



Council – 27 April 2011

Corporate Plan 2011-15

Purpose of report

To agree the Council's Corporate Plan for the years 2011-2015.

Attachment(s)

Appendix A - Draft Corporate Plan 2011-2015

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The current Corporate Plan covers the period 2008-2011, so it is time to replace it with a new Plan to cover the next electoral cycle.
- 1.2 Members considered at the Corporate Plan workshop on 25 November 2010 what the Council's priorities should be for the next 5 years, particularly taking into account the significant reductions in government funding that were in the pipeline at that point and have since been announced.

2.0 Corporate Plan priorities

- 2.1 The priorities agreed at the workshop were:
 - Regeneration
 - Economic development
 - Sustainable infrastructure
 - Financial stability
- 2.2 The Plan has been written around these priorities (sections 1, 3 and 4 of the draft Plan attached at Appendix A), while incorporating the supporting processes and resources required to achieve them.

3.0 Legal Implications

- 3.1 There are no legal implications arising from the adoption of the Plan. One of the outcomes set out in the Plan is 'Legal compliance' (section 8).

4.0 Risk Management

- 4.1 Effective risk management is one of the actions set out in the Plan under 'Good Use of Resources' (section 8).

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The budget and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy are both based on the outcomes of the Corporate Plan workshop referred to above and the budget workshop that followed it on 26 January 2011.

6.0 Equality and Diversity

- 6.1 The draft Plan includes commitments to fairness and equality under 'Customer-focused services' (section 5), 'A proactive and listening Council' (section 7) and 'Committed staff' (section 8).

7.0 Corporate Outcomes

7.1 The Plan sets out the proposed corporate outcomes for the 5-year period in section 1, and the actions we will carry out to achieve them in sections 3 to 10.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1 Council is recommended to adopt the new Corporate Plan for 2011-2015, subject to any final formatting and presentational changes to be signed off by the Chief Executive.

Legal	Power: Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers:					
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Date: 18 February 2011					
CFO		MO		CX	



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Corporate Plan 2011-15



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Introduction

We live in challenging times financially. The Council's income has reduced dramatically and we can no longer afford some of the plans and projects that we envisaged just a couple of years ago.

The country's financial problems have had a major impact on many of our residents and communities too, creating a greater demand than ever on some of our services and those of our partners. The challenge for all of us is to do more with less.

We have a record of improving services, investing in technology or staff to embrace new ways of working and to tackle specific issues. We have reduced our management costs by nearly a third in the last four years, and have entered into a range of shared and contracted-out services to ensure that Council Tax payers get the best possible value for money.

We remain ambitious and will play a full part in ensuring that the District thrives and prospers. This Corporate Plan includes a small number of key priorities which we will be focusing on over the next four years:

- Sustainable development – the demand for housing in this area has not gone away. Indeed, it has increased as the number of housing completions has almost ground to a halt over the last couple of years. We recognise the need for growth and the benefits it can bring, particularly in helping to revitalise our town centres, but it must be sustainable. We will aim to accommodate sensible levels of growth while preserving the character of our historic towns and villages.
- Regeneration and economic development – allied to growth must be improvements to the quality of our town centres. We will work with the private sector to bring investment into the area and to reverse the decline of some of our towns, particularly Rushden. We will continue to consult local communities about the changes that they want to see and work with them to achieve their aspirations for their local area.
- Financial stability – we will continue to control our costs and to provide value-for-money services by maintaining our drive for efficiency and building effective partnerships.
- Customer-focused services – despite the economic downturn, the District is still relatively affluent. Many of our residents and businesses routinely use the internet and we will upgrade our website significantly to provide better quality information and to enable far more transactions to be carried out online. We will also work even more closely with our partners, particularly the County Council, to meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community.

East Northamptonshire is a great place to live, work and visit. This Council will continue to play its part in making it even better.

Cllr Steven North
Leader

David Oliver
Chief Executive

1.0 Corporate outcomes – where we want to be

This Corporate Plan sets out East Northamptonshire Council's key priorities and the outcomes that we intend to achieve over the next four years. These reflect a realistic balance between what we would like to do and what we can afford to do, and provide a basis for us to plan our work and to allocate our resources.

Our ambitions are challenging and we have limited resources but we believe we are right to be aiming high – our communities and our customers deserve that, and we all want a district that we can continue to be proud of.

