



South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council

Performance Management Framework

Foreword – Sue Cooper, Leader, South Oxfordshire District Council

South Oxfordshire's Corporate Plan sets out six strategic themes that describe what we hope to achieve over the next four years. These themes are clearly important to our residents, with all of them being agreed as important in our consultation last year.



In my foreword to the Plan last year, I emphasised the rural nature of our district, with the need to focus on biodiversity and wildlife but also to balance the affordability of housing with over-development of our area.

Why is it important to have a Performance Management Framework (PMF)?

- The PMF is important as it measures what the council is doing against our priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2020-24
- We know that residents are interested to know how well their council is doing from the very high response rate to the public engagement during 2020 (the most successful Corporate Plan engagement ever seen at the council)
- The PMF – with its quarterly reports and annual strategic review - will be a clear way to report on our performance to the public, in line with our theme of Openness and Accountability.

How will the PMF help us to deliver the Plan?

- By measuring what we are doing we will see progress, challenges, areas needing more emphasis or where priorities need to change. Some measures will be numerical and some will be descriptive.
- From high-level strategies down to individual workstreams, this establishes where we are and how far we have to travel to achieve the outcomes we want
- This is a change in how the council is run, creating a “golden thread” that links individual performance to our Corporate Plan

Providing opportunity for transparency, scrutiny and challenge

- This is not just about celebrating good news; it can also highlight problems to be overcome. It aims to provide transparency on what the council is doing and will help to hold us all to account.



Foreword – Emily Smith, Leader, Vale of White Horse District Council

Last year it was my pleasure to introduce the Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan for 2020-24, which set out the agreed priorities to help communities and people across the Vale of White Horse thrive.

As residents, you've shown your interest in what the council is doing. The public engagement exercise was the most successful Corporate Plan engagement in ten years at the council.

This Performance Management Framework (PMF) highlights how we intend to measure our performance against the priorities in the plan and provide opportunities for scrutiny and challenge.

As I emphasised in the Corporate Plan, we take seriously our responsibilities to meet national and local climate targets; we consider the climate emergency to be central to our work. This PMF provides the structure to see progress against this and our other priorities.

- It will measure what the council is doing to implement our priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- The PMF, with its quarterly and annual strategic reviews, is the transparent process by which we intend to keep you informed.
- By measuring what we are doing, we will see progress, challenges, areas where more emphasis is needed, or where priorities need to change.
- From major themes set out in our Corporate Plan, to individual workstreams, the PMF will establish where we are and how far we have left to travel to achieve the outcomes we want.
- This approach improves how individuals and teams work together toward shared goals.

The PMF will provide the opportunity for transparency via scrutiny and challenge. It will identify successes and also point out where changes are needed. It will help hold us all to account.

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Introduction

Effective performance management plays a central role in putting our communities and residents at the heart of everything. It also enables them to see how well we are doing and how we intend to improve.

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils (the councils) have developed corporate plans which identify priorities which they will focus on until 2024.

The approach set out in this Performance Management Framework (PMF) will support the delivery of the priorities within the corporate plans, improve transparency and assist local people in holding the councils to account.

Openness, transparency and accountability is an inherent part of the council's culture and is fundamental to the achievement of our priorities set out in the corporate plans 2020-24. Moreover, they are essential to effective corporate governance. Therefore, this framework will further strengthen arrangements by enabling our decision making, processes, culture and effective leadership to further focus on the issues that matter to service users and the public.

This PMF has been designed to ensure that the councils' priorities are translated into clear plans with measurable targets which can be easily monitored by elected members and support effective implementation by officers.

The framework also sets out how we intend to measure our work and when we intend to report on this (and to whom).

Through measurements that reflect achievable progress, outside observers should understand how the councils approach strategic priorities and change. They will see quarterly reports to councillors that measure progress against priorities and a yearly report that sets out our progress and key achievements.

To officers, the framework should be embedded throughout their individual performance management. Through this, their line managers will be expected to work with them to understand how they as individuals, support the delivery of the councils strategic priority themes. This "golden thread" principle will allow our resources (staff) to focus on and prioritise the things that matter most to our residents and communities.

Enhancing Corporate Governance

Corporate governance is about doing the right things in the right way. It encompasses accountability and transparency in our actions and decisions.

In developing this framework, the following principles – which are designed to ensure that our processes and arrangements enable robust corporate governance – have been identified:

- **Embedding a strategic approach**

The framework should provide meaningful and accurate performance information and data to the right people at the right time. This will support the monitoring and implementation of the councils' strategic objectives as set out in our corporate plan.

- **Openness and accountability**

Performance management is everyone's responsibility and requires clear lines of accountability to facilitate openness and transparency. Performance information will be shared openly by default and used to take informed and transparent decisions. It will not be suppressed because it may reveal a lack of progress and/or underperformance.

