

Council
Monday 23rd July 2007
Report of the Portfolio Holder for Performance

A clear vision for Northampton

Corporate Plan

A constant criticism of Northampton Borough Council has been the absence of a clear sense of direction set out in a Corporate Plan. A Corporate Plan covering 2007/11 was agreed by Council on 28th June but the content biased towards the immediate “recovery agenda”. Work to produce the next plan covering 2008/12 has already commenced and will reflect the new administration’s priorities and vision for Northampton.

Best Value Performance Plan

The 2007/08 Best Value Performance Plan, an annual requirement of the Audit Commission, was approved by Council and submitted to the Audit Commission as required by the 30th June 2007. The performance management culture of the organisation and councillors must become a higher priority, therefore, the cabinet will receive a monthly report on performance management. The first of these was considered at Cabinet in June. Further consideration is being given to the performance monitoring needs of Overview & Scrutiny and Portfolio Holders and separate reports for these audiences are being considered.

Performance monitoring

Performance reviews are currently being undertaken with Directors and Corporate Managers. Further reviews are planned in 2 months time and the format and focus of the reviews is being considered.

Data Quality Audit

KPMG have recently undertaken a Data Quality Audit on behalf of the Audit Commission to ensure robustness of our Data Measurement systems and the results will be published later in the year. Considerable work has been undertaken introducing a Data strategy and Service action plans in line with the Audit Commissions best practice and the authority hopes to achieve at least data quality level 2 by 2008.

Straightforward, honest leadership

Human Resources

Following advice from the district auditor last year the previous administration agreed that the Highways DSO activity would cease to be managed by NBC at the end of June 2007. Discussions were held with Aktins and the DSO staff on the transfer of the activity and ongoing opportunities of employment with NBC. At the end of June 25 members of staff chose to transfer to other posts in NBC and 3 members of staff were transferred to Atkins.

The Single Status project is a major Pay and Grading review which this authority is undertaking as part of a national agreement. The project Board meets monthly to review progress and is working towards implementation in April 2008. Almost 400

jobs have to be evaluated and work in this area is generally on plan. The outcome of this work will have financial consequences for the authority and will need to be reflected in the 2008/09 budget setting.

Governance and Councillor Engagement

Arrangements for cross party engagement in training and services provided to councillors are being reviewed. It is hoped the first meeting of the group will be held shortly to agree terms of reference and review the induction training. Increasing the skills and capacity of the councillors is a vital part of the improvement agenda of this council.

The Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) Independent Remuneration Panel was commissioned to undertake work on behalf of NBC with regard to allowances in 2005 and they produce initial recommendations. The follow up work that they recommended was not completed and discussions are in hand with NCC to establish working arrangements that ensure that there is a clear work plan and long term objectives for this panel in respect of NBC requirements.

An open and efficient council

Maintaining compliance to legal duties

The Government's Home Improvement Pack (HIP) initiative relating to house purchases has not progressed as planned but local authorities providing House search information have received advice on the way to set their search charges. The cabinet have agreed revised Land Charges to reflect the true cost of providing this service. The full house search service provided by NBC will be maintained at the same charge.

New statutory responsibilities under the Gaming Act began on 21st May and will be fully operational from 1st September. Cabinet agreed an extra post in the Licensing section to cover the new statutory responsibilities and ensure proper regulation and compliance in Northampton.

IT Infrastructure and Connectivity

The intake of new councillors has required considerable work with regard to providing IT facilities and connectivity to the Borough Council. All councillors were provided with email facilities as soon as possible, with hardware following afterwards. The initial focus was to provide hardware facilities to new councillors and work will shortly moved to reviewing the hardware provision to re-elected councillors.

Planning is underway to provide a more up to date and efficient computer infrastructure for the Borough Council. This will mean that the computer systems will be supported by a number of servers rather than a single mainframe, reducing the long term maintenance costs of our computer systems. Prior to implementation considerable archiving work is required and this will be commissioned shortly.

Brian Hoare
10th July 2007