

Quarter 3 progress - to end December 2013

Exception Report Summary

The following targets for this committee's area of responsibility in Part II of the Council's 2013/14 Corporate Plan have been identified as exceptions.

Please note, 'Exceptions' are defined as those targets not meeting expected performance and targets achieved. Full details of 'Target Status' are listed in the accompanying covering report.

Target no./Service	Target Status
1. Financial Services – Unqualified Audit Opinion	Achieved
8. Financial Services – Local Authority Mortgage Scheme, 2 nd phase	Achieved
4g. Cross Cutting – Living Wage Employer	Slippage Possible

The following updates are given against targets in the Council's Corporate Plan 2013/14 – 2015/16.

Targets are listed under the service responsible for delivery. By achieving these targets, the Council will be delivering our overarching priorities for 2013/14 shown below. These are listed in no particular order:

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.

Corporate Resources Directorate

FINANCIAL SERVICES

1. Achieve an unqualified audit opinion for the annual statement of accounts.

Measure: Unqualified audit opinion gained by 30th Sept (Quarter 2).

Performance @ QTR 3 – Achieved

Progress – Unqualified Audit opinions were received in September 2013 on the Council's Accounts and also those of the Foreshore Trust.

2. Maintain the occupancy of industrial units against a background of an uncertain economic environment.

Measures: Percentage of void industrial units and actual income versus the budget.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress –

Void units

Factory units 1 out of 62 vacant = **1.6% void (Q2 1.6%)**

Castleham Business Centre East (new) 5 out of 17 vacant = **29.4% void (Q2 29.4%)**

Castleham Business Centre West 5 out of 20 vacant = **25% void (Q2 70%)**

Actual income versus the budget.

Budget revised to £698,490 from £662,920 and actual income at year end is not expected to vary from this significantly.

3. Prepare for the phased introduction of the Government's new 'Universal Credit' commencing in 2013/14 and take appropriate action as necessary.

Measure: Regular reports and updates to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees where there are implications for the Council and the community and action taken as appropriate.

Performance @ QTR 3 – Target Not Applicable

Progress – As it currently stands, Universal Credit will not be introduced by the government in Hastings during this financial year. Current expectations are that it will be introduced sometime after June 2015.

4. Review existing Council Tax Support Scheme (introduced April 2013) and implement new scheme for 2014/15 as necessary.

Measure: Scheme agreed by 31st January 2014.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress – Council approval obtained to retain Year 1 scheme for 2014/15.

5. Give priority within the shared Fraud Investigation Service to more serious cases, working within the Single Fraud Investigation Service requirements (commencing April 2013)

Measure: Number of serious cases investigated.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On target

Progress – 15 serious cases have been closed in the first 9 months compared to 34 cases last year (and 29 the year before). However, a higher figure of potential fraud (£508,779) has been identified in the first 9 months of this year compared to £410,988 for the whole 12 month period last year.

As reported at the end of quarter 2, there have been a number of high value serious cases investigated where the council has worked closely with other investigative authorities. These have taken considerable resources and have impacted upon the statistics above.

Further cases are expected to result from this work over the next 3-9 months.

6. Continue to deliver the annual Audit Plan and report outcomes to the Audit Committee.

Measure: Comparison of audits completed against those on the published audit plan reported in the annual audit report.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress – Completion of the annual plan is on profile but slippage is possible dependent upon the outcome of the Housing Benefit Grant Subsidy work which has taken significantly longer than in previous years.

7. Continue to improve the Council's procurement arrangements, working in collaboration with other local authorities, the East Sussex Procurement Hub and other partners.

Measures: Value for money contracts secured, savings achieved and procurement arrangements completed.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On target

Progress – In November, the East Sussex Procurement Hub was shortlisted for a national local government award by the Society of Procurement Officers, this was an excellent achievement which reflected not only the efforts of the Hub but the officers across Hastings and other East Sussex councils who have contributed time, effort and ideas.

The following procurement activity was concluded during quarter 3 by the ESPH.

Contract Title	Date	Savings/Revenue Achieved for HBC
Utilities Invoice/Contract Audit	Review underway September 2013 and report available early	Review completed identifying a potential of £1,600 pa savings.

