



Report to Cabinet

Subject: Corporate Plan 2004-08 Review

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1. Purpose of the Report

- To review progress made during the lifespan of the 2004-08 Strategic Corporate Plan
- To review lessons learned during that period and set out how that learning is now being applied to improve the Council's strategic planning activities.

2. Background

The Council's first formal Strategic Corporate Plan was agreed in June 2004, covering a three-year period to 2007. It incorporated the Council's Best Value Performance Plan.

The Plan was refreshed annually thereafter, rolling forward a further year in 2005 (when a number of targets were added) to take the Plan through to 2008 and including new BVPI targets in all three years from 2005-2007.

Summary versions of the Plan were produced in 2004 and 2005 for wider circulation, including amongst all employees. Main and summary versions were published on the website.

The 2004-2008 Strategic Corporate Plan set out the Council's vision for the Borough to be "Healthy, Green, Safe and Clean" and the Council's three priorities for improvement adopted at the time to progress towards this.

- Improve Community Safety

- Develop facilities, activities and a safe environment for children and young people
- Enhance the physical environment of the Borough

It included broad outcomes sought in each area, around which targets were developed in the first refresh in 2005. Progress towards these and issues arising from this are discussed below.

The Plan also incorporated a corporate Improvement Plan, derived from the CPA assessment to address wider organisational improvements. That Plan has now been fully delivered.

Production of the Strategic Corporate Plan addressed one of the key criticisms in the Council's 2003 Comprehensive Performance Assessment, that the Council did not have a clear vision and that priorities were seen to be too all-embracing. In some ways, this criticism reflected the point in time that the review was carried out, shortly after the 2003 election, and ignored the Council's considerable previous achievements in setting out Aims and Objectives and related corporate planning. It nevertheless did drive the Council towards improved medium-term planning and significantly strengthened focus on priorities.

Now that a new Strategic Corporate Plan has been adopted for 2008-2012, it is appropriate to reflect on the achievements and improvement secured during the lifetime of the 2004-08 Plan and to reflect on any lessons learned from the process.

3. Review of Progress 2004-2008 and Lessons learned

3.1 - Positioning of the Plan

The introduction to the original version stated clearly that we saw the Strategic Corporate Plan as sitting "at the apex of the Council's planning processes". At the time, that was a sensible and practical view. However, it perhaps understated the role of the Community Strategy, itself under review at the time, an issue which has become of greater significance during the lifespan of the Strategic Corporate Plan.

At the time there was some uncertainty over the future of the Community Strategy. As a Council, we were keen to act early in response to the CPA inspection - this may have led us to push issues through the Strategic Corporate Plan that might better have fitted in the Community Strategy.

Since 2004, it has become increasingly clear that the Community Strategy (now redesignated Sustainable Community Strategy), with its more outward and outcome focus, needs to be the leading strategic document for the Borough (for

the Council and its partners). It now, in effect, should sit “at the apex of the Council’s planning processes”.

We have clearly learned from this and have consciously repositioned the new Strategic Corporate Plan as a result. The Council’s Organisational Vision puts the Sustainable Community Strategy at the heart of our strategic planning – it sets out that our key role is to define and deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Our new Strategic Corporate Plan aims to complement the Sustainable Community Strategy, focusing on our ways of working (the type of organisation we want to be) and how we will deploy our resources to support the delivery of Community Strategy outcomes. It articulates the improvement principles set out in our Transformation Programme, which are key to the organisation we want to be in the years ahead.

We have therefore learned from the both the experience of the first Strategic Corporate Plan and changes to the local government landscape in the development and positioning of the new Strategic Corporate Plan.

3.2 - Outcome focus

The 2004/07 Strategic Corporate Plan set out broad outcomes we sought to achieve against each of the priorities. The following year we added in a series of outcome focused targets against these.

We have had some success, often in partnership, delivering against these outcomes. However, we have also since recognised that some of the measures chosen were not the best measures of progress and that some targets set were not easily measurable. We are far from unique in this – many other organisations (including some first-wave Local Area Agreements) have encountered the same difficulties. We were also arguably over-reliant on satisfaction measures to measure progress in some areas, rather than more objective measures of Council performance.

A further learning point is that, while measures and targets are desirable to assess progress, care needs to be taken not to seize upon artificial measures. If there are no obvious SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-focused) measures, we should not feel the need to somehow invent these. Rather, it needs to be accepted that, in some areas, progress towards priorities might better be assessed through more intuitive, less measurable assessment.

The external landscape has also changed rapidly here, culminating in the Local Government White Paper, which fundamentally changes the local government performance management framework. In particular, the emergence through 2005 of the first wave Local Area Agreements, including one for Nottinghamshire,

meant that many of our partners (on whom we depended to deliver some of the outcomes we sought, particularly in relation to Children and Young People) moved the focus of their attention towards delivery of LAA outcomes.

While we quickly took steps to realign Community Strategy targets more closely with those of the new LAA, we were not able to secure similar alignment for some of our SCP targets.

