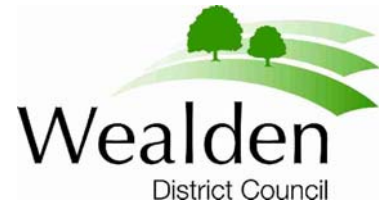


## Policy and Review Service Plan 2009/10



### The role of the service

- Develop, co-ordinate and promote policy and processes in relation to emerging issues for the Council, its service provision and the fulfilment of its responsibilities and obligations to the residents of Wealden.
- Lead on local strategic partnership working and ensure appropriate support arrangements are in place.
- Develop the Sustainable Community Strategy through the Local Strategic Partnership, for adoption by the Council in fulfilment of its statutory obligation and to ensure that Community needs and wishes are clearly set out and agreed and can be integrated with other Council Strategies e.g. Local Development Framework.
- Maintain a corporate overview of the Council's policy framework in relation to local, regional and national policy initiatives, and seek to achieve a coherent strategic fit with other key policy mechanisms such as the Corporate Plan
- Provide a high quality and effective internal audit service which contributes to the sound corporate governance of the Council and complies fully with the Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government.
- Communicate the range and value of services the Council has a responsibility to provide, explain the Council's actions, and help it identify and address the future service needs of the community.
- Co-ordinate the delivery of the Council's improvement agenda through the overall review of Council performance, maintaining the performance management culture and working closely with Members, officers and partners.
- Provide executive and administrative support to the Chief Executive, Leader and Portfolio Holders in the exercise of their functions.

### The service is planning to achieve the following outcomes by March 2011:

- A corporately shared vision with established priorities for service delivery agreed with key internal and external partners.
- To raise Wealden's profile regionally and nationally.
- More effective three tier working with closer working relationships between the District Council, parishes and towns and the County Council.
- A stronger community voice in local decision making.
- Independent assurance of the quality of our services in line with the highest national standards.
- Improved value for money based on the opinions of our customers and when our performance is compared to other local authorities.
- Leading our communities in reducing harmful impacts on the environment.
- Embed the new performance management framework throughout Council services
- Value for money efficiency savings year on year.
- Working as efficiently as possible, meeting agreed key priorities, and cutting 'red tape'.
- A highly efficient, corporately cohesive service as a consequence of the planned Transformation Programme.

## What have we achieved in 2008/09?

### Corporate Objective 1 : Putting People First

Providing Quality Services  
Health, Prosperity and Community Safety

- We achieved Charter Mark Status in June 2008.
- We improved our community engagement through the recruitment of a new panel of Wealden residents. The Council now has a bank of 1200 local people that it can consult on local issues. The views of a representative sample of 522 people on the panel fed into the budget exercise and the preparation of the Corporate Plan.
- The awareness of Wealden has been improved through increased volume of press releases, closer working with the media, the production of a DVD and examples of service excellence for the LGA Annual Conference in July 2008 and the publication of a Council Service guide which generated over 1000 enquiries.
- We represented the Council on the county-wide project team to develop the second Local Area Agreement signed in June 2008, ensuring the incorporation of the key issues for Wealden residents and businesses.
- We have influenced the development of the South East Rural Board to place greater focus on the social and community dimension, achieving a more even balance with economic and environmental considerations.

### Corporate Objective 2 : Pride Of Place

Sustainability  
Place Shaping

- We have delivered many of Cabinet's priorities from the Action Plan for Climate Change including raising awareness and achieving national Level 1 standard for sustainable procurement. A number of these have been delivered within existing resources releasing savings to deliver actions in subsequent years.
- We have installed gateways to six of our towns and villages.
- We continue to provide practical support to our internal partners in Planning Policy in the LDF development process, promoting the alignment of the Core Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy, developing a coherent vision, preparing and implementing a robust communication and engagement strategy for the forthcoming consultation and ensuring the continuing close involvement of the Wealden Local Strategic Partnership.
- We are continuing to support our colleagues in Housing Services in the context of severe difficulties in achieving housing delivery in Wealden, facilitating round table discussions with all the players, including developers, and encouraging innovative and challenging approaches to achieving better outcomes for people in Wealden.

