

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

2 February 2010

Report of the Leader and Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Council

1 COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2010/11

This report proposes a revised set of key priorities for 2010/11, taking account of the current and anticipated effects of the recession.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Our improvement priorities for 2009/10 were agreed in February 2009 and are set out in Spotlight, our 2009/10 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 2009/10, where we particularly wanted to achieve improvements. The eight are:

- 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
 - arising from work of the borough's Local Strategic Partnership.
 - 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 2009/10 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 and as reported in our annual CPP.

1.2 Updating our Priorities for 2010/11

1.2.1 This year we are updating our priorities in two stages. This paper focuses on the updating of our key priorities, as establishing these may assist us to rationalise our service priorities, which we shall report to Members in due course.

1.2.2 Each year the existing and any proposed new priorities are assessed against a number of criteria to evaluate whether they are appropriate to be carried forward or are suitable for adoption. 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 The following additional criteria guide 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

1.2.4 This year we are proposing that the Council's key priorities are updated as follows:

- Add the following new key priority to reflect the unprecedented effects of the recession on the Council and public sector financing in general. "Manage the Council's financial resources and performance to meet the challenges of the recession and its impact on public finances".
- Modify the existing key priority "Secure a continuing supply of affordable housing and work to prevent homelessness" to anticipate a greater emphasis towards provision of good quality private rented accommodation.
- Combine those key priorities where the emphasis is on delivery through partnerships and recognise the overlap with Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement and the work of the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership.

1.2.5 The net effect of these changes is to reduce the number of our key priorities to six, worded as follows:

- Manage the Council's financial resources and performance to meet the challenges of the recession and its impact on public finances.
- Promote and support the sustainable regeneration and economic development of Tonbridge town centre.
- Secure a continuing supply of affordable housing across all tenures 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.
- Work with partners to:
 - Reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime
 - Promote, encourage and provide opportunities for healthy living

- Make a positive local contribution to tackling the causes and effects of climate change
- Achieve further shared priorities to improve residents' quality of life in Tonbridge and Malling.

1.2.6 At this stage the focus is on updating the key improvement priorities rather than the improvement actions to achieve them. We wish to emphasise that the improvement actions will also be fully updated and set out in our 2010/11 CPP.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 There is no direct statutory requirement to specify a set of key priorities. However, many of them are underpinned by statutory requirements.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 Establishing, and subsequently achieving, the Council's key priorities are central to effective performance management and delivering value for money.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 There would be a material risk to the Council's reputation and standing were it not to specify and subsequently deliver a set of key priorities.

1.6 Recommendations

1.6.1 We recommend that the revised set of six key priorities be endorsed.

Background papers:

Nil

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