
REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES TO COUNCIL

1 DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2013-2018

- 1.1 This item of business was referred by the Executive on 6 March 2013 with a recommendation to approve the revised Corporate Plan for 2013 – 2018. An extract of the key elements of the report of the Chief Executive to the Executive is attached at appendix 1.
- 1.2 The Executive felt that the third bullet point on page 4 of the Plan should read: 'Delivery of efficiency savings against the current backdrop of continuing cuts in local government'.
- 1.3 Since the Executive meeting the implementation date for the introduction of Universal Credit in Essex has been announced as February 2014. Actions relating to this have now been included in the action plan.
- 1.4 A copy of the revised Corporate Plan for 2013 – 2018, which incorporates the revision referred to in paragraph 1.2 and inclusion referred to in paragraph 1.3 above, is attached at appendix 2.
- 1.5 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES** that the revised Corporate Plan for 2013 – 2018 be approved. (CE)

2 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- 2.1 This item of business was referred by the Executive on 6 March 2013 with a series of recommendations proposing changes to the Council's governance structure following on from the recent Peer Review of the Council. An extract of the key elements of the report of the Chief Executive to the Executive is attached at appendix 3.
- 2.2 At the Executive meeting Members expressed concern that it might be difficult to increase the size of the Review Committee, while at the same time identifying Members to work shadow Members of the Executive. It was emphasised that it was a matter for the Leader to determine the exact number of, and which, Members to work shadow Executive Members; it could range from, for example, 3 to 7 Members work shadowing Portfolio Holders, acknowledging the number of portfolios minus the Leader's overarching role and responsibilities.
- 2.3 It was acknowledged that a system of work shadowing could help provide additional expertise and aid with succession planning over a period of time, although there was no guarantee that a work shadowing role would automatically qualify a Member for consideration of an Executive role. It was noted that individual Portfolio Holders should be consulted by the Leader in terms of identifying potential Members who may work shadow them. All in all,

work shadowing could be seen as another aspect contributing to Member training and development. It was not envisaged that the work shadowing role would attract specific remuneration.

- 2.4 Overall, the recommendations put forward would, if implemented, be cost neutral, as no additional payments were proposed. There was some debate at the Executive around heritage responsibilities and whether they best remained with the Leisure, Arts and Culture side or best sat with Planning and Transportation. A case could be made for either, although it was acknowledged that the linkages to the built environment, listed buildings and conservation areas were important in the context of the District Council's roles and responsibilities.
- 2.5 During discussion around disbanding the Community Forums, particular attention was drawn to the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner public meetings, the first of which was scheduled for 28 March. Two such meetings would be scheduled per annum, in addition to the local neighbourhood police panels. It was also likely that the emerging clinical commissioning group (CCG) would require public meetings within the District as it would need to engage with residents. It would be useful if the District Council could work with the CCG to facilitate this.
- 2.6 It was further emphasised that local highways panels were held within the District, which included a regular public question time slot. In addition, ad hoc public meetings or consultation forums could still be scheduled to respond to any specific local issues, such as already occurred around the planning process.
- 2.7 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES**:-
- (1) That, from the next municipal year, the membership of the Review Committee be expanded from eight Members to fifteen Members, with the Chairmanship continuing to rest with a member of the main opposition party.
 - (2) That the specific functions carried out by the Review Committee be expanded to make clearer reference to its role in both the budget monitoring process and the forward planning around the budget and medium term financial strategy, including in-depth review and analysis of not just policy issues, but also service specific areas of work. Also, to include specific reference to the scope for joint reviews with adjoining Councils.
 - (3) That the Executive Portfolios and responsibilities be changed as follows:-
 - Environment to become Environment, Leisure, Arts and Culture.

