

Item 10(iii)

PORTFOLIO:

**FINANCE & PERFORMANCE
MANAGEMENT**

Report of
Portfolio Holder:

**COUNCILLOR
JEFFERSON**

Policy and Performance team, Briefing note for Councillor Jefferson, February 2007

1. Policy development

1.1 Corporate Improvement Plan

A draft Plan has been reported to the Executive and is currently being consulted upon with all three of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and other stakeholders, including local people. The Council has not produced a Corporate Plan since 2004 and since this time has faced significant challenge and change, not least the emergence of Carlisle Renaissance.

The Plan offers an opportunity to set out the Council's Vision and ambitions for the future and to define our key priorities of Cleaner, Greener, Safer Carlisle, Learning City, and the Renaissance programme and what they mean for the City Council and for our partners in the Carlisle Partnership (LSP). The Council recently appointed a Learning City Manager who will help us to update the Learning City priority, refreshing and building upon the Learning City Strategy.

The Corporate Improvement Plan also offers opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate our many achievements over the last few years.

The Plan is firmly grounded on what the social and economic statistics are telling us are the needs for Carlisle, and on what local people have told us is important to them. It also needs to address elements of the recent White Paper, including engagement and empowerment of local communities. A primary way in which the Council will do this is through building upon its established area based teams.

The Plan will also meet the requirements of the Best Value Performance Plan, i.e. contain performance information for 2006/07, although this requirement will be repealed by the Local Government Bill for future years.

1.2 Equality and Diversity Policy

The Council's Equality and Diversity policy was presented to the Executive on 19 February following consultation with Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is to be adopted by Full Council in March. It provides a framework, or a set of principles that will guide the Council in meeting its obligations under the relevant legislation.

1.3. Data Quality

Quarterly corporate performance reporting was developed in collaboration with Members and is a cornerstone of our performance management framework. Performance reports are by exception, i.e. they focus attention on areas that are under performing and where the trend in performance is deteriorating. Exception reporting helps us to make decisions about how we

manage and allocate our resources and will inform the priorities within the Corporate Improvement Plan.

It is therefore essential that the data on which decision making is based is robust – this was emphasised during the Audit Commission's annual audit, 2006. We are currently producing a Data Quality Policy that will ensure accurate and timely information that supports the Councils' decision making processes and withstands external scrutiny. The policy will be consulted upon and reported to Council in due course.

3. Freedom of Information

In January 2007 we received a total of 8 FOI requests – this compares to 17 in January 2006, and 7 in January 2005. Requests included:

- Parking fines issued over the past year
- Streets where fines issued most frequently
- Licences reviewed since November 2005
- Responsibility for Equality and Diversity

Further training for Knowledge Champions, who represent each of the directorates, has been arranged for February 2007.

4. Consultation

The 2nd employee opinion survey will be reported in the next couple of weeks. The results of the Cumbria County Council Quality of Life Survey is now on the County Council's web site. Results for Carlisle, and implications for policy, particularly the Corporate Improvement Plan, will be reported to Council in due course.

5. Risk Management

Both the Peer Review and Use of Resources review, carried out recently looked at the Council's Risk Management arrangements.

Both were fairly positive with the Peer Review recognising that:

"Effective performance, risk and project management systems and processes are in place within the council." and

"The Overview and Scrutiny Committees bring constructive challenge to the executive of the council, and undertake both policy development and risk management roles."

It is intended that we will report annually to Council after the end of the financial year, following the review of the risk management process.

During the course of the year, relevant information is reported to full Council in the regular Portfolio Holder's report

Risk Management and Business Continuity Management training are both included in the Management Development Programme for 2007 which has just been published. The first training for middle managers will take place between March and April (dates still to be confirmed).

The corporate Risk Manager has been giving guidance to managers on a one-to-one basis for those carrying out risk assessments/ developing Operational Risk Registers.

Business Continuity Management – Marsh Consultants will be facilitating the development of the new Business Continuity Management Arrangements. An assignment 'kick-off' session and initial Business Impact Analysis are set for 21st February.

Risk management of partnerships is on the next CRMG agenda.

The process of developing Service Plans is about to start and the Policy and Performance team will ensure that operational risks are reviewed and updated and included in Service Plans.

The Audit Committee received a Risk Management overview from Jason Gooding in November 2006. Copies of the latest Corporate Risk Register and CROS report are now sent to the Audit Committee after they have been to CROS. Upon consideration of their first Risk Management report in January, the Audit Committee resolved that "it be noted that sound governance arrangements in respect of Risk Management are in place and continue to be adhered to in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Policy."

Report for Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management

Council 6th March 2007

Financial Services

Budget Process 2007/08 to 2009/10

The Executive's Budget proposals were moved and seconded at the Council meeting of the 6 February 2007. Two amendments were considered by the full Council on the 19 February. The amendments were carried and the final budget resolution was amended and approved.

Revenues and Benefits

Most performance targets, as set out in the Service Plan, have been met for the third quarter of 2006/07. The exceptions being, recovery trends suggest that we will marginally miss the very ambitious collection targets for Council Tax and NNDR (although Council Tax collection is on course to be the best ever). Other top quartile targets likely to be missed include Benefits accuracy and overpayments recovery.

Audit Services

Audit work on all of the "material reviews" is progressing satisfactorily, and 5 of the reviews are now at draft report stage. It is anticipated that all of these reviews will be completed to Final Report stage before the agreed target - date i.e. the end of the Financial Year.

Work on other system-reviews is also progressing. Follow-up reviews have been undertaken relating to previous reviews of Charitable Funds, CCTV, Car Parking and Network Vulnerability

Progress reports are issued to the Audit Committee on a regular basis. The most recent report was been presented to the Audit Committee on 23rd January.

A training session for Members of the Audit Committee, relating to the recently published CIPFA Toolkit for Local Authority Audit Committees, was held on 23rd January.

Updated Action Plans relating to the Statement on Internal Control and the Code of Corporate Governance were presented to the Audit Committee on 23rd January.

At the meeting of the Audit Committee on 23rd January, Members agreed an approach for a review of the effectiveness of Audit Services, as required by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment)(England) Regulations 2006.

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