We know we can't achieve all this alone. We will be working with other public sector partners and the private sector to achieve them.

The Council's vision is

Working with our communities to sustain a thriving District

The corporate outcomes that we will focus on for the next 4 years to achieve this vision can be summarised as:

	A good quality of life where the district will be:	Priority outcomes
Improvements for the community	Prosperous	Regeneration and economic development
	Sustainable	Sustainable development Strong communities High quality built environment
	Clean	Effective management of waste Clean streets
	Healthy	High levels of participation in active recreation Improved housing Good public health
	Safe	Low levels of crime Low levels of anti-social behaviour
	Council services which provide good value for money	Financial stability Good value for money
	Effective processes	High quality service delivery
Effective partnership working		Strong strategic partnerships
Strong community leadership		A proactive and listening Council
Effective management		Committed staff Good use of resources Legal compliance Effective business continuity
How we learn and grow	Knowledge of our customers and communities	Customer and community insight
	Councillors and staff with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours	Continuous development Appropriate behaviours

These outcomes form the basis for the content of this Corporate Plan.

2.0 Where are we now?

We keep track of national statistics on a range of things that contribute to quality of life. These statistics consistently show that East Northamptonshire is generally safer, cleaner, healthier and more prosperous than most parts of the country.

We also regularly encourage views and feedback on services, and consult and engage with local people and partners on our future plans and development. Much of this happens through:

- Surveys of our Residents' Panel of around 900 residents
- Consulting with local communities about how they want to see their area or neighbourhood develop, and involving them in the planning process.
- Community Focus groups on specific service developments
- Surveys and "You say, We do" articles in Nene Valley News
- Day-today customer feedback through comments, compliments and complaints
- The feedback buttons on our website and in our customer service areas
- Standard questions in our service area questionnaires to give us customer feedback across the whole Council
- Opportunities to speak at Council meetings
- Councillors' surgeries and meetings with their communities

Analysis of feedback over the past few years provides a major part of the background to the preparation of this Plan. In addition we have considered the impact of the recent recession and current economic climate on local residents, communities and businesses, together with the changed policy direction of the coalition government.

Many of the issues about which residents regularly express concern are primarily the responsibility of other public sector bodies, such as:

- crime (the police)
- health (the NHS)
- the condition of roads and pavements (the County Council or, for major 'A' roads, the national Highways Agency)

Other concerns, like job prospects or shopping facilities, are largely dependent on national factors such as the economy.

This plan focuses on what we can do to deliver what our communities and customers want and it also recognises that we will need to work with a range of partners to achieve our vision of **Working with our communities to sustain a thriving District**

Our approach to achieving the outcomes set out **[ON PAGE X / IN SECTION 1.0]** is outlined in the following sections.

3.0 What will we do to achieve our goals?

We need to make the most of limited resources, so we will focus on the quality of life issues that are most important to our communities and that we can do something about.

3.1 A good quality of life – Prosperous

East Northamptonshire is a relatively prosperous District, and unemployment is low. We have already invested in improvements to the town centres of Raunds, Irthlingborough and Rushden to make them more attractive and to encourage people to visit and to shop, and we will build on this.

Regeneration and Economic Development

The economic prosperity of the District is driven primarily by national factors, but there are a few key actions that we will carry out to help to provide the best possible climate for business growth.

We will:

- Pursue opportunities for high-speed broadband to be installed across the District
- Free up land for development in Rushden and complete the improvements to the High Street to make the town centre more inviting for retailers and shoppers
- Work with Town and Parish Councils to identify the regeneration needs of their areas and to put plans in place for meeting those needs
- Develop a Local Infrastructure Plan that sets out the facilities and transport links that local communities need and use the government's New Homes Bonus to deliver some of those locally-decided requirements.
- Provide a business-friendly planning service, within the constraints of planning policy, designed to make it as easy as possible for companies to set up or expand
- Help businesses to find the support they need to help them thrive in challenging market conditions
- Provide equality of opportunity for businesses through regulation and enforcement.

3.2 A good quality of life – Sustainable

Demand for housing in East Northamptonshire has continued during the recent recession and we can expect further growth as the economy picks up. Our challenge is to ensure that this growth is resilient to future changes in climate and benefits the local economy and local communities by improving the quality of the environment.