	November 2013	
Empty Homes Review	Review completed November 2013.	Additional New Homes Bonus (NHB) revenue generated = £1,071,596 (80% retained by HBC) against cost of review = £57,822. Cost sharing agreed where ESCC absorb 20% of the cost.
Insurance Services	Contract awarded December 2013	Additional 5% discount achieved on renewal costs.
Banking Contract	Extension to March 2015	Tender will start in February with the aim of reducing costs by aggregation of clients and merchant services volume discounts.

- 8. Deliver a second phase of the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme within Hastings and St Leonards. The Council acting as guarantor on deposits for eligible first time buyers to help stimulate the local housing market.**
Measures: Numbers of eligible first times buyers supported onto the housing ladder. Percentage of the £1m indemnity committed.

Performance @ QTR 3 – Achieved

Progress – A second phase of the scheme was launched in late March 2013. As at the 31 December 2013, in addition to the 37 completions in the first phase, there have been 29 completions, 2 offers made and a further 5 applications in the pipeline. Of the £1m indemnity, £874,500 (87.5%) has been committed.

The third phase of the scheme which was to be funded by East Sussex County Council is not proceeding following the temporary hold put on the scheme by Lloyds Bank and the government's introduction of the Help to Buy scheme.

- 9. Support the new operator to fulfil the potential of St Mary In the Castle (SMIC)**
Measure: SMIC fully reopened and restoration works undertaken.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On target

Progress – Restoration works are now progressing well and are expected to be substantially complete in February. Buckswood have submitted an application for Listed Building consent for refurbishment of the café.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Name	Improvement Direction	Actual Dec 2012	Direction of Travel	Actual Dec 2013	Status Dec 2013	Target Dec 2013	Target Mar 2014
6.1 % Council Tax collected in year	Bigger is better	90.8%	Worse	89.4%	Not Met	90.2%	96.0%
6.2 % Non domestic rates collected in year	Bigger is better	89.9%	Better	90.3%	Not Met	92.0%	97.0%
6.3 Average number of days to process new housing benefit claims	Smaller is better	12.9	Same	12.9	Met	15.0	15.0
6.4 Average number of days to process changes to housing benefit claims	Smaller is better	3.1	Worse	4.1	Met	5.0	5.0
6.5 Average number of days to process new Council Tax Reduction claims	Smaller is better			12.5	Met	15.0	15.0
6.6 Average number of days to process changes to Council Tax Reduction claims	Smaller is better			2.6	Met	5.0	5.0

CORPORATE SERVICES

1. Support local democracy by the effective delivery of electoral services activities.

Measures:

- a) Successful management of the 2013 East Sussex County Council election.
- b) Preparation for the transition to Individual Elector Registration currently proposed for full introduction in 2014.
- c) Polling Places Review undertaken as a result of changes to Parliamentary terms (Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011).
- d) All statutory timetables met in line with Electoral Commission requirements.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress –

- 2013 ESCC elections successfully completed in Q1 and accounts satisfied;
- Preparations well underway for transition to IER; 'go live' date has been confirmed by the Minister for June 2014. Core staff attending relevant training events through Cabinet Office, Association of Electoral Administrators and Election Management System suppliers.
- Polling Places Review has been completed, with input from the cross party review team. The 3rd February Cabinet has recommended the outcome to the full Council on 19th February.
- All statutory timetables currently being met in line with Electoral Commission requirements.

2. Facilitate the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), to act as the principal strategic forum for collaboration between service providers, community representatives, the voluntary and private sectors.

Measures:

- a) LSP Board is supported to work effectively; in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver services which respond to locally identified need and act as a collective voice with a shared vision for shaping the town.
- b) With partners, undertake the biennial local 'Place Survey' and feed findings into the Council and partners decision-making processes to inform priorities and service developments.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress – The latest LSP Board was held in January. The Board received a comprehensive position update on the seawater bathing quality and what initiatives were being carried out by HBC, the Environment Agency and Southern Water to improve the standard. It was stressed that the bathing water quality has improved year on year over the last twenty years, but the standard has been raised by a new EU Directive. An action plan has been drafted and will be circulated to the Board once Southern Water have confirmed agreement.

The Board also received a presentation from Andrew Palmer on Housing and Homelessness.

