



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Strategy 2008 - 2011 – Update on progress
Date:	Friday 14 th March 2008
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Relevant Background Information

This report outlines the stage of development of the corporate plan 2008-2011, building upon the strategic objectives identified by Members and feedback from the party briefing sessions which took place at the end of January. As outlined in standing orders, the corporate plan and the processes that underpin it are the key way in which the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee acts as the Council's main instrument of policy. The development and implementation of the corporate plan therefore embraces a number of processes including:

- The establishment of agreed corporate priorities and strategic plan;
- Strategic financial, human resources, asset management and information management planning to ensure resources are effectively allocated for implementation of the strategic plan ;
- The development and prioritisation of the capital programme and the city investment strategy;
- The integration of strategic planning in the organisation on a functional, thematic and area basis;
- The development and implementation of strategies for effective partnership working with key stakeholders, through an effective external relations strategy, including the development of community planning and;
- The development and implementation of effective performance management to ensure objectives are met.

Development of the corporate plan for 2008 – 2011 is progressing on a number of fronts and a summary is set out below. Please note separate reports have been provided on the issues of strategic financial planning and performance management. It should also be noted that a draft Human Resources Strategy, intended to support the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives, will be brought to the Committee for consideration in the near future.

Development of corporate objectives and priority actions

At the end of January, Members were briefed in their party groups on citizen and member surveys and the emerging strategic objectives, their definitions, initially aligned projects and programmes and performance measures. The five objectives as they

currently sit are:

- Strong leadership;
- Economic growth and wealth creation;
- Community cohesion and well-being;
- Environmental sensitivity and sustainability;
- An organisation fit to lead and serve.

Feed-back from the party briefings suggested the following:

- Members were broadly content with the direction the corporate objectives were taking;
- Members wanted a greater degree of corporate working across the authority;
- Members expressed the need to ensure that the Council has the right structure to deliver these objectives;
- Members wanted to see more explicit linkage between the Council's vision for the city and the Assembly's agenda;
- Members wanted a focus on reducing deprivation;
- Members reinforced the importance of community planning.

The direction set by Members has now been communicated to a number of officer working groups which are developing detailed recommendations in terms of projects and programmes of work, available resources and effective performance measures. It is intended that party briefings on these proposals and recommendations will be carried out during May with a view to the Committee determining the Council's high level strategy in June. This will not be the end of the corporate planning process but the beginning of a continuous cycle over the next three years, where annual business planning and resource planning are informed by the high level strategic direction. In the first instance the strategic direction set by Members will inform the financial planning process for 2009/10, with the intention that business planning and resource planning happen concurrently.

A review of the operation of the new governance arrangements, including scrutiny of performance, is also underway with a view to ensuring that the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee has the necessary information and resource levers to drive the delivery of key priorities.

Capital Programme Prioritisation and City Investment Strategy

As agreed by Committee in February, party briefings on the prioritisation of the capital programme and the further development of the city investment strategy will take place during April. This is an important opportunity for Members to begin to prioritise resources in line with the objectives which they are setting for the Council and the impact the Council wishes to make in the city.

The integration of functional, thematic and area-based strategic planning

The Council is working within an increasingly complex planning environment in which Members are seeking to balance the need for:

- functional business planning, as determined by the Council's structures eg cleansing;
- thematic planning, for example in terms of issues such as community safety, community relations, older people;
- area and neighbourhood based planning eg SNAP.

The new corporate plan needs to be an expression of the Council's strategic intent in each of these processes and it will be necessary to align plans in such a way that the Committee has confidence that the overall strategic direction of the organisation is co-ordinated, integrated and delivered. Options as to ways in which the Committee can be supported in ensuring this alignment will form part of the recommendations for effective implementation of the corporate plan.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the report.