Sustainable development

We will:

- Work jointly with our partners in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, covering the area known as North Northamptonshire, to revise the Core Spatial Strategy so that it balances effectively the overall need for housing and business growth and the wishes of local communities.
- Produce Master Plans for Higham Ferrers and Thrapston, building on their development for the other towns in the District, to give local people a say in how all our towns should develop over the next 10 years.
- Develop Neighbourhood Plans for those villages and rural areas that want them and work with Town and Parish Councils and local communities across the District to implement them.

High quality built environment

We will:

- Involve local people in the planning process
- Concentrate housing growth in those areas where development can be sustainable
- Ensure that new developments provide adequate infrastructure, including high quality green and open space, and that new buildings meet high environmental standards

3.3 A good quality of life – Clean

We know that the services that the public values most are refuse collection, street cleaning and recycling, so we will continue to invest in them. Waste management is becoming increasingly expensive because of Government fines for putting household waste into landfill sites, so we will provide a service that is both high quality and low cost.

Effective management of waste

We will:

- Maintain a weekly refuse collection service for food waste as part of a new, improved waste and recycling service
- Reduce the amount of domestic waste that is taken to landfill
- Increase recycling rates through continued education and enforcement

Clean streets

We will:

- Adopt a 'zero tolerance' policy to clearing litter from privately-owned land. The responsibility lies with the landowners but, where necessary, we will clear the land ourselves and recover the costs from them
- Continue to act promptly to deal with graffiti, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and other eyesores

3.4 A good quality of life – Healthy

People are living longer than ever before, and we will continue to provide services to help everyone stay fit and active.

Increased participation in active recreation

We will:

- Continue to provide opportunities for leisure and recreation throughout the District
- Develop opportunities for sport and recreation on the River Nene
- Work with Town and Parish Councils to identify and protect open and green spaces and use them for active recreation
- Deliver further sections of the “Greenway”, a network of routes for walking and cycling from Raunds and Thrapston through Stanwick Lakes to Wellingborough Railway Station

Improved housing

We will:

- Seek, through our planning policies, to ensure that appropriate types and levels of affordable housing are provided as a result of new developments
- Address poor housing standards through grant aid and enforcement
- Work with our communities to put problematic empty properties back into use.

Good public health

We will continue our mix of advice, education and enforcement to ensure that:

- Workplaces are safe
- Food premises are hygienic
- The water, air and land we enjoy is clean and safe

3.5 A good quality of life – Safe

Low level of crime

Levels of crime in East Northamptonshire are already low, and we will continue to work with the police and other partners to keep it that way. While crime prevention and detection are primarily the responsibility of the police, we will:

- Engage with local communities in vulnerable areas to help them improve their own personal and home safety
- Ensure that new developments are well-designed to minimise the opportunities for crime

Reduced anti-social behaviour

While crime levels are relatively low and anti-social behaviour has been decreasing, there are still problems in some areas, particularly town centres. This leads to people feeling unsafe.

We will:

- Target the few prolific offenders who cause most of the problems
- Work with the police and other partners to target the areas where anti-social behaviour is most common

4.0 Good value for money

We have suffered a significant cut in government funding at the same time as our investment income and revenue from fees and charges have fallen. Because of these reductions in income we have had to cut costs significantly, but we aim to maintain high quality services while keeping Council Tax low.

Most of our Council Tax payers think that our current low level of tax – just over £2.00 a week, and less than 10% of the total bill – represents good value. Many people's everyday household costs are rising significantly, though, so now it is more important than ever for us to continue to provide good value for money.

Financial stability

We must ensure that our finances remain healthy so that we can continue to maintain high quality services. We will:

- Balance our budget by 2012/13, leaving a reasonable level of reserves to cater for major unexpected costs
- Manage our finances carefully so that we can afford our future plans

Value for money

We will:

- Focus our resources on the priority areas set out in this Corporate Plan, spending money only on those things which are important to our local communities or essential for the effective running of the Council
- Continue to keep Council Tax levels as low as possible
- Continue to look for opportunities to reduce costs and increase flexibility, for example through joining up services with other councils

Achieving these outcomes for our communities depends on our carrying out certain key processes well

5.0 High quality service delivery

Our main aim is to provide high quality, customer-focused services to the public. This is sometimes challenging, because many of the services we provide are governed by various laws, some of which require us to ensure that businesses and members of the public comply with them. We are inspected by a number of regulators and government departments to ensure that we are complying with those laws and enforcing them effectively.

