

REPORT TO COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Chief Executive on behalf Cllr John Kirkman

REPORT NO. CEX294

DATE: 8th September 2005

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| TITLE: | Outcome from Gateway Review of Priorities – Monday 18th July 2005 |
| FORWARD PLAN ITEM: | Yes |
| DATE WHEN FIRST APPEARED IN FORWARD PLAN: | May 2004 |
| KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL: | Yes |

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| COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION: | All |
| CORPORATE PRIORITY: | All |
| BACKGROUND PAPERS: | Previous Reports to Council |

Background

1. A panel comprising the Cabinet along with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the five DSPs met to undertake a full review of the Council's progress in achieving the Category A and B priorities approved by Council last year and in realising the savings targets set from category Z services. The meeting was chaired by the Cllr John Kirkman who asked me to prepare this report to Council on his behalf.

This work was undertaken by posing three key questions for each major priority:

1. Do we have a good understanding of the problem?
2. Is there a robust and resourced action plan?

3. Is there early evidence that the outcomes in the plan are being achieved?
2. Consideration of the response to each of these questions led the review team to make an overall assessment for that priority. The results of these assessments are detailed below:

Green light Priorities which passed the Gateway review

| Priority | Service |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| A | Access* |
| A | Recycling |
| A | Street Scene |
| B | Affordable housing |
| B | Business Development |
| B | Diversity |
| B | Housing Management* |
| B | Planning and Development Control* |
| B | Vulnerable Persons* |

Amber light priorities, which passed the gateway, review but with a warning being issued.

| Priority | Service | Reason for Warning and Actions |
|-----------------|-------------------------|---|
| A | Crime and ASB | Action plan has been drafted but not yet approved. Plan to be approved by October. |
| A | Town-centre development | Action plan is currently a consultative draft, final plan to be approved by November |
| B | Communications* | Majority view that this priority may be more important and complex than originally envisaged. To refer to Engagement DSP to re-assess importance of communications and how resources allocated in the communications strategy should be deployed. |

Red light priorities which failed the review

| Priority | Service | Reason | Action |
|-----------------|---------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| B | LSP + Community Strategy* | Insufficient evidence that the required outcomes have been achieved. | To review in six months time |
| B | Public Toilets | Lack of progress in Grantham | To review in six months time |

Realisation of savings in non-priority areas

3. The review team considered the progress of the Council in securing the targeted savings from category Z services. Although some concern was raised in regard to the first quarter results for pest control and the implications of reducing eligibility for discretionary rate relief, it was determined that there was sufficient progress to give a green light.

Minority Views

4. Although the majority of the assessments were unanimous there were some assessments on a majority basis. These are marked * and the additional actions reflecting these minority concerns are detailed below:

| Priority and Outcome | Issue | Proposed Action |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Access (A) Green | Some members not on the appropriate DSP do not feel that the problem or the actions being taken have been fully explained to them. | It was recognised that the member training and development programme will help, however the Access team will also consider better ways of communicating with these members. |
| Communications (B) Amber | Several members felt this should receive a green rather than an amber light. | |
| Housing Management (B) Green | A minority view was for an amber light based on the lack of objective data regarding progress. | To review the appropriateness of the targets set. |
| LSP and Community Strategy (B) Red | A minority view was for an amber light reflecting recent progress | |
| Vulnerable Persons | A minority view was for an amber light reflecting concern over whether the scoping was robust. | To review the scoping of this priority. |

Budgetary Implications arising from the Gateway Review

5. The gateway review was conducted at this time in the Council's calendar so that it could inform the budget preparation cycle.

Resources were perceived as a major issue in progressing the Council's priority for Communications. The Corporate Director for Community Services has therefore been asked to prepare a Service Plan, which includes measures to improve our performance on communications beyond those detailed in the current Communications Strategy.

The issue that resulted in the award of the other two amber lights and the two red lights were primarily due to the limitations on the managerial capacity of the organisation. This can be resolved by either some form of re-structuring and/or a reduction in the number of priorities or an increase in the number of non-priorities.

6. In the afternoon the review team considered the options available to the Council if, in the next budget round, the resources of the authority are not sufficient to enable the authority to deliver both its statutory obligations and the communities priorities. As part of this the team reviewed the lowest scoring services within Category Y, where attention would need to be focussed if the required savings could not be met by efficiency gains alone.

Recommendation

7. That the Council approve the outcome of the gateway review of priorities and the consequential actions as set out in this report.

Duncan Kerr,
Chief Executive

On behalf of Cllr John Kirkman, Chairman of the Council