

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS & LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	1 APRIL 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	12
TITLE:	CORPORATE PLAN 2014-2017: PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES FOR HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	LOVELOCK, GITTINGS, DAVIES AND TERRY	PORTFOLIO:	Leadership (Leader of the Council), Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport & Consumer Services, Lead Councillor for Housing and Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods
SERVICE:	DIRECTORATE-WIDE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Corporate Plan was approved by Council in February 2014 and sets out the Council's priorities for the next 3 years. This report highlights the issues, priorities and associated activities for which the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee has responsibility. Committee is asked to note and endorse these priorities and associated activities.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That you note and endorse the priorities and associated activities set out in the Corporate Plan as they relate to the responsibilities of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

The *Corporate Plan 2014-17 Working better with you* was approved by Council in February this year. The Plan highlights key issues and challenges the Council wants to address over the next 3 years and sets out what the Council will do in the form of a prioritised action plan. Of particular relevance to the work of this committee are the following issues and challenges for Reading:

## Housing

Due to a range of influences, for example Reading's relatively strong economic position and vibrant town centre, the town remains an attractive place to live. As a result there is a high level of pressure on housing. This pressure is particularly acute on more affordable housing options both in the Private Rented and Social Housing sector. At the same time national economic, policy and legislative changes have also had a significant impact on the Housing Sector. However, supporting local people to access suitable and affordable accommodation is unchanged as a key priority.

Maximising the development of affordable housing in the town, and ensuring that housing remains an affordable, stable option for local people, is a key priority. The town has a higher than average number of properties in the Private Rented Sector so driving up quality and ensuring we have the right mechanisms to secure this accommodation for local people is a key part of our approach to support residents to access suitable housing.

A proactive approach to preventing homelessness and helping people to manage through welfare reform changes is also critical.

## Neighbourhoods and Environment

Satisfaction with services in neighbourhoods remains higher than the national average. We will work with residents, and our other partners in specific neighbourhoods to achieve common goals and make a difference.

We are committed to improving the quality, cleanliness and safety of the street environment and ensuring waste and recycling are managed effectively. We also want to increase the recycling rates within the town.

## Safety

Reading's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has made solid progress between 2012 and 2013:

- Overall crime reduction of 7% (939 fewer crimes)
- Burglary reduction of 36% (337 fewer household were victims). Based on Home Office estimates this has saved a total of £775,000.
- The 2012 Residents Survey shows that the percentage of residents surveyed who feel the level of crime needs to be improved has reduced from 36% to 29%.

The Partnership will continue this focus as we know it is of importance to residents.

## Sport, Leisure & Culture

We have a range of sporting and leisure facilities. Satisfaction with leisure centres has fallen recently and investment is needed to ensure they can fulfil expectations at a time of increased competition. We have some fantastic cultural facilities but we need to use these more to provide increased economic benefit.

The Corporate Plan lists **4 Priority areas** for the Council for the next 3 years:

1. Creating and sharing prosperity
2. People are supported and protected when they need to be and people are healthy and can thrive in their community
3. An attractive and safe town
4. Good quality public services

Priority 3 and 4 are the most relevant to this committee and the principal outcomes are listed below. The detailed objectives and associated action plans are then set out in the tables below.

### **Priority 3: An attractive, safe and well-kept town**

*Working to improve our neighbourhoods and Reading's environment*

Outcomes:

- Cleaner and greener neighbourhoods
- Improve housing choice and standards
- Create more transport options
- Reduce our carbon footprint
- A safer town
- More culture, leisure and sporting opportunities

### **Priority 4: Good Quality public services**

*Working to be more enterprising and efficient in what we do*

Outcomes:

- Better Customer Services by satisfying more enquires at the first point of contact
- Financial stable
- Being enterprising to increase income opportunities
- Improved service delivery
- Our staff are provided with support to manage increased workloads

**Priority 3: An attractive, safe and well-kept town**

Our ambitions for Reading	How will we know we've made a difference?	What we will do over the next 3 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone feels they live in a clean, safe and friendly neighbourhood</li> <li>• Everyone has a choice of home that meet their needs</li> <li>• Residents take responsibility for their community and take part to make a difference</li> <li>• Residents take pride in their neighbourhood and actively take part to make a difference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strength of the local economy</li> <li>• Levels of crime and antisocial behaviour</li> <li>• Houses built</li> <li>• Residents' satisfaction with their neighbourhood</li> <li>• Transport links</li> <li>• Residents feel safer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase recycling rates</li> <li>• Deliver transport projects</li> <li>• Deliver landscape improvement schemes</li> <li>• Deliver more homes</li> <li>• Continue with crime prevention</li> </ul>

Activities - what we will do	Measures we will use to track progress
<p>Increase the amount we recycle and reduce the amount we send to landfill through education on recycling, reuse and waste prevention including the implementation of weekly collections in flats, improve recycling and introduce a recycling incentive scheme using funding from the DCLG (Department, Communities &amp; Local Government) Weekly Collection Support Scheme.</p>	<p>Increase the amount recycled to 42%.</p>