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- Leisure, Tourism, Heritage, Arts, Culture and Business to become Economic Development, Regeneration, Business Liaison and Tourism.
 - Planning and Transportation to become Planning, Transport and Heritage.
- (4) That each of the Executive Portfolios allow for the possibility of a Member being nominated at any time to work shadow that Portfolio Holder, with a maximum of 7 Members work shadowing at any particular time (1 for each Portfolio Holder); these work shadowing arrangements to be facilitated by the Leader who will make the appropriate appointments.
- (5) That, in light of the above, the current two Member Champion roles be disbanded.
- (6) That the current East and West Community Forums be disbanded and replaced by a more tailored approach, which involves:-
- The Leader and appropriate Portfolio Holders, plus the Chairman of the Review Committee, meeting with the Leaders of the Parish and Town Councils two times a year to discuss matters of common interest across the District.
 - Working with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the local Joint Crime and Disorder Partnership to promote two public meetings per year on policing and crime in the District.
 - Working with the local Clinical Commissioning Group and local Joint Health and Wellbeing Board to promote two public meetings per year on health provision in the District.
 - Arranging other topic specific or area specific meetings as appropriate, as agreed by the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holders.
- (7) That, subject to agreement to (1) to (6) above, relevant changes be made to the Council's Constitution to reflect these decisions. (CE)

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2013-2018

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To recommend to Council that the revised Corporate Plan for 2013-2018 be approved.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Since 2006, the Council has revised the Corporate Plan on an annual basis. The format and content of the Corporate Plan has continued to be reviewed and updated each year. The latest draft plan attempts to build on the format and content of the 2012-2017 Corporate Plan and the feedback received from the recent Peer Review exercise.
- 2.2 The draft before Members tonight reflects the decisions taken as part of the 2013/2014 budget process and the content of the Council's Key Policies and Actions report.

3 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 3.1 A copy of the revised Corporate Plan for this year is attached as appendix 1. The Plan brings together the Council's main priorities; it picks up the key elements from the 2013/14 budget. Subject to Members' consideration and comment, the Plan, once approved, will be one of the main reference documents for the Council.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan is a working document which, along with the Annual Report (which will include a look back as to our performance and is finalised prior to the summer recess), explains what the Council is about, what it is focusing on and what it is aiming to do over a period. The Plan is seen as a key element in cementing linkages between service planning and the budget process and in particular the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2013/14 – 2017/18, which covers the same period.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The content of the Corporate Plan is in line with the decisions taken as part of the budget process.

The preparation of the Corporate Plan impacts upon, and will continue to require senior officer time, as it is produced and reviewed.

Corporate Plan 2013 – 2018



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What is the Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out Rochford District Council's short and medium term priorities, over the next five years, and is linked into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and budget process.

The Corporate Plan and its delivery plan is reviewed and updated annually. It takes into account national, regional, county-wide and local priorities. To inform the Council in setting priorities we use a range of information and intelligence, including the results of public consultation exercises undertaken in the District.

Most importantly the plan provides the Council's link to the key partnership structures operating in the District. The main partnership operating locally is the Joint Castle Point and Rochford Local Strategic Partnership. The Corporate Plan ensures the District Council's objectives support those of the Local Strategic Partnership.

Internally, the Corporate Plan is underpinned by Divisional Plans and individual staff and team priorities are picked up through the Performance Review process. The Corporate Plan does not set out everything the Council does. However, it attempts to focus on the 'headline' items and provides clarity around where the Council plans to concentrate its activity. The Plan should be read in association with the Council's Annual Report, which is published in July, and gives details of how we have performed over the last year.

Key Policies

The following list highlights the main policies and strategies of the Council which support delivery of the Corporate Plan.

- The Local Development Framework.
- The Joint Area Action Plan for London Southend Airport.

- Individual Action Plans for Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh Town Centres.
- The Asset Management Plan.
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Workforce Development Plan.
- Housing Strategy.

The Rochford District – in figures:

Population: 83,287 (census 2011)

Ranks 299 out of 326 authorities nationally – where 1 is the most deprived (IMD 2010)

84% of homes owner occupied

8.5% of households are privately rented (census 2011)

76.9% of residents in employment compared to a regional figure of 74.1% (nomisweb July 2011 – June 2012)

5.5% of residents unemployed

compared to a regional figure of 6.7% (nomisweb July 2011 – June 2012)

The Council

The Council employs approximately 210 full-time equivalent staff, with key services contracted to the private sector, for example, refuse collection, recycling, street cleansing, grounds maintenance, leisure management and the IT service.

