

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 January 2012

Report of the Leader and Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 COUNCIL'S KEY IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2012/15

This report proposes a revised set of key improvement priorities for 2012/15, taking account of reduced resources for the foreseeable future in the context of the national budget strategy and pressures on public finances.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In February 2010 Cabinet agreed six key improvement priorities for 2010/11, where we particularly wanted to achieve improvements. The full year outturn was reported to Cabinet on 26 June 2011. The six are:

- 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.

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

1.1.2 These six key priorities were not formally updated for 2011/12 in view of the May 2011 elections and unprecedented financial and legal uncertainties. We have continued to work on them in 2011/12. Our key priorities have tended to be

medium to long term and carried forward each year to retain our focus on achieving improvements where these are most warranted. However, they do need to be reviewed and updated where necessary to ensure that they continue to reflect current and foreseeable circumstances.

- 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 2010/11 priorities were broadly based, span most areas of Council activity and work has continued on them during the current financial year. Many of them are service-level priorities.
- 1.1.4 Our key and other 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 and, traditionally, via a half-year progress report to Cabinet and our annual Corporate Performance Plan.

1.2 Updating our Key Improvement Priorities for 2012/15

- 1.2.1 This paper focuses on the strategic matter of updating our key improvement priorities for the next three years of the current Administration, subject to any necessary updating for any significant changes in circumstances in the meantime. This will inform Services' updating of other priorities and performance targets, which will be set out in our Corporate Performance Plan.
- 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, including whether it is covered by, particularly new, legislation
 - 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 improvement priorities are updated and amended as follows:

- Update the existing key priority, "Manage the Council's financial resources and performance to meet the challenges of the recession and its impact on public finances" to better reflect our approach in the context of reduced resources.
- Widen the existing key priority, "Promote and support the sustainable regeneration and economic development of Tonbridge town centre" to embrace development and regeneration across the Borough.
- Revise the existing key priority, "*Secure a continuing supply of affordable housing across all tenures and work to prevent homelessness*" to embrace the continuing supply of housing in general, while retaining a focus on affordable housing and homelessness.
- Amend the existing key priority, "*Achieve a cleaner, smarter and better maintained street scene and open space environment*" to embrace sustainability, including our local contribution to tackling the causes and effects of climate change.
- Divide and rationalise the existing generic key priority, "*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*
 to focus on health/well being and community safety.

1.2.5 The net effect of these changes is seven key improvement priorities, worded as follows:

- Prioritise, develop and implement new approaches to service delivery to achieve affordable and sustainable levels of expenditure in the context of reduced resources.
- Promote and support sustainable development, economic development and regeneration.
- Promote a continuing supply of homes in the Borough, including 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, better maintained and more sustainable environment.
- Reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime
- Promote and provide opportunities to improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities
- Individual justifications supporting each of these as key improvement priorities are included in Annex 1.

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 reported to Members in due course.

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 and this is reflected in Annex 1.

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 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.6.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

1.7 Recommendations

- 1.7.1 We recommend that the revised set of seven key improvement priorities be endorsed.

Background papers:

Nil

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Mark Worrall
Leader of the Council

David Hughes
Chief Executive

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	Equalities issues may need to be addressed in identifying and implementing improvement actions, not at this approval of priorities stage.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	As above
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?	N/A	

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.