Copies of the presentations and background papers are available at http://www.hastings.gov.uk/decisions_democracy/our_partners/local_strategic_partnership#lsp_meetings

3. Support the Council's transformation to a leaner, more resilient organisation which remains focussed on delivering outcomes for local people as well as supporting and valuing its staff.

Measures:

- a) Managers supported to implement actions in the refreshed Workforce Development Plan (to be agreed by date TBD) thereby ensuring the Council's workforce is equipped to meet new challenges and ways of working.
- b) Deliver an agreed 'organisational and cultural change' programme during 2013/14, building on commitments made at the end of 2012.
- c) Teams assisted to undertake service process re-design and to identify opportunities for efficiency, maintaining service quality and improving customer services.
- d) Engage and support staff throughout the change process by use of regular staff focus groups and a feedback survey.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress –

- a) A four-day programme 'The Personal Challenges of Leadership' has been completed by 16 managers. This was introduced to help them refresh their thinking and behaviour so that they are better able to deal with the changes we are experiencing. Work is underway to produce a succession, and talent management plan which will be incorporated into the Workforce Development Plan.
- b) Following a review of strategic leadership activity, a new structure has been put in place to support activity 'on' the business and 'in' the business. The new Strategic Leadership Board will identify the vision, priorities, business model and culture of the council, and will also manage the Priorities Income, Efficiency Review Process. This Board will commission work including efficiency and customer first service reviews and work on organisational development. The new Organisational Development Group will be tasked with delivering a refreshed 'Customer First Strategy' and 'Customer Charter' and activities to ensure the council is operating as 'One Team'. Both of these new groups will meet first in quarter 4.
- c) The Customer First Project Manager is working with the Revenues Service to complete the customer first and efficiency review of the service. The detailed review is looking at process mapping, efficiencies, customer journey and service issues as well as potential improvements for service delivery which could be achieved using technology and e-transactions.

A Senior POD manager is working with the Contact Centre and Environmental Health colleagues to review processes and customer focus for areas such as licensing, parking, food safety etc.

A 10 module 'Practical Management' programme for the four Contact Centre team leaders has begun and completes in May.

d) The Council's Staff Commission has been re-established and expanded to include representatives from each service area. This is a key mechanism for the council's political leadership to hear directly from staff. The Commission met once in November and again in February – Issues addressed by the group were:

- Staff Survey – review of questions relating to communications.
- Communications - across service areas/internal relationships, major projects publicised, new home page (under development), monthly bulletin produced by CCC manager and sent out to all staff.
- ID cards – new software/equipment being purchased.
- Staff Directory to include photo, job resume and floor location.
- Voice recognition system – any issues to be reported directly to IT for resolution.
- Community Contact Centre/Service teams/ Customer First – all staff to complete Customer care e-learning package within 6 months of new financial year.
- Vexatious complaints – being addressed in Complaints review and all staff will receive a briefing once review has been completed.
- Homeworking – Currently piloting faster broadband link. Review of phone system which will enable the internal extension to link to home office equipment.

4. Support Members to effectively undertake their roles and responsibilities.

Measures:

- a) Annual work programme of Scrutiny Reviews completed to time, cost and specification.
- b) Progress against Corporate Plan targets reviewed quarterly by Overview and Scrutiny Committees to aid transparency about Council performance.
- c) Comprehensive programme of Member training and briefings delivered according to priorities set by the Training and Development Group.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress:

- a) Two out of three key areas of the annual work programme have been completed during quarter 3. The final report of the scrutiny review on bathing water quality will be considered at the quarter 3 Services committee. Both Services and Resources committees are due to approve their Scrutiny Charter at their quarter 3 meetings. The final review into the impact on welfare reform is due to report to the quarter 4 Resources committee as scheduled.
- b) The Scrutiny Steering Group continues to meet quarterly to:
 - plan quarterly scrutiny committee agendas in the context of their annual work programme commitments
 - monitor progress against recommendations in previous scrutiny reviews
 - ensure outstanding commitments from previous quarterly meetings are kept to enable both scrutiny committees to effectively monitor Council performance

- c) The Training and Development Group continue to ensure that the programme of training and development are delivered to time, cost and quality. In addition, work for this quarter included:
- Piloting and rolling out of online training modules
 - Monitoring progress of the i pad tablet trial
 - Supporting officers in the planning for a new intake of members in May 2014.