The Council has a flat management structure headed by a Chief Executive, supported by 6 Heads of Service. These Heads of Service lead the management of a particular service area. A copy of the Council's organisational structure is included at Appendix 1. The geographical composition of the Council by wards is shown at Appendix 2.

The Council has 39 elected Members, has a Conservative administration and the political composition is as follows:

- 31 Conservative;
- 4 Liberal Democrat;
- 2 Rochford District Residents;
- 2 Green.

For the past four years the Council has operated a ‘strong leader’ model of government, with the Leader appointing seven members to the Executive and allocating portfolios to those members. The members of the Executive and their portfolios are included at Appendix 3.

Our Services

Local Government in Essex is structured into what is commonly termed as a ‘two-tier’ structure, with responsibilities and service provision shared between district and county councils.

For the District of Rochford, Essex County Council, Rochford District Council and the Town and Parish Councils work together with a range of other partners to provide a large range of services to the public.

Rochford District Council includes:

Environmental Services: Refuse Collection, Recycling, Street Cleansing, Public Open Spaces & Woodlands, Environmental Health and Licensing

Community Services: Leisure and Culture, Benefits, Council Tax, Community Safety and Strategic Housing

Planning & Transportation Services: Development Management, Building Control, Spatial Planning Policy, Planning Enforcement, Taxi Licensing, Car Parking and Economic Development and Regeneration.

Legal, Estates and Member Services: Committee services, Legal, Asset Management, Land Charges and Burials.

Information & Customer Services: Elections, Customer Services, office support, Information and Communication Technologies.

Finance: Audit, Financial Services and Performance Management.

Chief Executive Services: Human resources, policy development, partnerships, health and safety, emergency planning and business continuity, internal and external communications and staff engagement.

Our Vision for Rochford

The Council’s vision is shared with that of the Castle Point and Rochford Joint Local Strategic Partnership:

To make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here

To support its vision, the Council has three main corporate objectives for 2013 – 2018, these are:

-  **Making a difference to our community**
-  **Making a difference to our environment**
-  **Making a difference to our local economy**

Our vision and our three corporate objectives translate into the things that we do; our key strategic documentation such as this Corporate Plan, the Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF); the services we deliver and the facilities we provide.

Our Long Term Priorities

Over the next five years the Council aims to continue to improve its services to local communities as well as enhancing the difference it makes to the local economy and environment.

Over the next few years, the Council will focus on the following three key themes:

- Wealth creation in the District through supporting economic growth and job creation;
- The provision of housing in the District; and
- Delivery of efficiency savings against the current backdrop of continuing cuts in local government.

The Council has spent a considerable amount of time and resources on ensuring the appropriate planning framework is in place through the production of its Core Strategy. The focus must now transfer from plan and policy making to implementation. In this way the Council aims to assist the development of the local economy and take advantage of the development opportunities presented by London Southend Airport. The Council also aims to increase the number of its housing and affordable housing units delivered annually to meet the housing needs of the District. A key challenge for the Council is to continue to improve and meet the increasing and changing expectations of our customers, whilst at the same time having a much reduced level of grant funding from Central Government. This situation will inevitably pose a dilemma which the Council will work hard to minimise. The introduction of the Rates Retention and Local Council Tax Support Schemes now means that our funding is directly linked to economic growth and the creation of jobs within the district. The reduction in main Government funding for 2013/14 is £483,000 (14%). Since 2010/11, our funding has reduced by 29% in real terms.

Our Priorities for 2013/14

For more detail on the specific actions we will take in 2013/14 to deliver our three key themes, please refer to the detailed action plan.

Our Values

In working to achieve our vision and ensure delivery against our corporate objectives the Council will carry out its work in accordance with a set of values which it thinks are important:

- Be an open, accountable, listening, responsive Council.
- Put the customer and citizen at the heart of everything that we do, delivering services in a caring and sensitive manner.
- Co-ordinate the management of resources with an emphasis on sustainability.
- Value the contribution of partners, employees and citizens, trusting each other and working collaboratively.

