities
- To seek members' formal endorsement of the priorities and outcomes derived from that review.

2. Background

Priority setting is important for local authorities. It demonstrates direction, targets future investment and allows for future success to be assessed. Having clear priorities (and non-priorities) is particularly important for external assessments, including CPA.

The Council's priorities were set out in 2002, and refined in 2004 after the Council's first CPA assessment (with a focus on priorities for improvement). The priorities have since substantially fulfilled the above criteria, in particular in informing the targeting of investment.

It is clearly appropriate for priorities to be reviewed periodically and the period immediately following an election is an appropriate time for this.

Cabinet members therefore met informally on 27 June 2007 to consider future priorities for improvement for the Council.

The session was facilitated by external consultants Blue Marble. They drew upon material provided by the Council around current priorities, outcomes delivered so far, commitments, political priorities, survey results (through which residents had been consulted) and the current financial situation.

Members discussed issues arising from this evidence at length, drawing on existing Community Strategy priorities as a starting point.

Progress was reported to Cabinet (2 August 2007). That report included a proposal that “Healthy, Green, Safe and Clean” should be retained as the Council’s overall mission statement, in support of the Council’s motto “Omnibus Optimum” (the best for all). It also proposed “headline” priorities on which views of Policy Scrutiny Committee were sought.

Policy Scrutiny Committee considered the proposals at their meeting held on 18 September 2007.

At that meeting, committee members offered the following comments: -

- More emphasis could be placed on the “green” element of the mission, including specific reference to energy saving, addressing climate change and cycling.
- More clarity around involving local communities would be welcomed and it was suggested that this should include involvement of local councillors.

Since then, officers have carried out further work to identify priority outcomes for each of the suggested priority themes. These outcomes set out in broad terms what the Council, working with partners where appropriate, seeks to achieve over time. If agreed, targets will need to be set against these in due course, drawing on existing measures where available and developing new measures where they are not.

3. Proposal

Based on the work set out above, it is proposed that Cabinet adopts the following.

Priorities and outcomes

Priority - A high quality local environment

Outcomes

- A vibrant local economy
- Mixed and balanced housing for the community reflecting the Borough’s needs
- Clean and tidy streets
- Attractive, well maintained and well used parks and open spaces
- A sustainable local environment

Priority – A safer community

Outcomes

- Low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour
- Safety and security in the community

- A cohesive community

Priority - Good health for everyone

Outcomes

- An active community
- A healthy community
- Improved quality of life for older people

Priority - A good start in life for Children and Young People.

Outcomes

Every child and young person in the Borough¹: -

- to be healthy
- to stay safe
- to enjoy and achieve
- to make a positive contribution
- to achieve economic well-being

The proposed outcomes represent a mix of issues within the Council's direct control and those which the Council might seek to influence through its work with partners. They also include a mix of locally specific issues and regional and national priorities for delivery at local level.

Previous discussions included debate on how the priorities should be delivered. In these discussions it was agreed that the Council should seek to deliver its priorities for improvement through a variety of means including: -

- Involving local communities
- Working with partners
- Identifying and securing external funding to support the council's own resources
- Efficient and effective ways of working
- Using evidence to understand the needs of the Borough and acting on these
- Focusing on customer needs and expectations
- Meeting regulatory demands.

These will need to be reflected in the business case for future developments.

4. Next Steps

Suitable measures will need to be established for each of the outcomes against which progress can be measured and targets set where appropriate. A range of

¹ These outcomes are the same as those set out in the national "Every Child Matters" agenda

measures are already in place for many of these outcomes, including national performance indicators and Local Area Agreement measures and these will be used wherever possible to avoid duplication.

Where suitable measures are not in place, new measures will need to be devised and baseline positions researched against which future improvement targets can be set.

In due course, the priorities, outcomes, measures and targets will be worked into the Council's performance management system, creating the "golden thread" linking high level priorities and front-line activity.

A new Strategic Corporate Plan will be developed, built around these priorities, to set out the Council's direction over the next four years. The intention is for this to be completed by 31 March 2008.

More immediately, a budget scoring methodology needs to be developed, so that bids for future projects and new developments can be assessed against these priorities. This is critical if future investment is to be targeted at delivery of priorities – the Council's previous approach to this has been commended by the Audit Commission as an example of good practice. A report setting out these proposals will be presented to an early future Cabinet meeting.

5. Resource Implications

There are no specific and immediate resource implications arising from the development and adoption of the revised priorities.

However, their adoption is likely to have profound resource implications for the future, as future investment will need to be focused on the priorities and their delivery.

6. Recommendations

Cabinet is **recommended**: -

- To adopt the priorities and outcomes as set out in section 3 above and refer them to Council for approval as part of the Council's Strategic Corporate Plan.