

**North Yorkshire County Council****Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee****13 June 2011****Council Plan****Report of Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Performance and Partnerships)****1.0 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To review retrospectively the process of production and approval of the Council Plan, and to consider future involvement of the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee in that process.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Council Plan is a key component of the Council's policy framework, setting out the Council's objectives and how resources are to be used to deliver those objectives. Ensuring the Council Plan is developed in a timely and robust manner is essential in order to drive forward the business of the Council and improve performance, including the Council's contribution to the delivery of the North Yorkshire Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 2.2 The Council Plan sets out the Council's long-term corporate ambitions (2011/14) and priorities for action for the next year (2011/12). The Plan is revised annually.
- 2.3 In previous years this process has been closely allied to the budget setting process as this clearly demonstrates the golden thread running through the Council's objectives, priorities and allocation of resources. Due to the lateness of the announcement by the Government of the final settlement figures and the complexity of that settlement the decision was made to delay the agreement of the Council Plan until a clearer picture could be discerned.
- 2.4 For this reason the Council Plan was submitted to the Council for approval on 18 May 2011 in tandem with the Budget 2 report.
- 2.5 The Corporate Affairs Overview and Scrutiny Committee were involved in the development process in 2009/10. When the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny committee was established, it was agreed to scrutinise the process retrospectively due to pressure of workload.

**3.0 Development of the Council Plan**

- 3.1 As in previous years a cross directorate project team was established to co-ordinate the development of the draft Council Plan. This team reported

progress to the Informal Executive on 29 March 2011 and liaised closely with the relevant Executive Member. A draft was also reviewed by the Management Board.

- 3.2 Consultation with the public, partners and staff was a key feature of the development process, although this predominantly concentrated on the budget. Consultation processes included the Citizens' Panel, briefings and requests for comments in NY Times and on the Council website and intranet, correspondence and meetings with partners in the public, business and voluntary and community sectors and presentations in all seven districts.
- 3.3 The Council Plan has a number of audiences including elected members, officers, partners, the public, and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Efforts have been made to ensure that, as far as possible, the Plan is accessible, and of use, to all these audiences.

#### **4.0 Structure and content of the Council Plan**

- 4.1 Given the altered local government environment and the need to reduce costs and drive efficiencies, it was felt a pared down and more focussed Council Plan was appropriate. To this end the structure used for the previous two years was modified.
- 4.2 The vision statement of the Plan is aligned to that of the North Yorkshire Sustainable Community Strategy and the core priority areas, agreed upon for the refresh of that strategy, were incorporated. This does not mean that the County Council's objectives have changed or that other areas of work will not be progressed but that in these difficult times most effort must be focussed on a small number of vital service delivery areas.
- 4.3 The Council Plan includes more detail on the County Council's contribution to these core priorities, the key issues for North Yorkshire, the services the Council provides, and the major challenges faced by the Council over the next four years.
- 4.4 The County Council has selected measures and targets so that we can monitor our progress towards the priorities in the Council Plan. In particular we have 'Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)' which provide headlines on performance against particular activities. These are reported on a quarterly basis and scrutinised in detail to ensure our performance against the Council Plan priorities is effectively managed.
- 4.5 The Plan also details the County Council's plans to achieve savings through efficiencies and organisational change, and how resources will be allocated to the Council Plan priorities through the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), revenue resources, and capital plan.
- 4.6 A document the size of the Council Plan cannot detail all that the Council does. Further information about the Council's detailed strategies and plans is published in other documents available on the Council website.

## **5.0 The future**

- 5.1 The process for producing the Council Plan in 2010/11 has not been fully representative of the normal annual process. The lateness and complexity of the financial settlement and the necessary refocusing of the Council's budgets and services meant that the usual timetable was extended, and that decisions about priorities were delayed.
- 5.2 In future years it is intended to return to the practice of aligning the process more to the budget setting process. This means that the Plan will be agreed at the February meeting of the County Council. To meet this deadline a final draft needs to go to Management Board and Executive in January.
- 5.3 To ensure that any input from the overview and scrutiny committee is meaningful, this will need to be carefully timed. At the beginning of the process, drafts tend to be very undeveloped making comment difficult, but nearing the end of the process, it may be too late to make radical changes.
- 5.4 One approach might be to involve the overview and scrutiny committee at the beginning of the process when public consultation on the budget is carried out. The purpose of the committee's involvement at this stage would be to influence the priorities, tone and direction of the Plan.
- 5.5 Commenting on a draft of the Plan may also be something the overview and scrutiny committee wish to consider. Of the planned dates for committee meetings and mid-cycle briefings the following would be most suitable for this purpose:
- Committee meeting – 14 November 2011
  - Mid cycle briefing – 12 December 2011

## **10.0 Recommendations**

- 10.1 That the overview and scrutiny committee review the development process for the Council Plan and consider how they could be involved in future.

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Background documents - None