- **Continuous improvement process and learning culture**

This framework should be underpinned by a culture of understanding what went well, what didn't work as planned, and what can be done better. There should not be a blame culture in how we are performing.

Corporate Delivery Framework

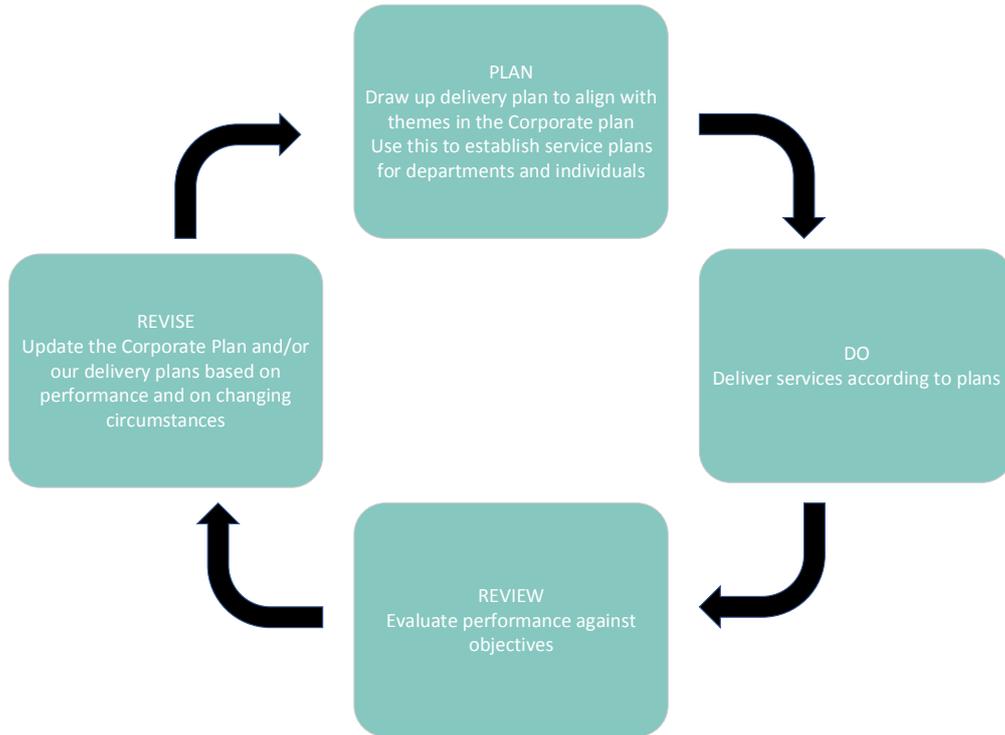
To enhance our corporate governance, the councils have implemented an approach to project management to improve the governance, oversight and control of projects. The Corporate Delivery Framework (CDF) provides a toolkit for staff to enhance successful project delivery. This framework will support the implementation of projects which are included in the annual delivery plans and through which the corporate plan priorities are delivered.

As an interim arrangement it is envisaged that the system which records and monitors projects within the CDF will be used to identify project progress. In the longer term the councils will be exploring the option of using an IT solution to facilitate quicker and simplified performance reporting.

Clear Priorities and Plans

Annual Business Planning and Performance Cycle

The councils have an annual business planning cycle in which they set their aspirations and priorities – illustrated in diagram 1 below.

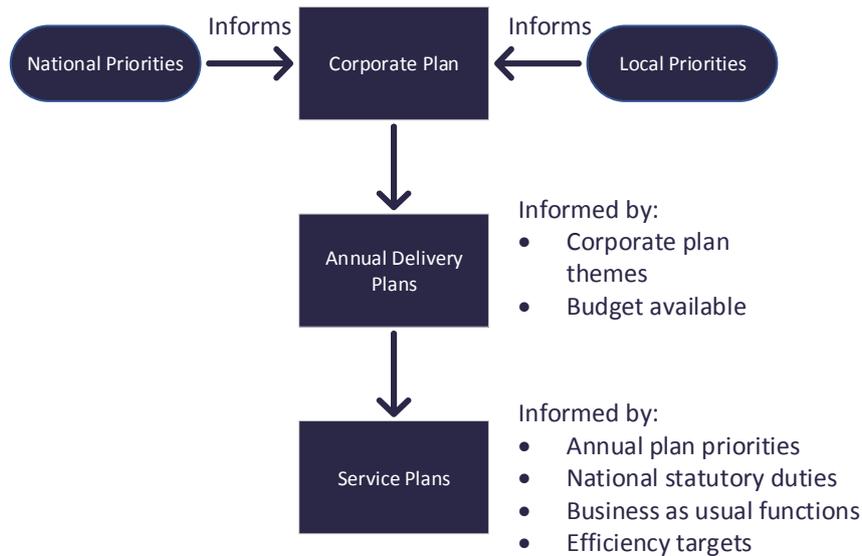


These aspirations and priorities are developed and articulated through several linked plans. These contain actions and measures on which progress is monitored by elected members and officers on a regular basis (quarterly and annually) as part of the performance management cycle.

