

Council Business Plan Consultation Feedback Report

1.0 Background Information

1.1 The Corporate Management Team and Executive Board approved a new strategic and service planning framework for the council in July 2007. The strategic element of this framework includes two high level plans which set the policy objectives for the organisation and our partnership working. These are:

- **Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11** - which sets out the customer/citizen (external) focused strategic outcomes being sought by the council and its partners for the city. This plan includes the Leeds Local Area Agreement and is the main delivery mechanism for the Leeds Community Strategy (Vision for Leeds 2004-2020).
- **Council Business Plan 2008-11** - which sets out what the council needs to do internally to enable the organisation to achieve the Leeds Strategic Plan. It outlines the business development, organisational change, process transformation and financial planning activities that we will be undertaking over the next three years.

1.2 The purpose of the Council Business Plan 2008-11 is to set out the business outcomes and priorities for the next three years. Effectively it is a roadmap to lead the business development and transformation activities and to ensure that the right resources are in place to achieve these. As such it needs to clearly set out where we are going, how we are planning to get there and how we will monitor and measure our success.

2.0 Development of the Council Business Plan 2008-11

2.1 The first phase of work to develop the Council Business Plan 2008-11 involved a series of meetings with senior officers to seek their views on what the business plan needed to contain. From these meetings a wide range of issues were raised and these were presented to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). Their view was that the Council Business Plan should concentrate on a small number of priority areas for improvement. This will ensure our efforts are focused to achieve real progress, rather than making limited progress across a large number of areas. CLT identified their key priorities as:

- One council – cultural change
- Service prioritisation
- Business intelligence
- Democratic and community engagement

2.2 From this starting point a initial set of outcomes and improvement priorities were developed. These outcomes and priorities were further refined at a workshop in November which brought together a group of senior officers from across the council with a range of responsibilities. They discussed whether the business outcomes were right and whether they did support the Strategic Outcomes for the Leeds Strategic Plan. This was the first time that both plans had been considered together. The draft business plan outcomes and improvement priorities were further amended as a result of these discussions and these were then subject to a wider consultation/challenge process including:

- Trade Unions – via the Joint Consultative Committee
- Staff – through two focus groups and a written consultation with corporate staff groups representing particular minority groups.

- Scrutiny – all boards

2.3 Specific feedback from this process is set out below.

3.0 Joint Consultative Committee

3.1 The Business Outcomes and Improvement Priorities were presented to the Joint Consultative Committee at their meeting on 28th November 2007 and no specific feedback was received.

4.0 Staff Focus Groups

4.1 Volunteers from across the council were invited to discuss the business outcomes and improvement priorities in two staff focus groups on 6 and 13 December 2007. Requests for volunteers to participate in the focus groups went out to all staff through Team Talk. 22 members of staff volunteered their attendance, although only 16 were able to attend due to sickness or work commitments.

4.2 The participants at the focus group commented on the following questions:

- Have we got the draft Business Plan Outcomes and Improvement right, and are there any gaps?
- What activities do we need to do to deliver these outcomes?

Key issues from the discussion

4.3 The debate at the two focus groups was lively and wide ranging. The detailed comments are available in a separate report but the key points from the discussion are set out below:

- There was overwhelming support for more of a “One Council” approach and staff felt that crucial elements to this were appraisals and induction. There was support for a single appraisal system which includes our values, leadership and other management skills – it was also felt that these should include a 360° element in order to be really effective. In support of this there also needs to be a more comprehensive and corporate approach to induction and the essential elements identified included:
 - Key plans ie Leeds Strategic Plan, Council Business Plan,
 - Vision of our leaders,
 - Our Values,
 - One Council concept,
 - An understanding of breadth of services provided by council,
 - Everyone’s role as an ambassador for the Council,
 - Customer service skills,
 - Role of elected members, and
 - Decision making processes
- Leadership was also felt to be important and key to this is a clearly articulated vision and visible leadership. Suggestions for how to achieve this included managers going back to the floor, Chief Officers being more visible, or senior managers blogs or pod casts etc.
- Training is really important for both members and officers, in particular, staff felt that this should focus on building a better understanding between members and officers. Ideas included involving more members in services not just Executive Members,

member induction involving time with front line services and promoting shadowing and exchanges to develop understanding between key services.

- Staff agreed that service improvement is important and should be at the heart of service planning and many were keen to be more involved. They felt they could make a really valuable contribution to service planning and improvement activities. Linked to this it was felt that customers and the public also needed to be involved more in improving and developing services.
- Staff supported the principle of closer partnership working but felt that currently not all partnerships work, or are as effective as they could be. The Council needs to ensure strong governance arrangements are in place to make sure that partnerships are effective and add value, improve efficiency and deliver better outcomes.
- Many staff felt that there was not enough recognition for staff who go above and beyond to provide outstanding service. It was felt that sometimes there was little incentive to put yourself out. Although it was discussed that this didn't have to be a financial reward it was felt that this should be considered.
- Staff felt that strengthening the performance management arrangements would support the delivery of all of the outcomes and improvement priorities.
- Concerns were raised around "blockers" within the organisation ie managers who do not pass on communications or do not involve staff in service planning or improvement. It was felt that the organisation needs to better empower the staff below these blockers in a two pronged approach linked to the improvements to training and appraisals for managers identified above.
- Communication was felt to be crucial to the implementation of the Business Plan (and the Strategic Plan). In particular staff suggested these arrangements are focused around the important messages like one council and service improvement and the mechanisms needed to be two way and any barriers identified and addressed.