Customer-focused services

We will:

- Use our customer knowledge to shape service delivery and improve the ways in which customers can access our services
- Identify those services which people would like to be able to access online, and provide those services online in a simple and convenient way
- Continue to identify and reduce 'avoidable contact', where our customers really shouldn't have had to call, e-mail or write to us
- Enforce relevant legislation sensitively, ensuring that our customers understand the reasons for our actions and feel that they have had a fair hearing
- Ensure we deliver services fairly and equitably to all our customers

6.0 Effective partnership working

We can only achieve many of our priority outcomes by working in partnership with other councils, the police, the health service, the voluntary sector and others.

Strong strategic partnerships

We will:

- Focus our efforts on those partnerships that make a significant contribution to our and our partners' priority outcomes
- Ensure that we play a full role in all those partnerships

7.0 Strong community leadership

A proactive and listening Council

We will:

- Lead by example, providing open and transparent government and clear decision-making arrangements
- Seek to engage Town and Parish councils and local communities in plans and developments that affect their areas
- Aim to support and develop capacity within local communities to help them to help themselves
- Provide opportunities for residents to influence council decisions
- Ensure we have regard to equality issues in our decision-making
- Explain our decisions and give feedback to the public on all the consultation we carry out

8.0 Effective management

Our management of people, finances, assets, information and risks is crucial to our providing high quality services and value for money.

Committed staff

We maintain a fundamental belief in the value of our staff and the contribution they make towards the success of the organisation. It is important to us for them to feel positive and motivated.

We will:

- Maintain competitive pay and benefits packages
- Treat our staff fairly and equitably by monitoring employment data and putting policies and procedures in place to deal with any issues that might arise
- Provide a safe, healthy and supportive environment in which to encourage and motivate staff to achieve high standards
- Seek to achieve a good work/life balance for staff, including managing workloads carefully as staff numbers reduce
- Consult staff about policies and issues that affect them and tell them about the progress of reviews, new council programmes/policies and progress towards the achievement of objectives and targets
- Listen to the views of staff and their trades unions and take them into account

Good use of resources

We will:

- Plan our future workforce requirements to ensure that we will always have the right people with the right skills in the right jobs
- Manage our finances carefully, procuring goods and services to achieve the right balance between cost and quality and applying effective internal controls and accounting procedures
- Ensure that we have the assets we need to operate cost-effectively, maintaining those assets and dispose of others that are surplus to requirements
- Store information securely, manage it effectively by ensuring that it is relevant, accurate, up to date and accessible, and make it available as required under Freedom of Information legislation
- Identify and effectively manage corporate and service risks
- Monitor and report on our performance, taking remedial action where necessary

Legal compliance

We will:

- Comply with all the statutory requirements that govern our activities

Effective business continuity

We will:

- Maintain effective business continuity arrangements to ensure that we have procedures and back-up plans so that we can continue to provide services in the event of major disruption, such as a fire or a significant ICT failure

Two things underpin everything we do – understanding the needs of our different customers and communities, and having staff and councillors with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours

9.0 Knowledge of our customers and communities

We recognise that all our customers and communities are different, and will reflect those differences in the way we deliver services.

Customer and community insight

We will:

- Develop our understanding of how customers currently use services and how, when and where they want to use them
- Engage with local communities to understand their needs
- Continue to use our Residents' Panel and surveys in Nene Valley News to gauge opinion and understand the issues that residents are concerned about

10.0 Staff and councillors with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours

It is vital that all our staff and Councillors have the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their duties.

Continuous development

We will:

- Continue to invest in training and development for staff and councillors, to ensure that they have the right skills and knowledge to carry out their roles into the future

Appropriate behaviours

We will:

- Use our knowledge, skills and behaviours framework as a basis for recruitment, induction, appraisal, training and development

Other important documents that support this Corporate Plan

Medium Term Financial Strategy

This strategy sets out how we will use our resources to achieve our priorities.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

We are working with partners to review the planning policies and proposals that will comprise the LDF.

East Northamptonshire Council Constitution

East Northamptonshire Council has agreed a constitution which sets out how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

To view the above documents, go to:

www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/corporateplan

All of the Council's strategies, policies, press releases and details of any ongoing consultation can be found at www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk