

**Report of the
Corporate Performance Select Committee to Special Cabinet Meeting
On Monday 12 March 2001**

Scrutiny of the Local Performance Plan

Introduction

In supporting the Cabinet in the production of the local performance plan for 2001 – 2002 the Committee have carried out a detailed scrutiny of the draft plan.

As with scrutiny of the Council Plan, members of the Committee were aware that further changes were being made to the draft document. Also that there would be a Members' seminar on the same evening at which further discussion would take place. Equally, members were aware that the Chief Officer of the Council was seeking major changes to the content of the draft plan. These will have a significant impact in addressing the concerns of the Committee, although they had not of course taken place at the time of the meeting.

It is inevitable that a document of such significance will be complex. However, the Committee feels that in general both Cabinet and the officers supporting them have done an excellent job in producing a much more manageable plan. Having said that, it is the Committee's understanding that this is *the* document which will form the base line against which the Council's performance will be measured. In that context the document is capable of much further development.

Cabinet may be aware that to aid the Committee in its work it received a presentation at its previous meeting from the District Auditor. The criteria which he provided have been used in the Committee's examination. This report therefore identifies the overarching issues.

Summary Conclusions

- The content of the plan has clearly been produced by many different people. The personalisation by Cabinet Members is a welcome addition but the Committee feels that the whole process would benefit from having tighter editorial control to ensure consistency of approach and uniformity of style.
- The Committee found it difficult to make a clear link in the hierarchy of aims, policies, outcomes, milestones, and the rest of the service planning process. Putting service policies into the main body of the document may help but only if there can be a direct correlation between the supporting policy and the flagship projects which will deliver them.
- However, since some supporting policies do not have flagship projects, the casual reader will find it difficult to understand how they will be delivered. This may be partly due to prioritisation or that the outcome of the measures will appear in service plans. However, this linkage should be made clearer.
- An attempt has been made to use a project management approach to the delivery of the strategic aims. Members fully support this as a way of attaching resources and measurable targets to achieving agreed outcomes. However, this technique has been applied inconsistently. There are some good examples of

clear outcomes and measurable targets. However, many others lack this clarity. Many of the outcomes are outputs and similarly milestones are often tasks which are not necessarily steps along a pathway to achieving the outcome. This suggests that there is a lack of clarity in what the Cabinet are trying to achieve – the focus being on doing things rather than knowing what the overall impact should be. *(The Committee are aware that the Chief Officer of the council is doing further work to improve the outcomes)*

- To whom is the plan addressed? - As before there is still some confusion about this. As drafted, both the plan and its summary appear to try to address both the public and the more informed audience. This is a difficult if not impossible task and the Committee think that the more honest approach would be to recognise that the main plan is not going to be a document that will be warmly embraced by the public. However, this is no excuse for producing a plan which is full of professional jargon. Introducing glossaries of terms might help but a more preferable solution would be to remove the jargon altogether.
- The Committee fully understands the reason why the plan is being introduced by the Chief Officer of the Council rather than Members. However, it could be made clearer in that section who is accountable for the plan. As it is the Council's plan presumably the cabinet are accountable for delivering it and the Chief Officer of the council and management team for making it happen.
- The public summary is not written in a language which the public will understand. The Committee has produced a detailed critique with suggested changes to help simplify it.
- An attempt has been made to align resources with policies to the extent that budgetary information is included in the plan. However, the Committee would prefer to see a direct alignment of strategic aims, policies and the resources devoted to delivering them. This is so that as part of the monitoring process it would be possible to determine whether best value is being delivered.
- The Committee's examination of the LPP for 2000 – 2001, particularly in relation to the monitoring information, proved almost unmanageable because of the sheer quantity of data. For next year the volume looks as if it might be less for two reasons.
 - The majority of it will be in service plans – how will these be scrutinised?
 - Many of the milestones are not measurable – performance cannot be demonstrated

The Committee accepts that if the statutory deadline is to be met, lack of time may prevent a more radical re-appraisal of the milestones. However, members feel that further refinement of the milestones or targets should continue so that the cabinet can be satisfied that the Council's priorities will be delivered and that the Committee can carry out its task of monitoring performance.

Overview of the plan

In carrying out its work the Committee developed a template against which the individual sections were reviewed. In order to give an overview of the full document the table set out at Appendix 1 provides a summary of the Committee's

findings. The Committee hope that these will be accepted in the genuine spirit of a contribution to achieving a common purpose, mainly the publication of the local performance plan which is worthy of the County Council and which achieves an unqualified audit.

EVALUATING THE LOCAL PERFORMANCE PLAN

Features of the Plan	Indicators used by the Committee	Comments
The Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the presentation clear and engaging? ▪ Is the language clear and jargon free? ▪ Is it clear whom the plan is for? ▪ Is the structure easy to follow? ▪ Can you relate policies to resources/ ▪ Is it a manageable document in terms of both length and the monitoring information it will generate? 	<p>The document is clear, and, particularly those parts relating to the portfolio holders personal introductions are a welcome addition. Overall the document is not particularly engaging <i>if</i> it is intended for the public. The public summary as currently drafted is not engaging and needs to be reworked.</p> <p>The main LPP is packed full of jargon which should preferably be removed. This is equally true of the public summary as currently drafted, but it is capable of being changed and reworked.</p> <p>Both plans seem to address the same audience. The Committee think it would be more honest to separate the documents and make it clear to whom each is addressed.</p> <p>The main plan is easy to follow and will be improved when the changes identified have been made.</p> <p>Only in a limited way. The Committee recommend that this is changed and improved in a subsequent plan.</p> <p>This year's LPP is much more manageable than it's predecessor though because of the lack of precision in the targets it is not yet clear what monitoring information will be generated and how it will be managed.</p>
The Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there a clear link with the other planning processes of the Council? 	<p>The Committee did not find the links clear and easy to understand. Appendix 2 will only be understandable to a limited number of people who have a lot of knowledge about planning processes. If this is the way of illustrating the links to the average reader then it should be made clearer.</p>

The Strategic Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are they clear and specific? ▪ Do they present a balance between operational and service specific? 	<p>The strategic aims are now much clearer although in some cases not very specific.</p> <p>There is a good balance between the service specific aims and the overarching aims for the council as a whole. However, the flagships and the milestones place a great deal of emphasis on management and organisational issues and members of the public, if they should so decide, will find it hard to see what is in the LPP for them.</p>
The Flagships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are they measurable through the milestones outcomes, i.e. they describe what will have changed as a result of carrying out the specific action? ▪ Apply the SMART test, how do they rate? ▪ Are the outcomes and targets consistent with the flagships project? ▪ Is the accountability clear? 	<p>As currently drafted, many of the flagships are not described as measurable outcomes nor are the milestones. Clarifications of the outcomes will help but more work is needed to make the document measurable so that it could be tested against the SMART test.</p> <p>See note above. However, there are some really good examples of how it can be done within the plan. With a little more effort it will be possible to produce an extremely useful performance management tool.</p> <p>As currently drafted it is difficult to relate flagships outcome to supporting policies and strategic aims. The Committee could not honestly say whether there is an inconsistency although it would appear to be so simply because supporting policies which the Committee would have expected to be priority are not these..</p> <p>Accountability for the portfolio's is clear but is not yet apparent who will have responsibility for delivering the outcomes and achieving the milestones.</p>