

OUR IMPROVEMENT AGENDA

2004-2007

**ROCHFORD DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

NOVEMBER 2004

**ROCHFORD DISTRICT
COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO
THE AUDIT COMMISSION'S
CPA REPORT PUBLISHED
IN SEPTEMBER 2004**

FROM THE CPA, THE COUNCIL'S MAIN STRENGTHS WERE IDENTIFIED AS:

- The Council provides some good quality services, such as leisure and income collection
- Overall, public satisfaction is high
- To build capacity for improved services, the Council works well in partnership with other organisations
- The Council is successful in attracting external funding

AREAS TO IMPROVE FOCUSSED UPON THE FOLLOWING:

- Clearer articulation of the Council's overall ambition with due weight being given to national priorities
- Completing the Authority's key planning documents to provide a more structured strategic framework which clearly links together
- Reviewing and developing the Member role in the formal decision making process
- Engagement with the public around their needs and priority setting

AREAS TO IMPROVE FOCUSSED UPON THE FOLLOWING:

- Developing internal and external capacity to deliver the Council's plans
- Specifically targetting the Council's services for vulnerable people on Housing Benefit/Council tax and homelessness to secure improvement
- Developing the Council's culture of performance management

TO PROVIDE A CLEARER ARTICULATION OF OUR VISION, WE PLAN:

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To progress the Corporate Vision of Rochford as the place of choice in the County, to live, work and visit with key targets including broad timeframes for delivery over a 20 year period	12-14 months	Chief Executive/Leader	Corporate Policy Manager (CPM)	Audit of Existing Strategies and Actions	By June 2005	From within existing resources but to carry out Audit and additional strategic development work, capacity building grant to be sought from ODPM. At this stage estimate £80k	
			CPM	Audit of National Priorities	By June 2005		
			Audit and Process Review Manager (ARPM)	Analysis of Needs identified within existing consultation exercises to date to determine basis for further consultation	By June 2005		
			CPM/APRM	Member "Visioning" Awayday held	July 2005		

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
			CPM	Undertake public consultation	Sept/Oct 2005		
			CPM	Feedback draft Vision and public responses into Member Budget Awayday	Nov 2005		
			CPM/Head of Financial Services (HFS)	Finalise Council vision and 5 year Budget Strategy	By end of Jan 2006		
			CPM	Outcome agreed by Council	Feb 2006		
			CPM	Corporate Strategy produced	April 2006		Clear vision contained in Corporate Strategy

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To relook at all Council strategies/plans to identify linkages/gaps and amend accordingly	2 years from April 2006	Chief Executive/Leader and relevant policy Chairmen	CPM and relevant Heads of Service (HOS)	Review purpose and use of existing strategies	By Dec 2006	From existing staff resource base	
				Delete non essential strategies	By Dec 2006		
				Evaluate remaining in terms of linkages and gaps and amend accordingly.	By April 2007		
				Non-Statutory strategies amended	By April 2007		
				Statutory Strategies to be revised in accordance with statutory timeframes and procedures	From April 2007 through to end of 2008		
							Clear linkages with Corporate Strategy and clarity around strategic documentation

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To review Community Strategy in the light of agreement to the Corporate Strategy	From April 2006 for 12 month period	Chief Executive/Leader	CPM	Through the Local Strategic Partnership, review the Community Strategy and Action Plan and amend in light of agreed Corporate Strategy Publicise and consult on changes Local Strategic Partnership to agree revised document and Action Plan	April to July 2006 Sept/Oct 2006 By March 2007	From existing resources	Clear linkage between Council's Corporate Strategy and the District-wide Community Strategy produced by the Local Strategic Partnership

TO PROGRESS THE COUNCIL'S KEY PLANNING DOCUMENTS, WE PLAN:

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
Adopt a new revised Local Plan	14-16 months	Head of Planning Services (HPS) Chairman of Environmental Services Committee/ Chairman of Planning Services Committee	HPS	Public Local Inquiry held	Feb 2005	Within existing resources and supported by Planning Development Grant	
			HPS	Inspector's Report received	By Aug/Sep 2005		
			HPS	Amendments/ Revisions considered and agreed	Sept 2005 Through to Feb 2006		
			HPS	Plan adopted by Council	By April 2006		Adopted Development Plan in place

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To have a "Fit for Purpose" Housing Strategy	Within 4 months	Head of Housing, Health and Community Care (HH&CC)/ Chairman of Community Services	HH&CC	Final amendments agreed by Council	Dec 2004	Within existing budget provision	
			Head of Revenue and Housing Management (HRHM)	Draft Business Plan submitted to ODPM for comment	Dec 2004		
			HRHM	Business Plan agreed by Council	Feb 2005		
			HH&CC/HRHM	Housing Strategy and Business Plan "signed off" by ODPM	Feb 2005		
			HH&CC/HRHM	Housing Strategy and Business Plan published	April 2005		
							"Fit for Purpose" Housing Strategy and Business Plan in place