4.4 They also suggested a number of minor amendments to the actual wording of the outcomes and improvement priorities which were made prior to their submission to Scrutiny in January.

5.0 Corporate Staff Groups

5.1 The draft business outcomes and improvement priorities were sent out as a written consultation to the corporate staff group representing disabled, female, BME and Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual staff for their views and input. Two responses were received and the key points made were:

- General support for the high level outcomes and improvement priorities but recognising that this is all they are at this stage and that they will need to be supported by resources and action plans.
- Concerns about how exactly we will achieve a better understanding of our customers in particular in relation to excluded groups
- Staff questioned how these would really challenge silo thinking and break down barrier to motivate people to help customers even when requests are multi-faceted and difficult.
- It was questioned why disabled and ethnic minority staff were not specifically mentioned as they have specific needs and as an organisation we need to promote accessibility and equality in services and employment.

5.2 A couple of points were made around the provision of special education and these have been forwarded to the Strategic Plan team as this sits within this plan.

6.0 Scrutiny Meetings

- 6.1 The Budget and Policy framework specifies that the initial proposals contained in both of these plans are to be published at least two months in advance of adoption and that Scrutiny is allowed at least six weeks to respond to these initial proposals. In line with this the draft Business Outcomes and Improvement Priorities developed after the initial consultation process were taken to Scrutiny in their January round of meetings for discussion and approval and the following feedback was received:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 8th January 2008

There was a discussion around the improvement priority to “improve leadership at all levels including officers and elected members” and member were pleased to see their role acknowledged. They also felt that this should be clearly linked to ongoing training, lifelong learning and personal development plans. OSC also referred the Business Outcomes and Improvement Priorities on to all Scrutiny Boards for further consideration.

Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Board 14th January 2008

No specific comments received

Children’s Services Scrutiny Board 17th January 2008

No specific comments received

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board 21st January 2008

Members raised the question about how the Business Plan would be linked into the local agenda ie area delivery plans.

City Development Scrutiny Board 22nd January 2008

Members felt that the reference to engagement of the public was not enough and as part of rebuilding community pride that the community need to be co-owners of the plans.

Resources Scrutiny Board 24th January 2008

Overall, there was a feeling that in future, the Board members would like to be involved differently in the development of these plans, because they do not feel scrutiny is necessarily the best way of reviewing them. There is a lot of information and a lot to discuss relating to each of the individual improvement priorities and they would like to have more opportunity to get into the detail of at least two or three of the priorities. The specific points raised by members in the discussion were:

- what indicators and targets will support the business plan improvement priorities? Resources Scrutiny Board requested the opportunity to review these in more detail.
- Members asked if there were any separate funds set aside to support improvements in particular areas especially where these cross between both plans (e.g. if we decided that care workers needed additional information to be able to deliver direct payments). It was reported that whilst there are no specific separate funds for the Council Business Plan there is a budget for invest to save projects. Funding to deliver the Council Business Plan is part of the overall budget package for 2008-09.
- Members felt that the improvement priority to “increase the provision of choice” is not clear and the Board would like the wording to be amended to reflect more explicitly what we mean.
- The improvement priority to “Maximise our income” needs to be more specific, as it is not clear what activities will be involved under this heading.
- The board raised questions about how are we going to monitor the commissioning process – it was answered that this was not clear yet but work is on-going to develop accountability arrangements and a new performance management framework to support the delivery of the Leeds Strategic Plan and Council Business Plan.

- Members said that the links between the plans needed to be clear and the accountability should be both flexible and robust to ensure that all parties are taking ownership.

There were two specific questions relating to information security and long-term PFI contracts which were not directly related to the business plan and these were forwarded to the relevant officers to be answered directly.

Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board 30th January 2008

No specific alterations or changes suggested and the board endorsed the Business Outcomes and Improvement Priorities to go forward to the next stage of the process.

7.0 Key Actions

7.1 The following specific amendments are to be incorporated into the next version of the business plan outcomes and improvement priorities:

Business Improvement Priorities	Amendment
Improve leadership at all levels including officers and elected members	Ensure actions on training and development are clearly linked to this improvement priority
Increase the provision of choice	Enable service users to access services in more convenient ways
Maximise our income	Ensure that we make the best use of our resources and that we are accessing all available funding

7.2 Other actions to be undertaken as a result of this feedback are:

- Business Plan Indicators and targets to be taken to scrutiny at their March round of meetings.
- Accountability and performance management arrangement to be taken to scrutiny once further developed.
- Consult with Equality team on specific activities to ensure the needs of minority staff groups are addressed
- Review staff focus group activities list suggestions with relevant managers with a view to their incorporation within the Council Business Plan.

8.0 Additional factors

8.1 There are a number of additional factors which may result in further refinements to the Business Plan Outcomes and Improvement Priorities. These include the new Use of Resources framework, feedback from the Corporate Assessment, emerging strategies and input from the One Council Steering Group. A revised set of outcomes and improvement priorities will be published once these changes have been made.