Action Plan

The Corporate Plan Action Plan highlights our key targets that the authority will be working towards over the next twelve months.

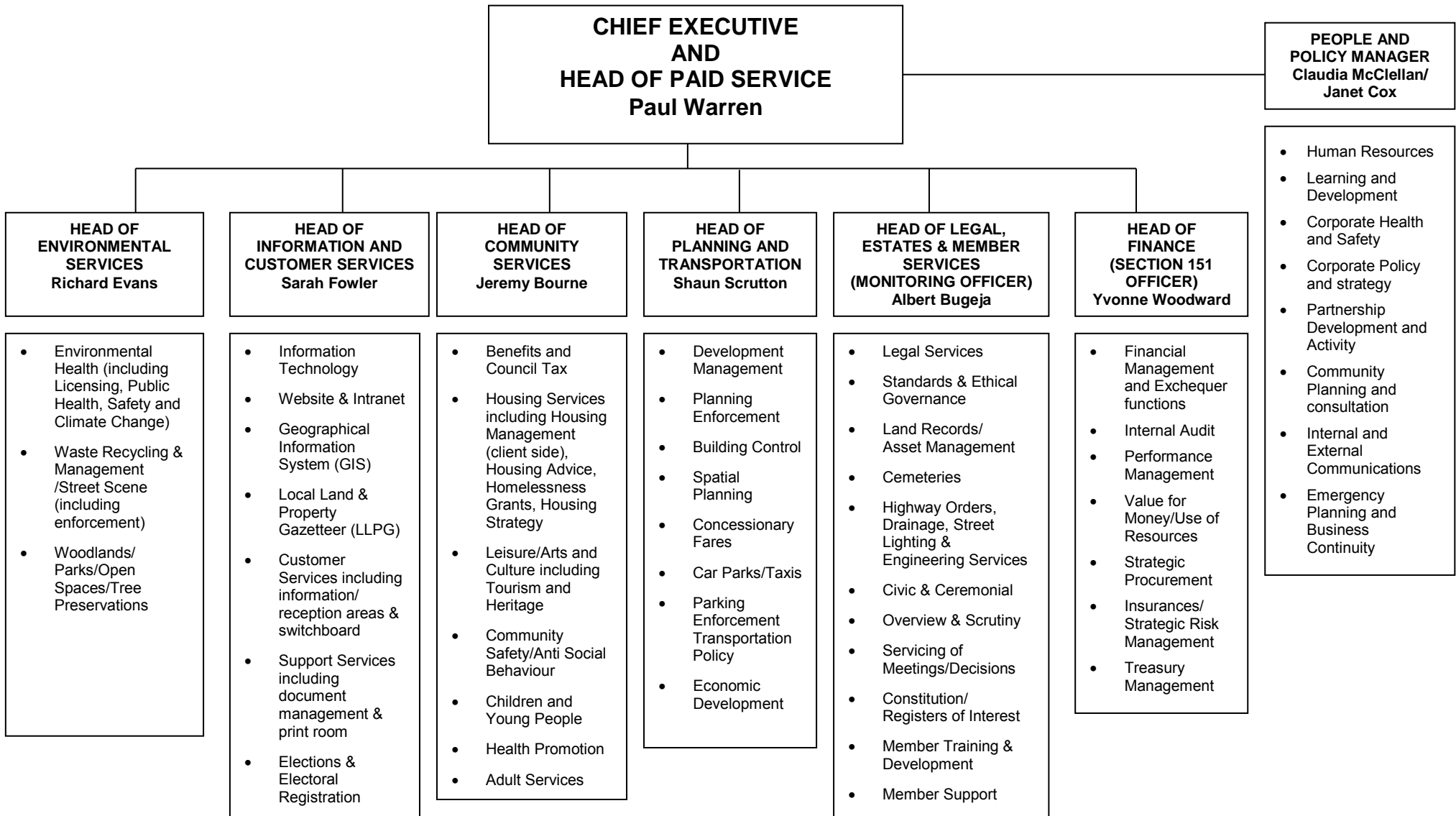
Making a difference to our communities			
Outcomes	Deadline	Key Activities & Actions	Portfolio Holder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency savings and opportunities for increased income including shared service working and providing services to third parties identified. 	March 2014	Monitor and report on achievement of efficiency targets for 2013/14. Monitor and report on income and shared service working. Conduct service reviews.	Leader/Finance and Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) is implemented, monitored and reviewed. 	December 2013	Ensuring Local Council Tax Support Scheme reporting and recording is suitable. Monitor LCTS expenditure against the available forecast budgets. Review and amend the scheme, in accordance with the level of funding allocated for 2014/15 and expenditure levels incurred in 2013/14.	Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income from the new Business Rates Retention scheme is maximised 	On going	Establish new in-house arrangements for administering the collection of business rates. Implement effective collection activity.	Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capita calls contract reviewed, in conjunction with the work on the new telephone replacement project. 	March 2014	Review performance of Capita against Service Level Agreement. Ensure specification of new telephone system can meet the needs of this work. Conduct assessment as to most effective means of delivering the service, from a customer and cost perspective by October 2013.	Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing/Service Development, Improvement & Performance Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive Local development Framework (LDF) 	March 2014	The preparation and implementation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley town centre plans. Development management policies. Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP) in partnership with Southend BC covering London Southend Airport and its environs. Allocations Framework. 	Planning, Transportation & Heritage

