

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

27 January 2009

Report of Council Leader and Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2009/10

This report proposes a revised set of priorities for 2009/10, taking account of progress achieved against our 2008/09 priorities.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Our improvement priorities for 2008/09 were agreed in February 2008 and are set out in Spotlight, our 2008/09 Corporate Performance Plan (CPP). Many of them are medium to long term and are carried forward each year to retain our focus on achieving improvements where these are most warranted. However, they do need to be reviewed annually and updated where necessary to ensure that they continue to reflect current and foreseeable circumstances.

1.1.2 We were encouraged to identify a small number of key priorities through the CPA process and identified eight key priorities for 2008/09, where we particularly wanted to achieve improvements. The eight are:

- Identify the opportunities and achieve the benefits for Tonbridge & Malling flowing from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007)
- Enhance the vitality of Tonbridge town centre
- Add to the supply of affordable housing and reduce the incidence of homelessness
- Give priority to involving and meeting the needs of young people
- Achieve a cleaner, smarter and better maintained street scene and open space environment
- Promote, encourage and provide opportunities for healthy living

- Reduce:
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - Criminal damage
 - Offences against the person
 - Substance misuse
 - Environmental crime
- Make a positive local contribution to tackling the causes and effects of climate change

Each of these priorities requires the involvement of more than a single Service and some involve all Services.

1.1.3 While recognising that it is good practice to identify a small number of key priorities, we also made explicit our intention to achieve real progress against a range of other priorities. Our other 2008/09 priorities are broadly based and span most areas of Council activity. Many of these are service-level priorities.

1.1.4 Our key and service improvement priorities are one of the main drivers by which we continually improve performance. Along with their associated improvement actions, they are allocated to Services, sections and individuals through the Council's performance management system. Progress is monitored continuously at these levels in addition to the half year progress report to Cabinet, the summary presented in this report and as reported in our annual CPP.

1.2 Updating our Priorities for 2009/10

1.2.1 Annex 1 (separate document) sets out our existing priorities for 2008/09 and indicates significant progress to date in implementing their associated improvement actions. It sets out three proposed new priorities for next year and identifies six existing priorities for deletion. This includes one deleted key priority. The proposed new priorities are highlighted with light shading to help with identification. Priorities proposed for deletion are highlighted with darker shading.

1.2.2 The existing and proposed new priorities have been assessed against a number of criteria to evaluate whether they are appropriate to be carried forward to, or are suitable for adoption in, 2009/10. The criteria used relate to:

- the extent of support for the activity expressed by public consultation
- whether the matter is a national priority
- whether there is a commitment to the priority, for example, as set out in the Community Strategy or reflecting an acknowledged political priority.
- the extent of progress achieved against each of the improvement actions.

- 1.2.3 On the basis of this assessment, most existing priorities are proposed to be carried forward. Areas of work where we propose to delete priorities continue to be important but, for the foreseeable future, it is a matter of maintaining good performance in these areas rather than seeking significant further improvements.
- 1.2.4 The following additional criteria have guided the selection of key priorities:
- they should relate to an issue relevant to the local community and aim to achieve a noticeable improvement in local services
 - they should relate to a matter dealt with by more than a single service
 - they should relate to an improvement which affects more than one area of the Borough
 - they should figure as key political priorities of the current administration
- 1.2.5 This year we are proposing that the Council's key priorities are updated as follows to reflect significant changes at both national and local levels.
- Delete "Identify the opportunities and benefits for Tonbridge and Malling flowing from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007)" as a key priority and incorporate further associated improvement actions into priorities aimed at improving public access and involvement in services.
 - Broaden the existing key priority "Enhance the vitality of Tonbridge town centre" to reflect the importance of ensuring that development is sustainable, particularly in view of the current financial situation.
 - Modify the existing key priority "Add to the supply of affordable housing and reduce the incidence of homelessness" to reflect more directly the importance of working to prevent homelessness.
 - Modify the existing key priority "Give priority to involving and meeting the needs of young people" to directly reflect the importance of safeguarding children and young people, highlighted by recent high profile national media attention.
 - Updating the existing key priority "Reduce: anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, offences against the person, substance misuse and environmental crime" to better reflect the focus of the Community Safety Partnership and its 2009/10 Action Plan.
 - Sharpen the focus of the existing service priority "Make Tonbridge & Malling a better place in which to live" to directly reflect delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement and the work

of the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership and elevate this to a key priority.

1.2.6 The net effect of these changes is to maintain the number of our key priorities at eight, worded as follows:

- Promote and support the sustainable regeneration and economic development of Tonbridge town centre.
- Secure a continuing supply of affordable housing and work to prevent homelessness.
- Involve, safeguard and meet the needs of children and young people.
- Achieve a cleaner, smarter and better maintained street scene and open space environment.
- Promote, encourage and provide opportunities for healthy living.
- Work with partners to increase community safety by tackling:
 - acquisitive crime
 - anti-social behaviour
 - perception of crime
 - substance misuse
 - violent crime
- Achieve with our partners the priorities set out:
 - in the Sustainable Community Strategy for Tonbridge and Malling (2009/12)
 - in the Local Area Agreement and
 - arising from work of the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership.
- Make a positive local contribution to tackling the causes and effects of climate change.

1.2.7 We have deliberately ensured that these key priorities continue to have an external focus on achieving improvements that matter for our residents and other stakeholders. Overall, we believe that the recommended set of key and other priorities will encourage appropriate corporate and service-level improvements during the coming year. However, Members will appreciate that concentrating our resources to these ends, whilst seeking to maintain high performance in other areas, is requiring a concerted corporate effort as we are also having to achieve necessary efficiencies in a very difficult economic climate.

1.2.8 At this stage the focus is mainly on updating the improvement priorities rather than the improvement actions to achieve them. We wish to emphasise that the improvement actions set out in Annex 1 reflect the position at the time of writing. They are 'work in progress' and will be fully updated and set out in our 2009/10

CPP. We expect that for many of the priorities further actions will be identified as part of the process of preparing the 2009/10 CPP.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 There is no direct statutory requirement to specify a set of priorities and improvement actions, or to report progress in achieving them. However, many of them are underpinned by statutory requirements and this is reflected in the Annex.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 A significant proportion of the priorities and actions set out in the Annex are related to financial and value for money considerations. The whole document is concerned with managing the Council's performance effectively, efficiently and economically.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 There would be a material risk to the Council's reputation and standing were it not to set out its priorities and associated actions in a comprehensible and accessible format.

1.6 Recommendations

- 1.6.1 We recommend that the priorities, including the key priorities, as set out in Annex 1 (separate document) be endorsed.

Background papers:

Nil

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