It could also be argued that we did not give enough prominence to the key measures within our own direct control to assess progress towards our priorities. The inclusion of the annual Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) returns within the annual refreshes of the SCP meant that all BVPIs were reported, but their inclusion with that level of detail meant that the key measures did not stand out clearly and their strategic significance could therefore have been lost.

All of these lessons have been learned and acted upon in the new Strategic Corporate Plan. The new Plan: -

- Continues the outcome focus of its predecessor
- Fully aligns outcomes for children and young people with the national “Every Child Matters” outcomes to reflect our priorities in this area.
- Will include SMART outcome focused targets relating to these outcomes fully aligned to the new Nottinghamshire Local Area Agreement where appropriate and drawing on measures included in the new National Indicator suite (we have delayed their final inclusion in the SCP until the LAA is agreed)
- Will limit these measures to those of strategic significance relating to our priorities – performance against the full range of national indicators and supporting local indicators will be addressed in the complementary but separate Performance Digests.

3.3 - Driven by Priorities

This has been one of the key successes derived from the 2004/08 Strategic Corporate Plan.

The priorities agreed have significantly driven the Council’s investment throughout this time and feature very strongly in the combined Budget/Service Planning process (itself derived from the Strategic Corporate Plan). 100% of all new revenue and capital growth has been targeted at priority areas over the past two years and funding has been moved away from lower priority areas to support priorities, within services and across the Council.

3.4 - Progress towards Priority Targets

3.4.1 - Improve Community Safety

We have made good progress overall in this area, largely in partnership with others, and have secured many of the targets set in 2005.

The key overall (and very challenging) target to **reduce recorded crime** in the Borough by 22.5% over a three year-period has been secured – we secured a 29.3% reduction. Performance over the past year has been exceptional, when we secured a 20.6% reduction, equal to 2,257 offences. Though this reduction has to be seen in the context of a reduction across the county as a whole, our performance is particularly notable as we have secured the biggest reduction in the county.

Within these figures, there has also been a significant reduction in acquisitive crime, another of our priority outcomes - domestic burglary and car crime together have fallen by 48% over the four years. The reduction in violent crime has been more modest over the period, falling by 6.4% overall. However, after a rise in 2005/06, the most recent two years have seen a more significant fall - comparisons between 2006/07 and 2007/08 show a 20.8% fall. Latest trends are therefore much more positive.

There has also been a **reduction in recorded Anti-Social behaviour**. New Police recording techniques mean that comparisons are only possible from 1 April 2006, but these show an 11.5% reduction for 2007/08 compared with 2006/07. This is the best district performance in South Nottinghamshire, and contributes to a reduction of 9.7% across the police division.

There has been greater encouragement to report incidents of hate crime (including domestic violence), which is itself a priority target. However, we have not been able to effectively baseline the position for reported Domestic Violence, which makes it difficult to assess whether incidents have fallen.

We have been less successful in addressing fear of crime – in spite of the substantial reductions in recorded crime, 56% of residents responding to the 2007 tracker survey thought crime had got worse over the past year and reducing crime is still seen by residents as the top priority for improvement in the Borough. Changes to survey techniques mean we cannot accurately assess performance against our measure addressing how safe people feel out in their areas by day and at night although indications are that we have broadly secured our target for daytime safety but have not secured that for night-time.

We have made some progress in assessing the extent of volunteering in the Borough, using satisfaction surveys. Baseline data on people involved in voluntary activity was gathered through 2005 satisfaction survey and repeated in

2006 and 2007. It shows an improvement to 38% saying they had volunteered over the past 12 months, compared with 30% in 2006 and 31% in 2007.

Our Area-Based Initiative programmes have significantly increased community confidence and capacity in some of our more deprived communities.

3.4.2 - Develop facilities, activities and a safe environment for children and young people

This is the area where some of our originally proposed measures have not proved practicable to assess. We have nevertheless made good progress towards many of the outcomes we sought, even if the measurement technique has varied.

On facilities and activities for young people that meet with their expressed needs and expectations, while we have not been able to agree a minimum local standard (and have not therefore been able to baseline this measure), we have installed a wide range of high quality new provision over the four years of the Plan. These include 6 new children's play areas (of which 3 are shared use with local schools); 3 refurbished play areas; 7 new ball courts (of which 3 are shared use with local schools); 2 skate parks and 1 climbing boulder.

To address satisfaction and expectations, we moved away from the retrospective survey approach originally proposed and focused instead on involving young people more in the design and development of new facilities, so as to build in satisfaction from the outset. We have developed various techniques to engage young people – particularly innovative examples include engagement on new facilities at Richard Herrod Leisure Centre for Netherfield Boys and Girls Football Club and Jackie Bells Field refurbishment in Netherfield. Young people were also extensively involved at all stages in the development of The Lodge Drop-In facility, itself an innovative partnership facility developed through the Gedling Partnership.

