

Scrutiny Committee Report



Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

Author: Sally Truman

Telephone: 01491 823046

Textphone: 18001 01491 823046

E-mail: sally.truman@southandvale.gov.uk

Cabinet member responsible: Ann Ducker

Tel: 01491 823378

E-mail: ann.ducker@southoxon.gov.uk

To: Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 19 February 2013

Corporate plan 2008-2012: final review of performance

Recommendation

That Scrutiny Committee notes the council's performance against its corporate plan 2008 – 12.

Purpose of Report

1. This report is the final review of the council's performance in delivering its strategic objectives and corporate priorities contained within the former corporate plan for the period 2008-2012.

Strategic Objectives

2. The corporate plan contains the council's strategic objectives for the period. Where still relevant objectives from the 2008 – 12 plan have been included in the new corporate plan for the period 2012 – 16.

Background

3. The council's corporate plan is a key document which sets out our strategic objectives and corporate priorities together with the measures and targets that track our performance.

4. We carry out a review of the corporate plan annually to track progress, identify corrective measures when performance is below target, and make any changes to the corporate priorities and measures that are needed to ensure that the plan remains relevant and up to date.
5. During the final year of the plan we carry out a fundamental review of the council's strategic objectives and corporate priorities and develop a new corporate plan for the next four year period. In February 2012 the council agreed a new corporate plan for 2012-2016. The purpose of this report is to set out the final review of the council's performance in delivering the key actions and targets contained within the former plan covering the period 2008-2012.
6. A summary of performance is attached at appendix one to this report.

Financial Implications

7. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

8. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

9. The council made good progress against the strategic objectives and corporate priorities in its corporate plan 2008 – 2012 as set out in appendix one.

Background Papers

- 'The Way Ahead' Corporate Plan 2008 – 2012

Appendix one - Corporate Plan 2008 – 12 – summary of performance

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: MANAGING OUR BUSINESS EFFECTIVELY

Corporate priorities

- provide value for money services that meet the needs of our residents and service users
- provide equality of access to our services.

We have met the challenges of reduced government funding head on. We took a brave step when we decided to jointly deliver many of our services with our neighbouring Vale of White Horse District Council. We were the first councils in England to share services to this extent, but were confident that this would help us to find the savings we needed to, whilst maintaining the quality of services to residents. We estimate that we have achieved ongoing savings of £521,000 from staffing restructures as a consequence of this, and have made significant savings on joint contracts e.g. our joint waste contract is estimated to have save around £1m.

We have reviewed most of our services to ensure that they are as efficient as they can be and estimate that this has achieved budget savings to date of £3,086,392. This efficient management of resources has meant that we have been able to fulfil our commitment to keep council tax down – we made no increases in the district council element of council tax in 2010/11 and 2011/12, and were actually able to reduce it by 2.5 per cent last year.

Our staff sickness absence per employee for 2011/12 is 6.93 days which compares very favourably with the industry benchmark.

Through our residents satisfaction survey we measure how satisfied residents are with what we are doing, and last year 95 per cent told us they were satisfied with the local area, and 78 per cent that they were satisfied with the council and its services – this is a significant improvement on the previous survey in 2009 (66 per cent).

According to our Peer Review in 2011 “There is a story of good progress on many priority areas within South Oxfordshire, this having been achieved at the same time as delivering a challenging and innovative agenda. Performance improvement has been delivered in priority areas and the council is held in high regard by citizens and partners.”

We have continued to improve our communications and our Outlook newsletter remains a very popular way for many residents to receive information about our services. However, more and more people are getting ‘online’ and we have responded accordingly. We relaunched our website in 2011 and have developed new online services e.g. waste collection reminders; our new Binfo smartphone app helps keep residents informed about their waste service; and we’re getting into social media too. Unsurprisingly visits to the council’s website continue to increase - in March this year there were 28,484 unique visitors to our site. According to our latest residents' survey 87 per cent of residents feel well informed about our services.

