

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

28th February 2006

<p>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2006/07 – 2009/10 PROPOSED CONTENT AND TIMESCALE</p>
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Summary

1. To inform Scrutiny and to seek Scrutiny's comments on the proposal to produce a 3-year Strategic Plan that incorporates the requirements of the following plans:
 - Best Value Performance Plan
 - Corporate Performance Plan
 - the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Introduction

2. In 2003/04 the Government issued new guidelines, which reduced the amount of information that had to be contained within Best Value Performance Plans. The new guidelines provided increased flexibility to 'good' and 'excellent' councils and enabled Middlesbrough Council to produce its first Corporate Performance Plan, which subsumed the requirements of the Best Value Performance Plan.
3. 'Good' and 'excellent' councils are required to include the following information in their Best Value Performance Plans:
 - out-turn data for Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs)
 - targets for BVPIs in the current year and subsequent two years
 - confirmation that they are adopting the code of practice in their approach to workforce matters and contracting.
4. Under the new CPA methodology Middlesbrough Council achieved a 4 star rating in December 2005, this enabled Middlesbrough to retain flexibility regarding how it addresses the Best Value Performance Plan requirements.

Evidence / Discussion

5. There are three main factors that drive the proposal to replace the Corporate Performance Plan with a three-year Strategic Plan these are:
 - to ensure alignment of our current plans
 - to formalise our medium term planning
 - in response to external influences.

Alignment of current plans and strategies

6. The Council currently articulates its vision, priorities and budget information in several documents, including:
 - the Vision – this provides details of the Council’s long-term vision (20 years)
 - the Corporate Performance Plan – this document provides details of the Council’s strategic priorities and the one-year actions planned to deliver these priorities
 - Budget Strategy – this is a medium term document that is reviewed annually and provides details of how the Council’s budget process support the achievement of the Council’s priorities
 - the Medium Term Financial Plan – this is a medium term document (3 years) that provides details of how the Council will ensure that its financial planning supports its priorities.
7. The Corporate Performance Plan, the Budget Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) all have sections that contain similar information. In particular, the sections that set the context within which the Council delivers its services and those that explain the rationale underpinning the Council’s priorities. This results in duplication across these documents.
8. The Corporate Performance Plan provides details of the Council’s achievements for the previous year and its actions for the coming year. The Council’s priorities cannot be delivered without consideration of the resources it has. The MTFP and the Budget Strategy are both driven by the Council’s priorities. Consequently it would be sensible to strengthen the alignment of the main planning and budget documentation by including incorporating the MTFP within the Strategic Plan.

Medium Term Planning

9. The Council does not have a formal overarching medium term strategic plan, even though much of the Council’s planning is for the medium term.
10. The Council’s MTFP is a three-year plan that is widely consulted on, it is a living document which is regularly updated and it is published to a wide audience.
11. The proposed Strategic Plan would incorporate the MTFP thus formalising and consolidating the Council’s medium term planning documentation.

External influences

12. The Middlesbrough Community Strategy is a long-term document, which sets the vision for Middlesbrough. The vision is delivered through Community Strategy themes. The Community Strategy also provides details of the Local Strategic Partnership's medium term strategic priorities. The Council's Corporate Performance Plan sets out the Council's contribution to the achievement of Middlesbrough's Community Strategy strategic priorities. Moving to a three year Strategic Plan would formally articulate the Council's medium term priorities and would strengthen the links between the Council's planning and its contribution to the LSP.
13. There is an expectation in the revised CPA methodology "CPA 2005 – the Harder Test" for councils to have medium term planning. It would be easier for the Council to demonstrate that it meets this requirement if we produced a three-year Strategic Plan.

Proposal

14. It is proposed that the Corporate Performance Plan is replaced with a three-year Strategic Plan that articulates the Council's medium term priorities as well as providing details on the improvement activities to be undertaken within the next year.
15. The Strategic Plan would incorporate the Council's statutory requirements in relation to producing a Best Value Performance Plan and it would also incorporate local requirement to strengthen the alignment between performance and budget planning.
16. It is proposed to structure the Strategic Plan in three parts:
 - Part I – Background, local context and the medium term vision
 - Part II – Council Performance and Action for 2006/07
 - Part III - detailed performance and budget information.
17. Details of the proposed content for each Part of the Plan is shown in Appendix A, attached.
18. The proposed timescale for the production of the Strategic Plan is attached at Appendix B.

CONCLUSION

19. That Scrutiny considers and comments on the proposal to produce a three-year Strategic Plan.

**Report prepared by
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