

HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PLAN

2014/15 – 2016/17

Hastings Council's Corporate Plan consists of the following 3 documents:

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| Part I Corporate Strategy | Strategic overview and priorities |
| Part II Annual Plan | a) 2014/15 - Targets and Milestones
b) 3 - year performance targets* |
| Part III Report back | Retrospective report on performance in 2013/14* |

** To be agreed and published in June 2014*

Part I: Corporate Strategy 2014/15 – 2016/17

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Corporate Plan sets out Hastings Borough Council's strategic direction and priorities over the three years, to the end of 2016/17.
- 1.2 This is a very challenging time for public services, the continuing impact of reduction in government grant is one of the biggest challenges we face. The needs of our town remain significant, and for the Council to play an active community leadership role and to continue to intervene to improve the quality of life of local people we face very difficult choices in how to target our reducing resources. (For full details of the Council's financial position please see the Budget report)
- 1.3 The Council has had no choice but to scale back activity whilst working hard to address the fact that the wider economic climate increases demand for some of our services. Already the Council has cut back on areas of activity, reduced our senior and support staff numbers, and found smarter and more efficient ways of working.
- 1.4 During 2014/15 we will be focussed on radically reviewing our priorities and the way we deliver services in advance of a further big reduction in our budget from the start of 2015. We will be re-examining everything we do and challenging ourselves to be sure that we are as effective and efficient as possible. We will be transforming the way we deliver services and maximising the use of technology and electronic communications.
- 1.5 The outcome of these processes in early 2015 will be a revised Corporate Plan and Budget for 2015/16 onwards, setting out our revised vision and priorities, the scale, size and shape of our services and the commitments we will make to local people.
- 1.6 Despite this very challenging financial situation, we remain an ambitious Council. We have come a long way in recent years, but there is still a big job to do in continuing to improve the way our town is perceived by businesses, investors, visitors and local people. We want to improve the quality of life and life chances for local people and attract new money, enthusiasm and business to our town to continue to help us grow.
- 1.7 To maximise improvements within Hastings, we continue to work closely with key partners, including Sussex Police, East Sussex County Council, our health partners, Sussex Coast College Hastings, University of Brighton – Hastings Campus, Amicus Horizon Housing and SeaChange Sussex along with representatives from the private, voluntary and community sectors to achieve our long-term shared priorities for the area. The Hastings and St Leonards Sustainable Community Strategy 2003 - 2026, sets out the town's vision and mission statement:

Vision: ***The renaissance of Hastings through social, economic, cultural and environmental regeneration***

Mission: *To build on the town's strong community spirit, culture, diverse population and extraordinary natural environment to create a safer, healthier more sustainable and more prosperous place with lasting opportunities for everybody.*

2.0 Developing our Corporate Plan and Budget

- 2.1. The first stage in the annual process to develop our draft Budget and Corporate Plan is to decide on our priorities. These are reviewed each year to ensure they remain relevant to current circumstances and opportunities, and are informed by local people's views and evidence about local needs.
- 2.2. Back in September 2010, the Council's political leadership began a ['Big Conversation'](#) consultation with staff and local residents outlining the challenge of spending cuts and seeking views on priorities in the difficult financial climate.
- 2.3. Since then local people have consistently told us through subsequent consultations that quality of life issues remain key priorities and that the breadth of Council services are valued.
- 2.4. The most recent phase of consultation was the [Local Place Survey](#) that took place in autumn 2013. This survey sought the views of residents on their perceptions of the town, their neighbourhoods and local services.
- 2.5. The survey results confirmed that levels of satisfaction with the town and services have remained broadly consistent with 2011 findings. This is encouraging given the continuing difficult financial climate and the challenge of spending cuts.
- 2.6. As the Council makes the transition to lower levels of activity, we continue to work closely with staff in order to ensure that they are empowered to make changes to improve what we do. Staff team meetings, service delivery planning, staff surveys, liaison with Trade Unions and a Staff Commission are the ongoing means of receiving the views of staff. These two way communication channels are vital to ensure we are all acting as 'One Team' as the organisation transforms itself to delivering in new and even more efficient ways.
- 2.7. Council staff have fed back that they are keen to ensure that our customers are kept at the heart of everything the Council does and that '**Customer first**' underpins how Council services are reshaped and delivered.

Our Priorities

- 2.8 We listened to what local people told us and have retained our overarching priorities for 2014/15. These are listed below (in no particular order of priority).
- 2.9 Underpinning our priorities from 2014/15 onwards is a renewed commitment to '**Customer First**', and working as '**One Team**' - this means that despite our financial challenges, we want to provide services that are efficient, effective and equitable and are based on what our customers tell us. The customer experience of using our services needs to be as straightforward and quick as possible, and we need to get it 'right first time'. All of our staff need to be informative, considerate and to communicate well.
- 2.10 We also recognise that we can only achieve our goals by the combined skills and effort of the whole of our staff team, and that working well together we are a strong force for change and improvement in our town.

Our Priorities 2014/15

Fairness and Equality

To provide high quality services that meet the needs and improve the quality of life of all our citizens, promoting equality of opportunity through a culture of openness, fairness and transparency, enabling local people to hold us to account.