The Corporate Plan

Corporate plans are developed every four years. They set out what the councils intend to achieve within the lifespan of the document.

The development of a corporate plan is informed by both national and local priorities. Diagram 2 below illustrates the range of plans which the councils produce and how we develop our actions to deliver the priorities set out in the corporate plans:



For 2020 -2024 the corporate plan priority themes are:

Vale of White Horse

1. Providing the homes people need
2. Tackling the Climate Emergency
3. Building healthy communities
4. Building stable finances
5. Working in partnership
6. Working in an open and inclusive way

South Oxfordshire

1. Protect and restore our natural world
2. Openness and accountability
3. Action on the climate emergency
4. Improved economic and community well-being
5. Homes and infrastructure that meets local needs
6. Investment that re-builds our financial viability

Each of the themes span service area and cabinet member portfolios.

Annual Delivery Plan

Each year the councils develop annual delivery plans which set out the detailed actions required over the next 12 months to deliver the priorities and objectives in the corporate plan.

The plan is usually developed at the beginning of a corporate plan annual cycle (illustrated in diagram 1) through a collaborative process between elected members and our Strategic Management Team (SMT) and aligned to budget setting.

Annual delivery plans are developed throughout the life cycle of the corporate plan and aim to:

- outline how the council intends to translate large strategic priorities into a set of actions to be delivered.

- set a series of measurements to show progress towards actions to deliver the corporate plans. These can be monitored quarterly and yearly within the PMF cycle.
- consider issues such as budget and resources which could impact on the delivery of the plans. This is used to inform budget-setting each year and ensure that the councils manage their resources effectively.
- provide clear signals to teams how their service plans should link to the corporate plans.
- align to the councils' Corporate Delivery Framework which supports effective project management and delivery.

Service and Team Plan

Services and teams will set their own goals for the year. These will reflect corporate and annual delivery plans and business as usual functions such as statutory responsibilities. Service plans should contain:

- actions that contribute to achievement of the councils' priorities as identified in annual delivery plans.
- actions that are driven by the need to improve efficiency and effectiveness in service.
- actions that relate to frontline service or delivery of statutory requirements, whether-or-not directly related to the council's priorities.
- align to the councils' Corporate Delivery Framework which supports effective project management and delivery.

Other Plans

There are a range of other plans and strategies that align with and contain actions that will help implement the corporate plan priorities and projects. Whilst lead responsibility for delivering these may sit within one team, activities may cut-across other areas of the council and/or partner organisations.

The relevant service lead is responsible for developing these plans and ensuring that they are robust, with proportionate governance and performance management arrangements in place.

Annual Strategic Review

The corporate plan will be reviewed annually to assess whether key projects and measures are still relevant and are continuing to deliver the actions we have set ourselves.

Measuring and Reporting Performance

Elected members of the Cabinet, Scrutiny and CEAC/CEEAC Committees will receive performance reports on a quarterly and annual basis. These reports evaluate the councils' progress in implementing corporate plan priorities and will ultimately be agreed and reviewed by Cabinet after the committee cycles. The committee meetings provide an opportunity to re-assess the corporate plan and annual delivery plans to ensure their continual relevance. Diagram 3 below illustrates this reporting and monitoring cycle:



Setting performance measures

A set of key strategic performance measures have been developed to monitor our progress in implementing councils' corporate plan priorities. Performance measures can be either Quantitative (Numeric) or Qualitative (narrative based e.g. case studies).

Performance measures should reflect progress against an objective and be something that the councils' actions can directly influence.

Quarterly Reports

These reports contain detailed data and information on the progress of corporate plan actions and measures. They also include financial and resource information which can be used to determine resource allocation to support the implementation of

priorities. In addition, details of remedial actions required to address a lack of progress or poor performance. This detailed evidence can then be used to revise timescales and activities as appropriate.

Annual Strategic Review

The annual strategic review will provide an opportunity to reflect on the councils' progress in implementing the corporate plan priority themes. It will be used to highlight key achievements and will include case studies to demonstrate positive impact on residents. The publication will be aimed at elected members, residents, staff and partner organisations.

The report should replicate the design of the corporate plans to demonstrate how they interlink and to provide visible and tangible progress on its implementation.

The annual report will be a key part of developing the annual delivery plan for the year ahead and allow elected members the opportunity to re-prioritise actions, projects or resources to respond to any changes in the council's landscape.