5. Review the Council's committee structures and Constitution with Elected Members, so these remain fit for purpose as the Council contracts

Measures:

- a) Systematic review of committee structures undertaken and findings reported to Cabinet by December 2013.
- b) Working Arrangements Group (WAG) convened and recommendations made for appropriate changes to the Council's Constitution arising from the review, legislative requirements, and to make it more user friendly.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target (part)

Progress:

- a) The Chair of the WAG has agreed that now is not the appropriate time to review the current committee structure and that this activity would be more helpful at a later point when the future scale and shape of the council is clearer.
- b) The rolling programme of addressing constitutional issues is on-going with items being researched, reviewed and discussed at WAG prior to being brought forward for Council approval.

6. Project manage the European-funded 'Future Cities' project to support climate change adaptation activities (extended in time until December 2013)

Measures:

- a) Submit the final funding claim by October 2013 (claiming for activity up until 30th September 2013)
- b) Accept delivery of the Map Table and develop a staff and member training programme to maximise the application of the map table

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

- a) The Future Cities project has been extended until December 2014. The October payment claim was submitted on time and has now been passed to the Joint Technical Secretariat by the lead partner for approval and payment.
- b) The Map table was used by the FLAG project in a recent workshop with local fishermen.

c) The final report from the collective energy auction which the 'Switched on Hastings' campaign promoted has been received. Nationally, almost 29,000 households registered to take part, and of these 11% accepted their offer and switched, with average realised saving of £175. The total savings amount was £557,083.

1012 registrants of which 153 made the switch - 15%

Type of switcher:

Dual fuel (gas & electricity) -

96 households opted online billing - saved an average of £209

33 households registered on line and opted for paper billing - saved an average of £139

12 households paper registrations and paper billing - saved an av. of £78

Electricity only:

7 households - opted online billing - saved an av. £183

2 households opted paper billing (online registrant) - saved an av. £95

2 households - opted paper billing (paper registrant) - saved an av. £193

7. Provide an efficient, customer-focussed contact and information service through the Hastings Information Centre

Measures:

- a) Build on the establishment of the contact centre and continue to improve the experience of personal and telephone callers using our services.
- b) Use intelligence gained from monitoring of customer enquiries and feedback to assist service improvements across HBC.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress –

- a) Significant work has been under way since the completion of the Contact Centre review to implement the recommendations and the Contact Centre Improvement Board is overseeing these improvements. Focus in quarter 3 has been on delivering a comprehensive training programme to give all staff the confidence and skills to respond to a wider range of queries. A key factor in the success of this training has been that it has been developed and delivered in consultation with service departments. The training has required a small number of staff to be diverted from customer service at a time, however this investment to save of time will enable the service to be more efficient and effective moving forward.

Planning is now underway to prepare for the huge increase in customer contact which occurs at the time of annual Council Tax billing.

- b) Detailed feedback and data from front line experience is being used to inform the Revenues service review currently underway.

8. Promote a culture of transparency in everything the Council does.

Measures:

- a) Details of Council assets, pay policy, senior management salaries, resources, decision making, contracts and spending published to aid transparency.
- b) Freedom of Information and other data requests responded to within legislative timescales.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress –

- a) The council is publishing that which we are required to do under current transparency legislation and guidance. The Council's annual Pay Policy is to be considered by Cabinet in March and Council in April.

The government have recently issued a response to its previous consultation on the Local Authority (Data Transparency) Code 2013 in which they state they are minded to introduce a revised code which will require local authorities to publish even further information. Officers are currently reviewing the additional requirements to identify if there would be significant resource implications for us in complying with this new code.

- b) The Council is continuing to meet its legislative timescales for FOI and other data requests except in a small minority of cases (34/605 in 2013). Many of these requests are multiple questions and often involve multiple departments responding.