Economic & Physical Regeneration

To secure economic & physical regeneration that produces high quality new developments while preserving the best of our heritage, promoting infrastructure improvements, economic growth and employment, particularly in tourism, creative industries, and high-tech manufacturing & research.

Narrowing the Gap

To 'narrow the gap' between the opportunities of our most deprived communities and those of the rest of the town, as well as between Hastings and the rest of the South East.

Facing Financial Challenges

To meet the current financial challenges by maximising the resources available to us through efficiency improvements, income generation, attracting external funding and investigate sharing services, maintaining an organisation that values its staff and is good to work for.

Interventionist Council

To keep the town clean, safe and attractive, using direct actions to tackle enviro-crime, poor housing, eyesore properties, derelict land and improvements to the public realm.

Environmental Sustainability

To tackle climate change and improve the borough's environment by reducing our own carbon footprint, maintaining high-quality green spaces, promoting sustainable transport, and encouraging 'green' industries.

The activities and projects we'll focus on in 2014/15 to achieve these priorities are included in Part II – see below.

3.0 Meeting the Budget Shortfall

- 3.1 The Council has been preparing for the reduction in its finances by undertaking an efficiency and transformation programme. We have been looking at ways to 'Invest to Save', whereby we invest money now in making ourselves more efficient and enable us to deliver into the future. The recent external auditors' report again compliments the Council on the difficult steps we've taken to address the budget shortfall.
- 3.2 We continue to address our budget pressures in a number of ways by improving the way we do things and continuing to make ourselves more efficient. The Council's Efficiency Programme has put in place measures that will save £2.2m per annum during 2014/15. Examples include:

- **Doing things with others** - we are already working with others to deliver a number of services and share costs e.g. our building control, fraud investigation, and stray dogs services are shared with Rother Council. We have made significant progress over the last eighteen months and have new shared service arrangements across East Sussex for a range of services including: emergency planning and abandoned vehicles.

We have procured a new grounds maintenance contract jointly with Rother District Council and Amicus Housing Association, enabling us to achieve better value for money for all involved.

Our joint waste and street cleaning contract arrangements with neighbouring districts and boroughs has provided us with £6m of savings over the next 10 years. There is still more we can do in partnership with others and we are working hard to develop these opportunities across all aspects of what we do – this value for money work is supported by the East Sussex Procurement Hub, which means we aim to get the best deal for every service/ activity/ contract we agree.

- **Seeking external funding** – the Council continues to have an excellent track record of seeking and achieving bids from external funding sources, be these National Lottery, government schemes, or European funding. In many cases we match funding, and this means we can deliver more for our town than we could have done alone. We are also able to import and export the best and most innovative ideas. Examples of these externally funded projects include:
 - Regional Growth Fund (RGF) – the Council is continuing to work closely with coastal colleagues in Kent and Essex and has successfully bid for £2.1m of RGF money for economic development and regeneration which will lever in some £7.6m of private investment in our town.

- Fisheries Local Action Group – (EU fisheries funding) the Council led a successful £963k bid for European funding that has leveraged a total of £1.4m investment in projects to sustain the local fishing industry.
- Coastal Communities Fund – a successful Council-led bid will yield skills opportunities and new jobs for local people by funding accredited training programmes at Sussex Coast College and the first new structure on Hastings Pier.
- Hastings Pier Trust – we have supported the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for monies that the Pier Trust is using to revive the fortunes of a key local landmark.
- Answers in the Carbon Economy (an EU partnership project) which is investing money in retrofitting our stock of industrial units to make them more attractive and a greater income source.
- **Working innovatively** – we have worked with partners to address accommodation issues and improve service delivery by co-locating Council staff and Police beat officers in our offices. This move is improving the co-ordination of enforcement and community safety through even closer liaison between our staff.

Given the absence of Government funding for Housing Renewal, the Council has had to develop new ways to continue the physical regeneration of our most deprived neighbourhoods. We have developed a partnership that will see £6.3m invested by the end of 2015 in a housing regeneration scheme in a deprived area which has some of the poorest housing conditions in our town. The Coastal Space project in Central St Leonards is a partnership with Amicus Housing and the Homes and Communities Agency.

- **Doing more with less** – We are undertaking detailed Service Reviews of our services, focussing initially on our high profile/volume/highest cost service areas to ensure they are customer first focussed and efficient. The first three reviews are Revenues, Housing Services and Benefits Service, further reviews will follow in 2014/15.
- **Reductions in activities/scale of services** – cutting the level of service we provide or stopping doing something is always a last resort, once we've exhausted all other options. The loss of local service provision is something the Council is keen to minimise when and wherever possible.

4. Annual Targets - Corporate Plan Part II

- 4.1 Part II of the Corporate Plan sets out targets and details some of the activities that will be undertaken in 2014/15 to implement our priorities – these are what we set out to achieve in 2014/15. These are monitored by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny committees quarterly and published on our website. This is one of the key means by which the Council is publicly held to account.

- 4.2 We ensure that our staff are focussed on achieving our longer term and annual priorities, by linking these targets to their departmental work plans and their individual objectives. These are monitored through quarterly performance reviews and the staff appraisal process.