We are aware that not everyone can use the internet to access information and advice. Alongside these improvements we have continued to review our services to ensure that they are accessible for all. We work closely with our disability and ethnicity panels and with the

Didcot Access group on this and to ensure that new developments such as Great Western Park meet the needs of all groups. We are an 'achieving' council against the national Equality Framework for Local Government – which means that we measure up well on national standards for accessibility.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Corporate priorities

- reduce the amount of waste we send to landfill
- reduce energy use from our own operations
- keep the district clean and tidy, and tackle environmental crime such as litter, graffiti, fly tipping and abandoned cars.

Our ambition was to be amongst the top performing district councils nationally in terms of our waste and recycling, and in 2009 we restructured our waste service and put in place a communication programme to help achieve this. By the end of our plan 68 per cent of all household waste was recycled or composted, making us the best in the country; and just before publication of this report we received the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) award for the most improved recycling rate. We are especially proud of this achievement because as well as giving a high quality service the new contract has saved council taxpayers £1m, and according to our recent citizens' panel survey 96 per cent of residents are satisfied with their waste service.

We know that clean streets are important because our resident surveys tell us so. We have worked hard to improve the cleanliness of streets in the district over the period of the plan and have followed this up with a district-wide big clean.

Part of keeping the area clean is dealing with environmental crimes such as litter and flytipping. Our contractor Biffa provides a rapid response service for the removal of large accumulations of litter, dead animals, fly-tipping and graffiti, and we take quick action to deal with abandoned cars – in the plan period we served the required 7 or 15 day notices on all vehicles confirmed as being abandoned, and where they were not moved or taxed, they were removed and scrapped within 24 hours of the notice expiring.

Cases of flytipping have reduced between 2009/10 and 2011/12 from 927 to 777 per year; part of our success on this has been to take swift enforcement action wherever possible against those that are responsible, and we have provided additional resources to enable us to do that.

Delivering our services uses a lot of energy, and we recognise that we need to do our bit to reduce energy use and therefore carbon emissions. This makes good business sense as it also saves us money on our energy bills. Our Carbon Management Plan, agreed in 2008, includes a target to reduce our energy use by 30 per cent by March 2013, and we are well on the way to achieving this with a reduction of 20 per cent by March 2012. We have achieved this through a wide range of projects in leisure centres, the council offices and from the new waste contract which includes the more efficient routing of vehicles.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: DELIVERING HOMES FOR ALL

Corporate priorities

- increase the supply of housing in the district, including affordable housing
- prevent homelessness and improve housing options, particularly for vulnerable groups such as young people and older people.

In our plan we said that we would develop a range of planning and housing initiatives that enable the delivery of housing across the district for new build housing of all kinds in our Core Strategy and working with housing associations to deliver affordable housing for those who cannot afford to buy their own home on the open market.

In 2009/10 we achieved 74 per cent of our target for housing allocations; this figure will improve significantly once we have allocated sites in the core strategy. We have now adopted our core Strategy (December 2012) which has increased the supply of housing land across our district.

We have attracted a significant amount of inward investment for affordable housing from the national affordable housing programme (2008/11). In 2009/10 we secured new funding of £10,371,000 from the Homes and Communities Agency to deliver 195 homes, and we also secured £2,800,000 in grant to enable the first phases of Great Western Park, Didcot to be brought forward. Around 400 new affordable homes have been built between 2008/09 and 2011/12 which have provided a wide range of property sizes with over 80 per cent delivered as family sized housing.

2011/12 saw:

- 25 affordable units delivered at Great Western Park
- 34 affordable units completed at Fairmile hospital site in Cholsey
- 56 affordable units were completed at Chinnor Cement Works site
- 28 new homes delivered through redevelopment of a redundant garage site, 'old' sheltered housing scheme and other land owned by Soha Housing
- 21 home purchases completed under the council's open market Homebuy (OMHB) schemes
- The first affordable Extra Care Housing scheme for older people completed by Soha in Thame – providing 40 self-contained, wheelchair accessible apartments.