Making a difference to our communities			
Outcomes	Deadline	Key Activities & Actions	Portfolio Holder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of new Housing Strategy 	March 2014	Review content of draft strategy following the Peer Review. Produce action plan for achieving the objectives of the strategy.	Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to Access to Services made. 	March 2014	Agree overall work programme of projects to be carried out. Replace Council's main telephone system. Assess options and determine procurement route by May 2013. Implementation of system by March 2014. Implementation of the new IT contract.	Service Development, Improvement & Performance Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain the Investors in People Gold Standard. 	February 2014	Run staff survey and develop an action plan for improvements required Continue to roll out e-learning and other development programmes such as the Institute of Leadership and management development programmes and people management training workshops. Run our annual 'Gold Workshops' to increase staff understanding of key work areas. Re-assessment in February 2014.	Finance and Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational Development Plan in place which supports the Corporate Plan and addresses Peer Review feedback. 	March 2014	Planning workshop with SMT to identify key issues and actions required. Development and continual monitoring and evaluation/amendment of the organisational development plan through senior management team meetings.	Finance and Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and preparing for the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) 	February 2014	Review the DWP UC Local Support Services framework and identify implications and options Carry out a Business Change Impact Assessment based on information provided by DWP. Engage with DWP and Jobcentre Plus to discuss what needs to be done in preparation for UC.	Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing

Making a difference to our environment			
Outcomes	Deadline	Key Activities & Actions	Portfolio Holder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve recycling rates towards a target of 70%. 	On going	Consolidate and modify the recycling scheme to maximise our recycling rates. Weekly collection of waste from flats by June 2013.	Environment, Leisure, Arts & Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term grounds maintenance solution in place 	November 2013	Cemeteries operations bought in house by July 2013 at latest New contract operational by November 2013 Management arrangements for pavilions reviewed	Environment, Leisure, Arts & Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further development of Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park 	March 2014	Funding bid submitted to enhance access and biodiversity in October 2013. Commence work on a Pet Memorial Area in May 2013	Environment, Leisure, Arts & Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Street Cleansing and Waste Management Contracts in place 	March 2014	Negotiate with contractor over extension of contract. Engage with members to determine required outcomes and savings	Environment, Leisure, Arts & Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise income from MRF contract 	January 2014	Negotiations with current contractor Market testing to secure best long term solution.	Environment, Leisure, Arts & Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of Columbarium at Rayleigh Cemetery 	May 2013	Start work onsite in March/April 2013 Operational from May 2013	Environment, Leisure, Arts & Culture

