

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**10 MARCH 2010**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**Report prepared by Anna Collier**

**1. Corporate Improvement Plan**

**1.1 Issue for Decision**

1.1.1 To agree both the new format of, and updated recommendations in, the Corporate Improvement Plan at appendix A. To note the comments against recommendations at appendix B.

**1.2 Recommendation of The Director of Change and Environmental Services**

- i. To agree the new format of the Corporate Improvement Plan at appendix A;
- ii. To note the comments against existing recommendations in the former version of the Corporate Improvement Plan at appendix B;
- iii. To agree that for all recommendations at appendix B apart from those noted in this covering report are now embedded and will therefore be removed from the Corporate Improvement Plan going forward;
- iv. To agree the added recommendations and related actions in the Corporate Improvement Plan at appendix A;
- v. To agree that Corporate Management Team authorise recommendations and related actions be added to the Corporate Improvement Plan as they emerge throughout the year for update at Cabinet; and
- vi. To note any recommendations from Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 The purpose of the Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP) is to identify and monitor progress on key areas improvement, primarily related to inspection recommendations but also taking into account any internally or externally identified areas for improvement.

#### New format

- 1.3.2 It was proposed at the last update of the CIP that a review of the plan was undertaken to ensure that it is operating as effectively as possible. The review identified a number of key points in relation to the reporting format. Firstly a need to become more targeted in the approach to responding to recommendations. The new format has therefore identified actions and timescales for implementing the recommendations. Secondly improving the ease of use for officers and Members. This has been achieved by including a status column which easily indicates whether the actions are on track to be achieved and reduces the need for lengthy and technical comments.

#### Removal of recommendations

- 1.3.3 The review also highlighted that there was a need to improve the reasoning behind and the frequency with which recommendations are closed down. Currently a large number of improvement actions have been in the plan for a number of years, as they have been considered as important though not necessarily, not implemented. However the addition of actions to deliver recommendations should help in identifying when areas for improvement have become 'business as usual' and need to be removed.
- 1.3.4 Currently the comments at appendix B show that the vast majority of existing recommendations as being 'business as usual', this is supported by the most recent organisational assessment which demonstrated a strong performance across the Council. The recommendations identified as still being areas for improvement are listed below:
- Improve areas of weakness where Audit reports have shown a level of assurance lower than substantial, one area remains outstanding since March 2009: Aspects for section 106 Agreements;
  - Further work is required to build on work currently undertaken by the Council with partners on delivering outcomes for the public;
  - The Council Considers and tracks with its significant partners the impact on users when making decisions on reducing costs;

- Progress and monitor action plans to improve satisfaction on those services where one in five people were dissatisfied with the service;
- The authority has made a commitment to carbon reduction and has established a climate change strategy is successfully implemented over the next three years;
- The Council should seek technical advice when accounting for complex capital transactions. The proposed course of action should then be discussed with the external auditor at an early stage so that the accounting treatment can be agreed prior to production of draft financial statements.

1.3.5 These actions are now included in the new format Corporate Improvement Plan at appendix A and actions to continue to implement these areas for improvement alongside timescales have been identified.

#### Inclusion of recommendations

1.3.6 Last year the Council received its first assessment under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) which has replaced the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The Council received the results of the new assessment in November 2009 and its Annual Audit letter in December 2009. The recommendations from both these documents have been included in the plan.

1.3.7 The review of the CIP identified that to work most effectively the plan should be an evolving document and updated on a regular basis, to reflect any changes in local and national context, not just twice a year as is currently the practice. Examples of recommendations that will be emerging after the agreement of the CIP are the Annual Governance Statement, the recent IDeA productivity peer review and the Climate Change Action Plan, actions should be developed to implement these should be developed as soon as possible.

1.3.8 The report proposes that CMT be authorised to add recommendations and actions to the plan before it is presented to Cabinet, in order that work begins in these areas immediately that they are identified. Cabinet will then be informed of the new additions and progress on actions will be given within the same report.

#### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 Cabinet could decide not to produce a CIP but not considering progress against the plan could mean improvement work is not progressed. This would have a detrimental impact upon service delivery and external assessments of the authority's performance.

1.4.2 Alternatively Cabinet could decide to retain the old format of the Corporate Improvement Plan however this is not recommended as the new format offers the opportunity to ensure that the recommendations are more closely monitored and fully embedded.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The CIP supports the Council in achieving its corporate objectives by identifying key areas of corporate improvement and identifying how these improvements will be delivered. Any additions are made in accordance with the Council's current Strategic Plan to ensure it is in line with the vision and priorities of the Council.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 Actions in relation to risk management are reported through the CIP where appropriate. Risks related to particular actions will be set out in the Strategic Risk Register or, below that, in individual service plans.

1.6.2 There are also risks to the reputation and performance of the authority associated with not responding to inspection and ensuring that best practice identified in other authorities is considered. The CIP provides a mechanism for driving improvement.

1.7 Other Implications

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

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## Staffing

The plan at appendix A identifies a range of officers and the actions that they have identified as needing to be taken in order to improve the way the Council operates.

### 1.8 Background Documents

1.8.1 Corporate Improvement Plan June 2009

1.8.2 Organisational Assessment November 2009

1.8.3 Annual Audit Letter December 2009

**NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED**

Is this a Key Decision?    Yes        No   

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this an Urgent Key Decision?    Yes        No   

Reason for Urgency

[State why the decision is urgent and cannot wait until the next issue of the forward plan.]