We have significantly expanded opportunities for **participation by young people in organised activities and events**. We introduced a Young Persons Gedling Leisure Card, take up of which has steadily increased - over 7,000 Borough youngsters now hold the card, representing 1/3 of the Borough's 0-16 year old population. We have provided extra time for young people's activities at Carlton Forum Leisure Centre following a review of opening hours and programming – this includes more sports hall time for junior sessions and clubs and extra pool time for swimming clubs. We aim to follow this up at other Leisure Centres. Activities introduced include free swims for young people at all three pools. These heavily subsidised activities and free swim sessions put on at the leisure centres over summer 2007 resulted in an extra 3,695 juniors compared to 2006, while joint working with the School Sports Forum to put on free after school

swim has encouraged 1,690 children to participate in these sessions since its introduction in September 2007.

To **contribute towards improvements in health of young people**, we have developed a purpose-built SHOKK Youth Gym at Carlton Forum– there were over 12,000 attendances at the gym in 2007/08, up by 33% compared with the previous year. In partnership with the Primary Care Trust, we also introduced the Young People’s Positive Moves Exercise Referral Programme, a tailor made programme for 8-16 year-olds with a condition that can be helped through increased physical activity – 126 youngsters have benefited from this scheme so far.

We have had less success in tracking and improving upon other outcome measures around obesity and children as crime victims. Perceptions of problem with young people/teenagers ‘hanging around’ have remained high (up to 66% compared with 59% baseline) in spite of significant improvements to facilities and activities.

Increasingly, we see Children and Young People as a theme that needs to be led through the Gedling Partnership and we have recently concentrated our efforts on developing capacity there to progress this agenda. We have adopted the national “Every Child Matters” outcomes at Borough level and aim, through the partnership, to adopt relevant targets from the new Nottinghamshire LAA for application in the Borough, to ensure future consistency and cohesion, while continuing to contribute directly through our own service provision.

3.4.3 - Enhance the physical environment of the Borough

We have had some notable successes in this area but, as with children and young people, some targets we set in our SCP that have proved more difficult to measure.

Our attempts to measure progress towards a **well designed and well maintained, aesthetically pleasing built environment** have not run smoothly. Less than 60% of respondents to our 2007 Tracker Survey answered the two questions we included about this and, of those who did, the vast majority felt that things had stayed the same. Our conclusion is that the question is perhaps not easily understood and not therefore a good measure of progress.

A better measure may be from the more general question about residents’ satisfaction with their neighbourhood overall and, at 74%, this remains high. We have also ensured that strong and effective policies around conservation were included in our Local Plan, adopted in 2005 and which generated over 18,000 representations from unparalleled local consultation. Key policies from the Plan have now been saved pending progression of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

We have secured our key target for a **clean and tidy Borough, with low levels of littering and graffiti** - 2007/08 results show just 5% of streets have unacceptable levels of litter, comfortably delivering our target of no more than 16.5%. Resident satisfaction with the service has consistently been high, at around 70% in satisfaction surveys.

Our recent State of the Borough research shows that there is generally good **accessibility to key facilities** throughout the Borough, though accessibility is generally better in urban areas than it is in rural areas. But 2007 survey results suggest residents are not convinced that the key third party services such as shopping, public transport and cultural facilities have improved recently and there is a clear view that traffic congestion has deteriorated significantly.

It is not likely, particularly in the light of current problems in the financial and housing markets, that all additional homes proposed in the 2005 Local Plan will be constructed by 2011, as proposed in 2004/05. Closer alignment with the LAA and within the Council through the new Strategy and Performance section should ensure a more joined up approach to target setting in this area in future.

Resident **satisfaction with Parks and Open spaces** increased by 5% between 2003 and 2006 to 75%, but dropped back to the (still high) level of 70% in our latest 2007 Tracker survey. But we did secure a Green Flag Award at Arnot Hill Park following £1m investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a key Nottinghamshire LAA target, and we are now using its management plan as a template for two other parks to apply for the same award. We also appointed 2 Park Rangers for Arnot Hill Park (one with lottery funding for 3 years) whose roles cut across all of our priorities including education, publicity, security and sustainability.

3.4.4 – Other Priority Issues

We have exceeded our key target for the **Continued Provision of Good Quality, Well Managed Social Rented Housing**. The proportion of non-decent council housing has fallen to 8%, an improvement on the target of no more than 12%. Our efforts to secure continued high quality for the future have been focused on securing Stock Transfer, which has now been supported by tenants and is scheduled to go ahead in Autumn 2008.

We have also exceeded both key targets to **increase the Proportion of Waste Recycled, Coupled With an Overall Reduction in the Amount of Waste Generated**. Our recycling rate at 31 March 2008 was 30.9% (plus 4.9% composted), exceeding our 29% target. Waste collected per head fell to 395kg, meeting our target of no more than 400kg.

On **accessible, customer friendly services**, we met our target for electronically delivered services, while on overall satisfaction, we have continued to secure results of between 65 and 67% satisfaction – this was enough to place us in the top 20 districts nationally in the 2006 survey. Residents' surveys also show that people increasingly feel well informed about the Council and its work – after a 20% increase from 2001-2005, scores have settled at around 60% in the two most recent surveys, close to the best in Nottinghamshire.

4. Resource Implications

There are no specific resource implications arising directly from this report. However, members will be aware that prioritisation has driven resource allocations during the lifetime of the previous Strategic Corporate Plan and will continue to do so under the new Plan.

5. Recommendation

Members are **recommended** to note the report.