Making a difference to our local economy			
Outcomes	Deadline	Key Activities & Actions	Portfolio Holder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue wealth creation initiatives 	On going	<p>Review and update the Council’s Economic Development Strategy and associated action plan to further address the issues of recession and encourage regeneration.</p> <p>Support and promote the creation of new businesses</p> <p>Encourage development of new business premises and business parks</p> <p>Support business to develop staff and seek opportunities to align training and skills with business requirements</p> <p>Support development of rural business through local development frameworks</p> <p>Ensuring council operations and policies support the local economy and its sustainability wherever possible.</p> <p>Redevelopment of Acacia House</p>	<p>Economic Development, Regeneration, Business Liaison & Tourism/ Planning, Transportation & Heritage</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of houses and affordable housing units 	On going	<p>Work closely with developers and landowners to bring forward housing sites set out in Core Strategy</p> <p>Carefully consider the viability of housing sites set against requirement for financial contributions and percentage of affordable housing</p> <p>Ensure mix of housing on new sites reflects the needs of the district’s population</p>	<p>Planning, Transportation & Heritage/ Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing</p>

Appendix 1 – Organisational Chart



Appendix 2 – Map of District



Legend

Wards

- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|----|------------------|----|-------------|
| 1 | Ashingdon and Canewdon | 8 | Hawkwell West | 15 | Rochford |
| 2 | Barling and Sutton | 9 | Hockley Central | 16 | Sweyne Park |
| 3 | Downhall and Rawreth | 10 | Hockley North | 17 | Trinity |
| 4 | Foulness and Great Wakering | 11 | Hockley West | 18 | Wheatley |
| 5 | Grange | 12 | Hullbridge | 19 | Whitehouse |
| 6 | Hawkwell North | 13 | Lodge | | |
| 7 | Hawkwell South | 14 | Rayleigh Central | | |

Appendix 3 – Executive Appointments – 2013/14

Portfolios	Appointee
Overall Strategy and Policy Direction (Leader)	Cllr T G Cutmore
Planning, Transportation & Heritage (Deputy Leader)	Cllr K H Hudson
Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing Functions	Cllr M Maddocks
Environment, Leisure, Arts & Culture	Cllr M J Steptoe
Finance and Resources	Cllr C G Seagers
Economic Development, Regeneration, Business Liaison & Tourism	Cllr K J Gordon
Service Development/Improvement & Performance Management	Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill
Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care and Well-Being, Health and Community Safety	Cllr Mrs J E McPherson



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PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

1.1 Recommended to Full Council that from the next municipal year:-

- i) The membership of the Review Committee is expanded from eight Members to fifteen Members, with the Chairmanship continuing to rest with a Member of the main opposition party.
- ii) The specific functions carried out by the Review Committee are expanded to make clearer reference to its role in both the budget monitoring process and the forward planning around the budget and medium term financial strategy, including in-depth review and analysis of not just policy issues, but also service specific areas of work. Also, to include specific reference to the scope for joint reviews with adjoining Councils.
- iii) The Executive Portfolios and responsibilities be changed as follows:-
Environment to become Environment, Leisure, Arts and Culture.
Leisure, Tourism, Heritage, Arts, Culture and Business to become Economic Development, Regeneration, Business Liaison and Tourism.
Planning and Transportation to become Planning, Transport and Heritage
- iv) Each of the Executive Portfolios allow for a Member to work shadow each of the Portfolio holders; these work shadowing arrangements to be facilitated by the Leader who will make the appropriate appointments.
- v) In light of iv) above, the current two Member champion roles be disbanded.
- vi) The current East and West Community Forums be disbanded and replaced by a more tailored approach, which involves:-
 - 1) The Leader and appropriate Portfolio Holders, plus the Chairman of the Review Committee, meeting with the leaders of the Parish and Town Councils two times a year to discuss matters of common interest across the District.
 - 2) Working with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the local Joint Crime and Disorder Partnership to promote two public meetings per year on policing and crime in the District.

- 3) Working with the local Clinical Commissioning Group and local Joint Health and Wellbeing Board to promote two public meetings per year on health provision in the District.
- 4) Arranging other topic specific or area specific meetings as appropriate, as agreed by the Leader and relevant Portfolio holders.
- vii) Subject to the agreement to i) to vi) above, the relevant changes be made to the Council's constitution to reflect these decisions.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

Context

- 2.1 This report picks up on some of the suggestions arising from the recent Peer Review of the Council in respect of governance and decision making, as well as political leadership and capacity. In particular, the report focuses on the operation of the Review Committee, the capacity of the Executive and the Council's engagement with the community through community forums and area committees.