For Members information – the number of FOI requests has almost doubled over the last 5 years from 375 per year in 2009 to 605 in 2013, all FOIs are published on our website at:

http://www.hastings.gov.uk/decisions_democracy/transparency/freedom_of_information/

9. Deliver an effective Legal Service that plays a key role in delivery of Council priorities.

Measures:

- a) Provision of strategic legal advice for key projects, policies and procedures (including standards, Freedom of Information, Data Protection etc).
- b) Activity to support enforcement and secure prosecutions; robustly defend the Council against actions brought against it.
- c) Activity to ensure the Council is appropriately protected in terms of contracts and property transactions, and is effective at collection of debts and charges against property.
- d) Ensure effective Corporate Governance – appropriate legal advice given to all to support decision making, including quasi-judicial committees and boards.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress:

Activity in another busy quarter included:

- a) Completing as part of a rolling programme, the first amendments to the Council's Constitution which were approved by Council in December 2013 – these included a refreshed Member-Officer Protocol. The Policy and Operational guidance for Enviro-Crime was approved by the October 2013 Cabinet.
- b) 14 successful prosecutions were undertaken for Enviro-crimes, 7 for dogs, 3 litter, 1 Housing Benefit, 2 Housing Renewal and 1 for Planning Enforcement. 3 Housing Benefit Formal Cautions were administered. We have successfully defended an application to discharge an ASBO (man approaching young females) and had two appeals dismissed concerning a revocation of a liquor licence and a statutory notice served on a landlord.
- c) 9 leases were completed, amongst these were the ground and upper ground floor of Aquila house and leases for Theaklen Drive and Brunel

Road. 7 Contracts were completed, notably Ace Lighting and Collective Energy switching. 5 Section 106 agreements were completed, notably Osbourne House and Redgeland Rise. Debts of over £44,000 were paid in council tax as a result of charging orders and a further £45,000 was secured by this method. A number of instalments have been made in respect of housing benefit overpayments.

- d) Legal Services continue to support members and officers. In regard to challenges it is encouraging that members licensing decisions stand up to legal challenge in the courts.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Name	Improvement Direction	Actual Dec 2012	Direction of Travel	Actual Dec 2013	Target Dec 2013	Status Dec 2013	Target Mar 2014
7.1 The proportion of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence	Smaller is better	4.35	Worse	5.31	Not Met	4.70	6.25

CROSS-CUTTING TARGETS 2013/14

RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. DELIVERING SERVICES INTO THE FUTURE

Brief: Prepare for further significant reductions in Council spending in the future whilst prioritising the activities and projects the Council has capacity to deliver.

Director: Neil Dart

Contributions: All Corporate Management Group

Lead Member: Cllr Birch

O & S: Resources

2013/14 Targets

- a) Deliver a programme of consultation to test local priorities with local people and staff.
- b) Undertake a programme of service and efficiency reviews, prioritising those with the potential for biggest gains in efficiency, cost savings, and/or resilience.
- c) Seek out and explore opportunities for new service delivery models, including shared services where this will provide efficiencies or resilience.
- d) Complete a Priority Income Efficiency Review process to inform the 2014/15 budget.
- e) Produce and publish a Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- f) Agree a Corporate Plan and Budget for 2014/15 onwards in February 2014.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress –

- a) The Local Place Survey that took place in Autumn 2013 sought the views of residents on their perceptions of the town, their neighbourhoods and local services.
- b) A review of Revenue Services is underway and will be followed by a review of the Benefits Service. A Housing Service review is also due to commence shortly. Further reviews will be undertaken during this and the next financial year.
- c) The service review process will assess the potential for new service delivery models and invest to save opportunities for each area of council activity reviewed.
- d) The PIER process and work undertaken to prove the case of how efficient we are has meant that HBC has been awarded the full Efficiency Support Grant and a further 25% bonus.
- e) The Medium Term Financial Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in November 2013.
- f) The draft budget and corporate plan were launched for consultation on 17 January. The final corporate plan and a balanced budget for 2014/15 will be considered by Council on 26 February.

2. CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT

Brief: To maintain an environment where risk management is an integral part of planning and performance management processes and the general culture of the Authority.

Director: Richard Homewood

- Contributions:** All Heads of Service
Lead Member: Cllr Birch
O & S: Resources
2013/14 Targets
- a) To maintain an overview of Corporate and Operational risks to the Council.
 - b) To formally review the Corporate Risk Register and report to Audit Committee during 2013/14.
 - c) To formally review the Operational Risk Register and report to Audit Committee during 2013/14.
 - d) To maintain an overview of the Council's Health and Safety Risk Management Policy and procedures.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress –

- a) The Corporate Risk Management Group meets quarterly and reviews the Corporate and Operational risk registers, monitors insurance claims and procedures for mitigating risk.
- b) The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly and was reported to Audit Committee on 27 June 2013.
- c) The Operational Risk Register is reviewed quarterly and was reported to Audit Committee on 27 June 2013.
- d) The Health and Safety and Risk Management Policy and procedures are routinely reviewed throughout the year. The Fire risk management and Alert Scheme were reviewed in the quarter 1.

3. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Brief: To provide strategic coordination and advice to the Council's policy and forward planning processes, ensuring the Council is maximizing opportunities to tackle climate change and make Hastings more environmentally sustainable.

Director: Richard Homewood

Contributions: All Heads of Service

Lead Member: Cllr Birch

O & S: Resources

- 2013/14 Target(s)**
- a) Oversee implementation of the 2013/14 actions in the HBC Environmental Policy Action Plan.
 - b) Co-ordinate implementation of the HBC targets in the Hastings and St Leonard's Climate Change Strategy Action Plan.
 - c) Review opportunities for exploiting external funding to support corporate environmental objectives.
 - d) Deliver our 2013/14 Climate Local Commitments.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Per capita reduction in CO² emissions in the Local Authority area and Percentage CO² reductions from local authority operations

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress –

- a) Strategic Environmental Projects Board met in January to review the action plans.
The first round of the Hastings Collective Energy Switching project has been completed and 1000 residents signed up.
- b) Understanding Energy Performance Certificates workshop held with staff around Energy Performance in Buildings
Future Cities conference in Essen attended and work has begun on rolling out the Adaptation Compass to other locals authorities in Sussex
Map Table used at the Ace Conference at the Sussex Exchange.
- c) Answers to the Carbon Economy (ACE) conference held on 4 December at the Sussex Exchange.
- d) The climate local commitments have been published by the LGA and are covered in a) b) and c) of this section.

4. CORPORATE EQUALITIES

Brief: Support the Corporate Equalities Steering Group to embed equality and diversity and take actions that contribute to the achievement of the Council's Equality Objective i.e.

“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”

In working to achieve this objective we will:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people in our town.
- Foster good relations.
- Identify priority actions for each year.

Director: Neil Dart

Contributions: All Heads of Service

Lead Member: Cllr Chowney

O & S: Resources

2013/14 Target(s) Our 2013/14 priority Equality actions include:

- a) Continue to work with partners in accordance with Hastings & St Leonards Equalities and Human Rights Charter and produce an Annual Equality Charter report to the LSP.
- b) Ensure all key Council decisions are informed by consideration of equalities impacts and are 'Poverty Proofed'.
- c) Collate and publish our equality data by the deadlines set by the Equality Act 2010 (i.e. by 31st January each year) ensuring the data we record is as accurate as possible, and is used appropriately to inform service improvements.

- d) Ensure Hastings Borough Council is an attractive employer to all sections of the community.
- e) Work with Stonewall and our staff, residents and local support groups to continuously improve lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans equality.
- f) Continue to work with Disabled-Go to provide accurate information about accessibility in our town on the on-line accessibility guide. Enhance the guide with updates and include details of a further 100 premises following audit.
- g) Seek accreditation as a 'Living Wage Employer' and following an assessment of our contractor's performance develop an action plan to assist them to work towards achieving the status over appropriate time periods.

Performance @ QTR 3 – a) – f) On Target, g) slippage possible
 Progress –

- a) Annual Equality report for 2013/14 currently being drafted with partners.
- b) An EIA timetable is in place and there is an opportunity to regularly review these at departmental meetings. February is particularly opportune as by this time most services know key areas of work coming up and these will form part of the draft Corporate Plan.
- c) Equalities information published in line with target.
- d) We continue to work in partnership with the Job centre as well as using LG jobs to publicise our vacancies. Successful Investors in People review.
- e) Stonewall project continues and makes contribution to (d) above.
- f) Contact with Disabled Go continues. Updated website launched during the period which includes additional venues agreed at review meeting earlier in 2013.
- g) Contractors contacted regarding current rates of pay – to date only one response received. Despite the Council itself being a living wage employer, it is unlikely that we will seek accreditation this year.