Activities - what we will do	Measures we will use to track progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the 'Love Clean Reading' project to improve the appearance and cleanliness of the public realm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents survey</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a feasibility study and full appraisal of the options available to bring forward a programme of new build council homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of the study and appraisal with recommendations to Committee</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a programme of parks and open spaces improvements across the borough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement 10 green landscape improvement schemes per year</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult on and implement new measures to drive up standards in Private Sector housing:</li> <li>Deliver a flexible home improvement scheme across for home owners over the age of 60, empty home owners and private landlords. To tackle serious health and safety hazards, small adaptations to support hospital discharge, and bring properties up to the Decent Homes Standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private Rented Sector Action Plan implemented.</li> <li>Number of long term Empty Homes brought back into use</li> <li>In partnership with Aster Living improve the quality of life and promote the independence of 550 residents through the provision of grants, loans, minor adaptations and Handihelp scheme</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver the Local Sustainability Transport programme by March 2015</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver Park &amp; Ride sites at Mere oak and Winnersh Triangle</li> <li>Implement schemes that will make cycling safer and more attractive in Reading, including new public cycle Hire</li> <li>Deliver a new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the Thames</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a new Heritage and Cultural Strategy and develop a revised Abbey Quarter project plan and funding bid to improve the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve Heritage and Cultural Strategy and action plan</li> <li>Prepare and submit the Abbey Quarter application to the Heritage Lottery Fund</li> </ul>

Priority 4 of the Corporate Plan deals with Good quality public services

Our ambitions for Reading	How will we know we've made a difference?	What we will do over the next 3 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People shaping the future of Reading</li> <li>• Meeting the needs of people for health, social care, education, housing, transport, leisure, culture and protection from crime</li> <li>• Continue to develop a new relationship with residents</li> <li>• Our staff are cared for and fulfilled in their work</li> <li>• Our staff are provided with support to manage increased workloads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved customer services</li> <li>• Better customer experience</li> <li>• Learning from what we do</li> <li>• Financially stable</li> <li>• Increase income</li> <li>• Improved service delivery</li> <li>• Our people can improve what they do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfy more customer enquiries at first point of contact</li> <li>• Prepare budget options to save approx £40m</li> <li>• Refresh standards and deliver best practice for customer care</li> <li>• Move Civic Centre operations to a new council building</li> <li>• Secure Investors in People Accreditation</li> </ul>

Activities - what we will do	Measures we will use to track progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with mystery shopping as a tool to inform improved service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The results of mystery shopping contribute to customer focused service development and improvement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a new learning and development 'menu' that incorporates essential training and development requirements for staff across the council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training Needs analysis completed across all council areas</li> <li>• Competencies for managers developed</li> </ul>

Activities - what we will do	Measures we will use to track progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure our workforce is of good quality and reflects future needs of the council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure Investors in People accreditation</li> <li>• Workforce strategy is linked to service plans in place</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a review of leisure provisions and facilities and implement proposals to better meet changing needs and demands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete review and options appraisal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the delivery of services at a neighbourhood level to make the best use of community facilities, joining up services to add value and encourage people to access a greater range of resources, and improving digital access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete initial review of service delivery at local neighbourhood level. Develop detailed three year programme of reviews and implementation of actions arising from 2014-17</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Management Action plan informs Capital investment and delivery of capital receipts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rolling three-five year Capital Investment Programme agreed supported by capital receipts and other financing resources</li> </ul>

## Delivery approach

The plan also sets out how we will go about delivering these priorities given reduced funding and new responsibilities. Along with listening to the community, structural reshaping and improvements to our customer service systems, a key element of the Council's approach has been the shift to a more responsive Neighbourhood working model: this approach underpins much of this committee's responsibilities.

## Neighbourhood working

Our approach places a strong emphasis on neighbourhood working. Teams will operate in dedicated 'patches' co-ordinating services being delivered between them. The intention is that our teams and partners will increase the way in which they work jointly by aligning their objectives, activities and resources to achieve longer-term changes in unemployment, health, educational attainment etc through making better use of all public funding spent locally.

This will enable councillors, teams, partners and residents to identify and propose areas where outcomes could be improved through greater integration of activities between those involved.

This approach would see us put more resources and coordination into our frontline services. To support this approach we are moving to operate more services under a neighbourhood approach which will see ward-focused officers and multi-agency teams delivering on neighbourhood priorities.

This will see improved service opportunities, more opportunities for residents to get involved and greater scope for communities to tackle some issues for themselves.

## 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The Corporate Plan fully aligns with the Sustainable Community Strategy and following strategic aims:
- *To Develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley*
  - *To establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit*
  - *To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all*

## 6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Our starting point is listening to what local people think which council services are important to them and their communities, and how we can work better together to deliver our shared priorities. The 'Working Better With You' initiative has provided lots of opportunities for residents to make their views known. We will continue to consult, involve and discuss service changes and improvements.

## 7. LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None arising specifically from this report.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Corporate Plan 2014-17 Working better with you