TO DEVELOP THE MEMBER ROLE, WE PLAN:

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To expand the existing Member Training & Development Programme to include further work around Overview & Scrutiny, decision making, chairmanship and leadership capacity	Over the next 2 years	Chief Executive/ Chairman of the Standards Committee	HAMS	Further training elements in place for areas by 2005/2006 Training & Development Programme	From April 2005	£10,000 additional funding to be sought within 2005/2006 budget	Increased Member knowledge and expertise
			HAMS	Evaluate progress at end of 2005/2006 programme amend accordingly for 2006/2007	March/ April 2006		

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To review the effective operation of Overview and Scrutiny Process	14 to 16 months	Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Admin)/Leader	Head of Legal Services (HLS)	Look at best practice elsewhere particularly in relation to 4 th option authorities, including visits to appropriate authorities	Mar-July 2005	No specific budget implications	More effective O&S Committee process
			HLS	Benchmark current performance against best practice	Sept-Nov 2005		
			HLS	Evaluate options	Jan-March 2006		
			HLS	Implement proposed changes	From June 2006		

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To review the effective operation of Planning Services Committee		Head of Planning Services (HPS)/ Chairman of Environment Services Committee/ Chairman of Planning Services Committee	HPS	Look at best practice elsewhere, including site visits	Mar-July 2005	No specific budget implications	
			HPS	Benchmark current performance against best practice	Sept-Nov 2005		
			HPS	Consult applicants and residents to seek their views on possible options	Oct/Nov 2005		
			HPS	Evaluate options	Jan-March 2006		
			HPS	Implement proposed changes	From June 2006		More effective PS Committee

TO IMPROVE OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PUBLIC, WE PLAN:

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To evaluate existing consultation outcomes		Chief Executive/ Leader	Audit and Process Review Manager (APRM)	Identify methods of consultation corporately and on individual services and evaluate feedback	By Dec 2004	From within existing resources	Improved feedback from the public
			APRM	Identify best practice and opportunities for improvement	By March 2005		
			HOS	Implement suggestions	From April 2005		

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To review and revise our Consultation and Communications Strategy	Over next 4 months	Chief Executive/Leader	CPM	Amend existing strategy in light of above taking into account best practice elsewhere Approval of Revised Strategy	By March 2005 April 2005	From within existing resources	Clearer framework for engaging with the public

TO DEVELOP INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CAPACITY, WE PLAN TO:

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To complete the review of our organisational structure	8 months	Chief Executive/Leader	Chief Executive	Complete review of alternatives	By April 2005	To be determined	Management and operational structure aligned with changing environment
			Chief Executive	Agree Way Forward	By July 2005		
			Chief Executive	Commence Implementation	From October 2005		

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To implement the Council's Workforce Development Plan	Over the next 5 years	Chief Executive/ Leader	CMB/HOS/ HRM	<p>Promote leadership capacity of the Council amongst Members and staff through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing and enhancing our Member Training & Development Programme - Developing our management and staff training programmes (see below) - Development of a succession management programme 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>By Oct 2005</p>	£10,000 additional budget estimate for Member Training Programme	

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
			CMB/HOS/HRM	<p>Development of Skills Capacity of Workforce through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investors in People accreditation gained and maintained - Review and Improvement of PDR process - Continued development of the staff induction programme - Continuous adaption of the staff training and development programme to remain responsive to the organisation and staffs' needs 	<p>From April 2005</p> <p>From Nov 2004</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	No additional budget requirement	

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
			CMB/HOS/HRM	<p>Developing the organisation through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving communications across the organisation - Upgrade the staff skills and qualifications information base - Completing the review of our recruitment and retention policies - Addressing issues around sickness absence - Upgrading our workforce planning systems 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>By Dec 2005</p> <p>By Dec 2005</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	No additional budgetary requirement at this stage	

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
			CMB/HRM	<p>Progressing our image as an employer in the local community through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with partners to improve the image of local government as a career of choice - Developing career path structures within the organisation - Improving recruitment access to jobs and opportunities available - With partners, work on securing recruits to areas of known shortage 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>By Dec 2005</p> <p>By Sept 2005</p> <p>By June 2005</p>	No additional budgetary requirement at this stage	

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
			CMB/HRM	Review staff pay and reward system through - Implementation of Job Evaluation system for staff - Implementation of Job Evaluation system for managers	By April 2005 By April 2006	Likely additional budgetary provision included in current budget strategy	Increased capacity amongst Members and staff
To undertake a review of all main partner arrangements	Over next 12 months	Chief Executive/Leader/ Chairmen of O/S Committee	CPM/ respective HOS CPM/ Respective HOS CPM/ Respective HOS	Identify existing main partner arrangements Evaluate benefits and outcomes Determine the way forward	By March 2005 April-Sept 2005 Nov 2005	No additional resources	Clarity around main partnerships and their operation

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To improve capacity in relation to waste collection and recycling	Over next 3 years	Corporate Director (Finance and External Services)/ Chairman of Environmental Services Committee	Leisure and Contracts Manager (LCM)	Agree strategy and commitment to joint procurement process	Nov 2004	£9,300 over period 2004-2007	
			LCM	Participation in the establishment of Joint Committee to oversee the procurement process	By March 2005		
			LCM	Development of Overarching Bidding Framework	By May 2005		
			LCM	Selection of Preferred Bidders	By Oct 2005		
			LCM	Tender Submission and evaluation	By Oct 2006		

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
			LCM	Approve way	By Jan 2007	To be determined	More integrated approach to waste and recycling
			LCM	Commence implemen- tation	From 2008		
To deliver the Government's Decent Homes Agenda through the Housing Option Appraisal Process	Over the next 3 years	HRHM/Chairman of Community Services	Housing Manager (HM)	Option Appraisal Board consider recommendations to Council	By Feb 2005	Costs of process already included in the Council budget	
			HM	Council takes decision on way forward	By Feb 2005		
			HM	Submit preferred Option to the Government	By March 2005		
			HM	Obtain Government approval of the proposed Option	By Sept 2005		

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
			HM	Commence work on chosen path Completion of Scheme	By April 2006 By April 2008		Capacity in place to deliver the Decent Homes agenda by 2010

TO IMPROVE THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN CONNECTION WITH HOUSING BENEFIT AND HOMELESSNESS, WE PLAN:

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To secure continuous improvement in the Housing Benefit Service	Over the next 16 months	Head of Revenues and Housing Management (HRHM) Chairman of Finance and Procedures O/S	Housing Benefits Manager (HBM)	Implement the HB Improvements Plan in respect of: Strategic Management Customer Services Processing of Claims	 By Dec 2005 By March 2005 By July 2005	£25,000 additional funding sought within 2005/2006 budget	Improved performance in the Benefits Service

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To build capacity and efficiencies around the Housing Benefit Service	Over the next 2 years	HRHM/Chairman of Finance and Procedures	HRHM/HBM	Evaluate options for capacity building and increased efficiency including partnership working with other Authorities	By Oct 2005	Additional funding sought utilising ODPM capacity building grant to carry out this work. At this stage, estimate at £60k	More resilient and efficient service
			HRHM/HBM	Take decision on the way forward	By Dec 2005		
			HRHM/HBM	Implement	From April 2006		

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To secure continuous improvement of the Homelessness Service over a sustained period	Over next 3 years	HH&CC/Chairman of Community Services	HH&CC/RSM	<p>Appoint additional Homelessness Housing Admin Officer</p> <p>Appoint Service Development Officer</p> <p>Ensure 85% of applications decided within 33 working days</p> <p>To review provision of housing advice services to improve homelessness prevention</p> <p>To develop the Council's rent and deposit schemes</p>	<p>By Jan 05</p> <p>By Jan 05</p> <p>By April 2005</p> <p>By Sept 2005</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	Additional £20k pa for 3 years	Improved service to clients

TO DEVELOP OUR CULTURE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT, WE PLAN:

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To introduce upgraded performance management system highlighting key targets and priorities including risk assessment	Over next 12-14 months	Chief Executive/Leader	APRM	Evaluate our existing performance management mechanisms	By March 2005	From within existing resources	More focus on performance management rather than monitoring
			APRM	Examine best practice elsewhere	By March 2005		
			APRM	Introduce revised Performance Management System	From April 2005		
			APRM	Review and refine as appropriate throughout the year	From April 2005 to March 2006		
			APRM	New system up and running	From April 2006		
3.29							

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
To consolidate culture of Performance Management with accountability across the organisation	Ongoing	Chief Executive/Leader	HOS Chief Executive/ Human Resources Manager (HRM)	Re-inforcement of targets and performance culture through the Staff PDR process Performance Management key targets included in staff induction process	Ongoing Ongoing	From within existing resources	Improved Performance Management Culture
To develop our cost comparison base	Over next 12 months	Head of Financial Services /Chairman of Finance & Procedures O/S Committee	HFS	Develop baseline positions to measure performance improvements against cost changes for all the major contracts	By Dec 2005	From within existing resources	

APPENDIX A

Action	Time scale	Overall Responsibility Officer/Member	Detailed Officer Responsibility	Key Milestones	When its going to be done	Cost Implications	Outcome
			HFS	Develop baseline positions to measure performance improvements against cost changes for services delivered "in house"	By Dec 2005		
			HFS	Review on an annual basis	Yearly from Dec 2005		Greater awareness of costs and better comparative cost data