The Review Committee

- 2.2 The Peer Review team concluded that it would be appropriate for the Council to re-examine the size of the Review Committee. They consider that there may be merit in increasing the Committee's membership and getting more Members involved, thereby increasing its capacity and ability to undertake more work, particularly in connection with the budget and around performance relative to the budget pressures the Council is facing. The team also felt there was scope to undertake further joint work with other Councils, especially in connection with joint partnership work and joint partnership structures.
- 2.3 The Peer Review team warn of the need to clarify the relationship between Audit and an expanded Review Committee around such issues as finance, but in reality the Audit Committee tends to look retrospectively in terms of budget and service issues, whilst an expanded role for Review would encompass a more forward looking and pro-active approach to the budget process.
- 2.4 In response to the Peer Review team's suggestions, it is therefore proposed that from the 2013/14 municipal year, the size of the Committee is increased from eight to fifteen members and that its functions are expanded to incorporate a more proactive approach to the budget process. For example, through feeding into the Medium Term Financial Strategy and examining future options in terms of expenditure and income generation. It is also proposed that greater emphasis be placed on the scope for joint working with other authorities around areas of common interest.

The Executive

- 2.5 The Peer Review team saw merit in reinforcing the Council's ambitions around wealth and prosperity and with that in mind, felt that there would be benefit in ensuring that within the Executive, greater emphasis was given to economic regeneration and promotion and development. With that in mind, it is suggested that a specific portfolio is created around Economic Development, Regeneration, Business Liaison and Tourism. That could be done through rationalising the current Leisure, Tourism, Heritage, Arts, Culture and Business portfolio, with Leisure, Arts and Culture moving to Environment and Heritage to Planning and Transportation.
- 2.6 The Peer Review team refer to future political leadership and capacity and in an attempt to develop that aspect, it is proposed that a formal work shadowing arrangement be put in place for the Executive, with each Portfolio Holder being allowed one other Member for work shadowing purposes. As with appointments to the Executive, the Leader would nominate Members for these work shadowing roles, such nominations being made at Annual Council.
- 2.7 If the above changes were put in place, it is felt that there would be no further rationale to retain the current Member Champion positions, whose roles and responsibilities have at times been far from clear.

Community Forums

- 2.8 Whilst the Peer Review team has looked at governance, decision making and political leadership, it did not look specifically at the issue of Community Forums. The Council took the decision to move to Community Forums a couple of years ago, as a successor to Area Committees. However, the Forums have not attracted many public and they have certainly not developed as originally envisaged.
- 2.9 Other than where there are specific issues that readily attract public interest, it does appear that a number of Authorities are struggling with a Community Forum type format, particularly where there are local Parish and Town Councils. As part of the debate around the way forward, it is suggested that rather than continue with the existing arrangements, the opportunity is taken to work with other partner agencies to facilitate specific subject only public meetings. For example, to work with the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner and the local Joint Community Safety Partnership to arrange local public meetings around Police and Crime and to do something similar with the local Clinical Commissioning Group around local health provision. Other local issues can then be picked up as appropriate and where necessary, local public meetings can be arranged.

3 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The changes outlined above represent both reputational and resource risks for the Council. However, if successful, they would help grow the overall

capacity of the Council and in many ways, represent a logical development to the way in which the Council has changed over time.

- 3.2 To not respond to the Peer Review and ignore the Review team's findings could be seen to be damaging in terms of the Council's reputation and the perception of the Authority within the local government community.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The changes outlined in this report would have minimal financial implications, although the deletion of the two remaining champion posts would save £850, which could be set aside for further Member training and development, either for the proposed work shadowing roles or for further Review Committee training. The costs currently allocated for Forum meetings (£500) would be reallocated to the tailored meeting arrangements proposed under recommendation (vi).