Alongside this we have implemented a number of initiatives to help people to find suitable homes or to stay in their own homes. This includes the Oxfordshire Homechoice scheme and promoting take up of disabled facilities grants. We have also reduced the use of temporary accommodation for those who come to us for extra support when they become homeless.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Corporate priorities

- Support creation of vibrant market towns
- Promote business growth and the creation of new jobs.

One of the key strands of our economic development work has been working to ensure that our market towns remain vibrant and attract both local people and visitors to spend time in them. Working in partnership with local town councils, chambers of commerce and local businesses we have developed our market towns strategy and action plans for Henley, Thame and Wallingford. We are now working together to implement the actions in these.

Major projects delivered over the corporate plan period include:

- work on branding and distinctiveness marketing to boost visitors to each of the towns
- appointment of market town co-ordinators in each of the towns
- delivery of SEEDA small rural towns programme attracting over £200,000 external funding to Thame and Wallingford
- annual surveys of retail unit vacancies
- investment of £260,000 has been provided for new moorings in Wallingford
- funding for streetscape improvements and signage in Henley town centre
- viability studies undertaken for regeneration of key town sites including former Waitrose site in Wallingford and Thame Cattle Market.

More widely, we have been working with businesses to implement our economic development framework and action plan, launched in 2010. Key successes to date include:

- completion of a South Oxfordshire skills survey
- support for home-based businesses
- provision of networking opportunities for businesses
- promotion of available commercial sites
- publishing an inward investment guide "Let's do business"
- delivery/promotion of business support services.

As part of the leading edge Science Vale UK Partnership we have been successful in obtaining Enterprise Zone status for development sites at Harwell Oxford and Milton Park – this is only the second in the country. We estimate that the business incentives that are available in the Enterprise Zone will help to create 8,400 new jobs in the area. We are working hard to encourage businesses into the district and already several businesses have moved into Milton Park, creating many job opportunities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: TRANSFORMING DIDCOT

Corporate priorities

- Plan for the expansion of Didcot as a major centre of population and employment in Southern Oxfordshire
- Develop a thriving town centre, with a wider range of facilities.

A number of years ago we set out to transform Didcot by improving the facilities available in the town, and to support the needs of its growing population for more jobs and improved leisure and shopping. The council now operates the successful Cornerstone arts centre, which attracts over 110,000 visitors a year. We have completed the Ladygrove Loop and have more recently allocated £15million for a new leisure centre on the north east Didcot development area.

Inward investment has helped to fund much of this growth – New Growth Point Funding is helping towards Didcot station forecourt improvements, and linked to this Homes and Communities Agency funding has been used to purchase properties opposite the station to enable us to bring forward regeneration plans for this key ‘gateway’ area of the town. Also looking to the future, we are working with our partners Hammerson plc on plans for phase II of the Orchard Centre.

Didcot is now a thriving town which will play a fundamental part in the new Science Vale UK enterprise zone which is set to be a major hub for science and technology businesses. We are working with businesses and other partners to ensure that local people can take advantage of the science and technology job opportunities and increase the number of local people who can find work close to Didcot.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: HELPING PEOPLE FEEL SAFE AND SECURE

Corporate priorities

- Maintain low levels of fear of crime and antisocial behaviour
- To take action to alleviate the risk of flooding to properties.

South Oxfordshire is a low crime area and feedback from residents tells us that 85 per cent feel safe on our streets at night and 97 per cent do so during the day; but even so some people do still experience crime and antisocial behaviour in their communities. We work closely with the Police and with other agencies as part of the South and Vale Community Safety Partnership to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour so that residents can feel even safer. Through a Joint Agency Tasking and Co-ordinating group we make sure that we all work together to tackle 'hotspots'.

We also work with the police, trading standards and other agencies to tackle underage drinking and drug and alcohol related disorder through Nightsafe and other partnership initiatives.

The good news is that we've seen a significant reduction in many types of crime - the level of criminal damage reported to the police has dropped by a massive 25.5 per cent over the lifetime of our plan.

