

**MEDIUM TERM WORK PROGRAMME /
RESPONSE TO CPA REPORT**

Chief Executive

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to propose the Medium Term Work Programme (MTWP) for the period April 2004 – March 2007, which includes actions in response to the CPA inspector's report dated June 2004.

2. Recommendation

- 1.1 That Cabinet adopts the Medium Term Work Programme, attached as Appendix 1, subject to any comments from Scrutiny Committees.
- 1.2 That the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate issues, be authorized to adjust the Medium Term Work Programme to take account of comments made by Scrutiny Committees.
- 2.3 That a progress report on the actions contained within the Medium Term Work Programme is considered by Cabinet on a six monthly basis, commencing May 2005.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 In December 2003, Council adopted a new strategic model based on three key aims and thirteen outcomes supported by the organisation's aspirations for the way those aims and outcomes will be delivered. Now that the strategy is in place, it is essential to be clear about how we are going to achieve our aims and outcomes.
- 3.2 The proposed Medium Term Work Programme (MTWP) aims to set out a clear list of targets which will help the council to achieve the outcomes it has adopted. It is not an exhaustive list of every action to be taken over the next three years, but rather a list of those initiatives which are key to our success in improving the community, environmental and economic well-being of the district.
- 3.3 In February 2004 the Audit Commission undertook its comprehensive performance assessment of the council and the inspector's report outlines a range of identified weaknesses against the CPA methodology, many of which had already been identified during our self assessment process. It is proposed that the actions to address those weaknesses are included within the MTWP, in order to avoid duplication and confusion between a separate Improvement Plan and MTWP.

4. Medium Term Work Programme

- 4.1 In 2002 Cabinet adopted a Medium Term Work Programme which set out a range of activities designed to help the council achieve its (then) strategic objectives. Although the Programme has not been reported formally again to Cabinet, it has been used by

individual Cabinet Members to monitor progress against the former strategic objectives.

- 4.2 Since the original Medium Term Work Programme was compiled, Council has adopted its three key aims and thirteen outcomes to replace the strategic objectives. It is therefore necessary to revise the Medium Term Work Programme and consider its use within our performance management framework.
- 4.3 The performance management framework (represented diagrammatically at paragraph 4.6 below) is an iterative process which 'starts' with our overall strategy, which was adopted in December 2003 based on the three key aims for communities, the economy and the environment, and the thirteen outcomes we want to achieve to deliver those aims. The next stage is to identify how we will set about achieving those outcomes and the revised Medium Term Work Programme represents a 'high level' list of actions which are key to our success over the next three years.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the MTWP should not include reference to the delivery of each service, and every improvement initiative – service plans exist for that purpose. It should outline those areas of work which will make a substantial difference to the community, to the environment and to the economy of Aylesbury Vale. The targets identified in the MTWP should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resourced and Timed (SMART) to ensure clarity about what we are aiming to achieve, and provide clarity about how we measure our performance over time.
- 4.5 Identifying and reviewing performance information is an essential element of the performance management framework and monitoring progress of the MTWP will provide essential data to both officers and Members about how well we are achieving our key aims and outcomes. This will in turn inform future strategic and service planning, completing the performance management cycle.

4.6 Performance Management Framework

- 4.7 The MTWP covers a three year period commencing this financial year. It will be an evolving document, which will need to be amended, updated and added to over time, as strategies and action plans are developed or reviewed, as funding decisions are made, and as targets are achieved and new targets set.
- 4.8 Whilst individual Cabinet Members will be able to use the revised MTWP to monitor delivery of our identified outcomes, it is proposed that a progress report is provided to Cabinet and Scrutiny on a six monthly basis, perhaps starting this cycle in May 2005. At that time the document should also be updated to identify more detailed targets for 2005/06 and 2006/07, and outline targets for 2007/08 in line with the council's financial strategy.