Performance Monitoring and Challenge

Effective performance management requires clearly defined and structured accountability. The councils have in place a range of mechanisms for monitoring, reviewing and challenging their performance. Performance management is a key responsibility of both officers and members as detailed below:

- **Cabinet Members**

Elected members hold ultimate responsibility for the services that the councils deliver.

Collectively Cabinet have overall responsibility for the delivery of the council's corporate plans. At the outset of the annual business planning and performance cycle, Cabinet must approve the annual delivery plans and in-year measures. It formally considers performance on a quarterly basis – focused on the actions and measures within the corporate plan and agrees remedial action to address a lack of progress or poor performance.

- **The Scrutiny committee(s)**

These are opposition-led bodies responsible for holding the Cabinet to account. Their role is to provide an appropriate level of challenge to Cabinet to ensure robust decision making.

Committee members will receive the quarterly reports and identify any remedial actions which need to be taken to ensure delivery against the council's priorities and make any necessary recommendations to Cabinet.

- **Lead Members (Portfolio Holders)**

Lead members have responsibility for performance of the services within their remit. To support this, they provide input into the development and monitoring of the corporate plans, as well as the service plans within their portfolio.

Officers provide relevant data and supporting information to support lead members with the performance challenge role.

- **Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) and Climate and Ecological Emergency Advisory Committee (CEEAC)**

Each council's Climate Emergency Advisory Committee is responsible for advising Cabinet on matters relating to the climate emergency and biodiversity. This includes, advising on how the council can contribute to the delivery of national legally-binding targets on the climate emergency, the council's own targets on the climate emergency, and making recommendations on ways in which the council can reduce damage to the global and local environment through the delivery of its agreed Corporate Plan.

The quarterly reports should be reviewed by these committees to provide their input and any recommendations to Cabinet on relevant measures, progress or remedial actions.

- **Strategic Management Team**

SMT has collective managerial responsibility for overall council performance and implementation of the corporate plans. The role of SMT is to provide performance support and challenge across the councils. SMT assesses progress against the corporate plan actions and measures for Cabinet, outlining areas for suggestions and improvement and implementing relevant actions.

Members of SMT are also responsible for ensuring the completion of service planning for their respective areas.

- **Council Services**

Each council service is responsible for providing performance data and information. This could range from employee reviews, statutory data returns, or responding to requests for information, updates and case studies for the quarterly/annual reports. In particular, the following teams have distinct responsibilities, but are expected to work closely together:

- **Insight and Policy** – are responsible for the development in collaboration with elected members and SMT the annual delivery plan and the annual strategic review process. The team are also responsible for the compilation of the annual report.
- **Assurance** – are responsible for the implementation of the PMF. Producing the quarterly performance reports for SMT, Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee and the Council, ensuring full consultation ahead of publication. They are responsible for the collation of performance information from services across the council to include within the quarterly/annual reports.
- **Internal Audit** - are responsible for providing guidance and information on risk management, in addition to dealing with the provision of audit services. If data quality issues are identified through the course of an audit, whether linked to performance measurements or not, this will be raised in the audit report. Internal audit also provides an independent review of the corporate approach to performance management and data quality.
- **Strategic HR** - are responsible for overseeing the staff performance management process and fostering a culture that supports “blame free” continuous improvement.
- **Managers** - Managers play an essential role in improving performance and should adhere to the principles of the performance management framework in their everyday work. SMT will be developing further

guidance for managers on how they can facilitate discussions and actions to improve both service and staff performance.

- **Officers** - Each officer should be pro-active in understanding how they contribute to the priority themes within the councils' corporate plans and where they have any specific responsibilities for its delivery (for example providing service performance data for monitoring). The level of accountability and roles will vary among officers. Officers should identify opportunities to develop case studies to illustrate their positive impact on residents in delivering the councils' priority themes - as outlined in the Employee Performance section below.

Employee Performance

Effective people management is central to delivering council priorities and excellent services to the public.

The foundation of individual performance management is the “golden thread” principle in which officers identify how their role fits with the wider objectives as set out in the corporate plans, cascading down through service plans to individual workloads. It should be clear how the employee’s work contributes to different themes within the corporate plans or actions in their area’s service plan. This connects and enables all staff to focus on and prioritise the things that matter most to our residents and communities.

Employees participate in a continuous individual performance management process. Line managers agree objectives with an individual and review their progress towards these on a regular basis. Responsibility for the individual performance management process lies with individual employees and their manager. Each employee must actively participate in the process with objectives and progress reviewed regularly through one-to-one meetings outlining what went well and areas for future improvement.

Our approach also allows an opportunity for employees to detail their positive impact on residents in the form of case studies. These can be selected and included within the annual report to highlight exceptional employee performance.