Domestic abuse is a crime that affects too many people and we are working with the police to support those who are victims and to reduce the number of incidents. Some of the things we support are the county domestic abuse co-ordinator, a dedicated outreach service for domestic abuse victims and their families and 'sanctuary scheme' works which help victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and feel safe.

Whilst flooding doesn't affect all residents, for those whose homes or property are flooded it can have a devastating affect on their lives. For a number of years we have been working with Oxfordshire County Council, the Environment Agency, local landowners and others to help to prevent flooding and to protect homes in the event that it does happen. This includes having clear agreement on roles and responsibilities in relation to flood alleviation, enforcement and reporting flooding.

We have carried out flood alleviation schemes to help prevent flooding in those areas most at risk, including in Tiddington, Berrick/ Roke, Chalgrove, Wheatley and Thame; and more are planned. We also work with local communities to enable them to take action by setting up flood groups – Chalgrove was one of the first to do this.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES, ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Corporate priority

- Increase access to a wide range of activities for young people, which meet their needs; and support young people at risk of committing antisocial behaviour and crime.

A number of our teams work with partners, including the schools sports partnership, the youth service and Thames Valley Police to increase access to and extend the range of positive activities available for young people. Access to positive things to do helps to keep more vulnerable young people out of trouble. In 2001/12 we ran a positive activities campaign, promoting the 'Activities Oxfordshire' website, to try to get more young people involved in volunteering and taking part in positive activities.

Our school holiday programmes provide a wide range of activities for children aged 5-18 years and we have extended the range of activities, to include kayaking, boxing, golf, sailing and horse riding. We have also secured external funding to deliver a range of projects in South Oxfordshire for 14 – 25 year olds.

We recognise that young people are the active citizens' of the future and we try to build their views as well as those of adults into planning for and communicating our services – for example how to get messages out about Halloween safety and on taxi licensing. Young people do some good work in our communities and we like to promote this, including bringing them together with older people to share experience and skills such as their recent help with IT classes run by AGE UK. Through work experience and extended work experience we help to give young people who are struggling to get work, the vital experience they need to demonstrate their skills' to future employers, and they support us to deliver some of our projects in the district. There have been 49 placements between 2010-2012.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Corporate priorities

- Support local groups to provide services and solutions in their local communities
- Advocate and influence on behalf of our communities on important local issues for which we are not the main provider.

The biggest way in which we support our communities to take action for themselves is by providing funding through our grant schemes. In the last year of our corporate plan alone (2011/12) we provided capital grants to 19 projects totalling £544,550, including:

- £60,000 to Garsington Village Hall towards a major refurbishment project
- £82,240 to Cholsey Parish Council for a new pavilion and community centre
- £8,114 to Aston Tirrold and Upthorpe Village Hall for an online initiative, including broadband and computing equipment
- £15,000 to Millstream Day Centre in Benson for internal modifications and garden landscaping.

We also provided revenue grants to 28 organisations totalling £424,140, including:

- £165,620 to CABs in Thame, Henley and Didcot
- £21,500 to Age UK Oxfordshire
- £21,769 to The Chiltern Centre in Henley
- £7,337 to Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre.

During the lifetime of the plan we awarded a total of £5.1million in funding to local communities and voluntary groups.

We also support towns and parishes to develop community led plans and market town action plans and more recently we have supported several parishes on neighbourhood planning. In total 42 communities in South Oxfordshire are now either involved in developing a community led plan or have already completed one and are implementing the actions contained within it. We have supported Thame, Henley and Wallingford to develop town action plans and Thame and Woodcote are well into the work on their neighbourhood development plans. Through the South Oxfordshire Partnership Community Places project we have provided more intensive community development worker support to Berinsfield for its community led plan and support to the new residents of the Great Western Park development in Didcot.

As a community leader we like to support our communities to campaign on local issues which are important to them. With Wycombe District Council we have continued to support local communities living along the M40 to take their case to the Government for noise mitigation measures to be provided on that stretch of road. We also supported local villages to make a case to Oxfordshire County Council to keep some subsidised bus services running in the Wallingford area.

This page is intentionally left blank