5. **CPA Report**

- 5.1 The council's CPA inspection took place in February this year and the inspector's report was circulated to all Members on 24 June 2004. Our Audit commission Relationship Manager, Tony Beirne also visited the council on 20 July to discuss the result of the inspection with Members.
- 5.2 A summary of the inspector's judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of the council against the ten themes of the CPA inspection is attached as Appendix 2. The summary also includes:
- Explanatory notes alongside the identified weaknesses to clarify the points made by the inspector;
 - Information about the progress we have made to date in addressing the issues highlighted in the report, the majority of which were identified in our CPA Self Assessment; and
 - Information as to whether or not the action is included within the revised MTWP.
- 5.3 One of the weaknesses highlighted by the inspector was that of setting SMART targets. The Audit Commission is placing more and more emphasis on measuring the outcomes of our work, i.e.: the impact that it has in the community. It is therefore even more important to be clear about what we are aiming to achieve, and how we are going to measure our performance.
- 4.4 The Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee considered this summary document at its meeting on 27 July and their comments are attached at Appendix 3. It is proposed that the Communities, Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committees are given the opportunity to consider the CPA feedback along with the proposed MTWP. Scrutiny Committees may also wish to use the information within the MTWP to inform their work programmes in future as it lists those initiatives which are key to our success in achieving our aims.

6. CPA Diagnostic assessments

- 6.1 In addition to highlighting the council's strengths and weaknesses against the ten CPA themes, the inspector made judgments about our work on the Decent Homes Standard and Public Space, following a 'diagnostic' review of these two areas of our activity. Appendix 4 summarises those strengths and weaknesses and also includes:
- Explanatory notes alongside the identified weaknesses to clarify the points made by the inspector;
 - Information about the progress we have made to date in addressing the issues highlighted in the report, the majority of which were identified in our CPA Self Assessment; and
 - Information as to whether or not the action is included within the revised MTWP.
- 6.2 The result of the Decent Homes assessment reflects the position of the council at the time of the inspection – the progress with our stock options appraisal and the introduction of new housing maintenance software means that we have made a considerable amount of progress against this assessment to date.
- 6.3 The result of the public space assessment requires further consideration, to identify whether we accept the weaknesses as detailed by the inspector, and what action we might take to improve our performance in those areas.

7. Monitoring Performance

- 7.1 In order to monitor performance against delivery of the targets in the revised MTWP it is proposed that a progress report is submitted to Cabinet on a six monthly basis, with the first report being submitted in May 2005.
- 7.2 In addition Scrutiny Committees may wish to receive a progress report on the issues of relevance to their remit.

8. Options Considered and reasons for recommendation

- 8.1 Whether to retain and revise the MTWP?
The MTWP provides a summary of the actions key to the council's success in achieving its aims. It brings together actions included in a variety of strategies and actions plans across the range of council services and is therefore considered to be a useful tool in identifying and monitoring important areas of development and delivery.
- 8.2 Whether to continue to develop and monitor an Improvement Plan alongside the MTWP?
The current improvement plan could be updated to address the issues raised within the CPA report, in isolation from the Medium Term Work Programme. However, there would be extensive duplication which may lead to confusion. In addition, the improvements will be agreed on the basis of the contribution they make to our key aims and outcomes, and to improving our services to local people; CPA should therefore not be considered as an end in itself.

9. Resource Implications

- 9.1 The resource implications of each action will be highlighted in the Medium Term Work Programme and these are built into our current medium term financial strategy. There are no financial implications in the proposed arrangements for monitoring and reporting.

10. Response to Key Aims and Outcomes

- 10.1 The MTWP is a delivery mechanism for our key aims and outcomes. Improving the way in which we report and monitor progress against targets is in line with the council's organisational aspirations, in particular to work strategically and to be performance driven.

Contact Officer: Stephanie Moffat Tel: 01296 585295

Background Documents: CPA report – June 2004;
AVDC Self Assessment January 2004;
AVDC Improvement Plan January 2004
Report to Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee 27 July 2004
Medium Term Work Programme 2002 – 05