5. ACCOMMODATION AND SMARTER WORKING

Brief: To deliver continuous improvement to the quality and value of our interaction and communications with customers and the community at large. To rationalise and consolidate Council services in fewer larger buildings, maximise the efficient use of floor space and develop fit for purpose, efficient, flexible and resilient administrative support processes. To maximise opportunities for flexible, mobile and home-working in support of these objectives.

Director: Richard Homewood
Contributions: All Heads of Service
Lead Member: Cllr Cartwright
O & S: Resources

2013/14 Target(s) a) Consolidate all operational staff into Aquila House.
 b) Maximise the efficient use of floor space in Aquila House through the introduction of additional hot desking facilities,

- rationalisation of team locations and the promotion of flexible, home and mobile working.
- c) Release floor space in Aquila House for sub letting to partner organisations to further reduce accommodation costs and develop efficiencies through partnership working.
- d) Complete improvement to accommodation in the Town Hall to provide additional meeting and democratic facilities.
- e) Implement new building support services arrangements for Council buildings and introduce more efficient and cost effective administrative processes.
- f) Extend electronic document and records management systems to all services to provide cost effective improvements in efficiency and reduce storage requirements across the organisation.
- g) Maximise the level of electronic transactions, payments and communications through the Contact Centre, website, text messaging etc.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress –

- a) POD team settled in at Aquila house. Disruption caused by the roof leak and heating leak resulted in staff from the fifth floor (Revenues and Benefits) relocating to the Town Hall temporarily.
- b) Fourth floor accommodation reviewed and rearranged to accommodate partner agencies in Community Safety Hub.
- c) Accommodation in Town Hall sub let to Pier Trust. SEAP now occupying part of Upper Ground Floor.
- d) Listed Building Consent application being submitted for refurbishment of Town Hall front office and adjacent areas to form an additional meeting room, rest room for Contact Centre staff and space for additional IT equipment.
- e) The new Business Support Model has bedded in and is proving effective. The existing resources were refocused and the new structure now provides flexibility and a more appropriate balance between Business Support and service areas. The new structure has realised efficiencies due to the streamlining of the Support Services Team through a reduction in administrative posts and Town Hall Attendants.
- f) The existing document and records management software (Idox) has been upgraded and has gone live in Planning. Work has begun on introducing the system into Environmental Health Services.
- g) Paye.net has now been rolled out through the council. An implementation team has been drawn together and the products finalised. Three new payment methods are being introduced. Paying bills from the Council by internet and paying for goods and services ordered from the Council over the internet and internet direct debits.

6. ANTI POVERTY AND WELFARE REFORM (TBC)

Brief: To co-ordinate HBC and partnership activity in response to the impact of welfare reform on our local residents

Director: Simon Hubbard

Contributions: All Heads of Service

Lead Member: Cllr Forward

O & S: Resources

2013/14 Targets a) Building on research undertaken in 2012, agree and implement 2013/14 actions in the Hastings and St Leonards Anti Poverty Strategy Action Plan.

Performance @ QTR 3 – On Target

Progress – Work on developing a coordinated local response to the impact of welfare reforms within Hastings borough is being taken forward by the Council and its partners through the multi agency anti poverty group.

A cross cutting anti Poverty Action Plan was adopted at Cabinet on 6th January 2014 and includes a range of actions, milestones and anticipated outcomes to be delivered by partners over the period 2013-2015.

At a strategic level the Council is playing a leading role in promoting further intervention and investment in Housing and regeneration within Coastal towns through the SELEP. The Council, together with Tendering in Essex and Thanet in Kent, has submitted draft proposal to the LEP for tackling dysfunctional and poor quality privately rented housing in coastal areas. These have been well received by colleagues across the South East and the proposals now form part of the preliminary submission of the South East Strategic Economic Plan presented to Ministers in just before Xmas. The emphasis on private sector housing reflects the significance of the tenure in driving forward or holding back regeneration in parts of Hastings and St Leonards.

The Council has also taken the lead in parallel but related work regarding how best to deal with the threat of inward benefit migration from wealthier areas as a result of the governments welfare benefits changes. The availability of a relatively cheaper private rented accommodation being the main portal by which such migration might occur within Hastings. This work has included workshops and dialogue with senior civil servants , academic, and representatives from both coastal and London borough regarding the need both to better understand the impact of these changes on areas such as Hastings.