## What have we achieved in 2008/09?

### Corporate Objective 3 : Purpose Through Partnership

Improving Performance and Efficiency

Strong Community Leadership

- We successfully designed, implemented and embedded a comprehensive new performance management framework for the Council.
- We have delivered our target of 3% efficiency savings by reviewing staff requirements and improved working practices.
- We have migrated fully to electronic working papers on all key audits undertaken during the year.
- We have strengthened shared working across Sussex by working with partner authorities and the private sector and the design and delivery of a pan-Sussex audit conference.
- We have begun to prepare the Council for Comprehensive Area Assessment in 2009/10, and initiated a discussion, facilitated by the Audit Commission, about how partners across East Sussex could approach the Area Assessment element together.
- We have continued to support the Wealden Local Strategic Partnership, encouraging the partners to contribute to the development of an Action Plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy, increasing the involvement of the voluntary and community sector
- We continue to demonstrate the Council's pride in its quintessentially rural nature through active local and regional participation in the East Sussex Rural Partnership and Forum and the South East Rural Board in the context of central government policy to mainstream rural issues, leading on behalf of District Councils in the south east.
- We have represented the Council through involvement in Sussex Improvement Partnership projects on Consultation & Community Profiling and Performance Management

## What we plan to improve

Target for 2010/11	2008/09 Baseline	2009/10 Milestone	2010/11 Milestone
<b>Corporate Objective 1 : Putting People First</b> Providing Quality Services Health, Prosperity and Community Safety			
Investigate the options for creating a strengthened and regularly refreshed panel of Wealden residents, including young people.	Refreshed panel operational from 1/1/09		
Communicate the Council's performance and customer service accreditation effectively to improve our reputation and public satisfaction, e.g. through media releases	Charter Mark media release by August 2008. Carry out baseline reputation survey by 31/3/09.	Improvement in satisfaction compared to previous year baseline by 31/3/10	
Develop public awareness of what Wealden District Council is and does through our 2008-11 Communication Strategy, expanding the ways in which we communicate	Improved use of surveys, measurement and targeting of media releases during 2008/09. 2/3 examples of Wealden Activity for LGA conference 2008.	Wider use of other media including radio, television, DVD and internet video by July 2009.	
We will retain Charter Mark Accreditation for Policy & Review Service and further improve our service standards as we work towards Customer Service Excellence.	Award by June 2008	Retained May 2009	
Optimize the inclusion of Wealden's priorities in the East Sussex Local Area Agreement (LAA)	June 2008	Refresh to be completed March 2009	
We will continue to work with our communities by engaging local people on the important decisions that affect our local area.		Continuing to facilitate the officer group on consultation; helping to develop robust, high quality in-house approaches to consultation	
We will publish the results of consultation, provide feedback to those who responded and explain how the results inform future service delivery and decisions.			
<b>Corporate Objective 2 : Pride Of Place</b> Sustainability Place Shaping			
Establish the carbon footprint of the Council - our aim is to reduce the Council's carbon emissions by 12.5% from 1990 levels by 2012	Delivered the Cabinet priorities for climate change	Confirm the Council's carbon footprint	
Develop information specific to wards and parishes through our Ward Councillors e.g. six-monthly sustainability articles for parish newsletters and parish profile on the LSP website.	At least one article in 2008/09	Extend WDC coverage so that inclusion of articles becomes the norm by 31/3/10. Work with Member Services to provide articles for the Parish newsletter they are developing	

Target for 2010/11	2008/09 Baseline	2009/10 Milestone	2010/11 Milestone
We will contribute to the delivery of a more environmentally friendly HQ building in line with the Council's Climate Change Policy and Sustainability Strategy.			
We will reduce our own impact on the environment by training Members and officers in those areas where they can make a difference.			
<b>Corporate Objective 3 : Purpose Through Partnership</b> Improving Performance and Efficiency Strong Community Leadership			
Develop Wealden's local image through rural partnership bodies and benchmarking groups and working with the Sparsity Partnership for delivering Rural Services (SPARSE)	Continued support to local rural partnerships and closer working through SPARSE.	Research project on rural deprivation in Wealden completed by March 2010	
Development of a new performance management framework in partnership with Districts, Boroughs & County as appropriate, for monitoring our contributions to delivery of the LAA and the Sustainable Community Strategy, shared local indicators and our own local indicators.	New PMF in place by Autumn 2008	Fully embedded PMF by July 2009	
Promoting development and use of evidence to support / improve decision making — sharing: collecting once, using many times; supporting other services in developing data collection and analysis tools that are fit for purpose	Examine the possibilities for a cross-service Wealden Data Group	Establish the Wealden Data Group; develop Wealden Facts & Figures, making better use of the data we have	
Deliver 3% cashable efficiency savings year-on-year	3%	3%	3%
Improve audit efficiency by holding all internal core audit data electronically	All core audits (>70% of total)	80%	90%
Encourage appropriate provision of and access to services in rural areas by creating a better understanding of rural Wealden communities through a more sophisticated use of available data	Leader of Wealden District Council representing district councils on the SE Rural Board	Work with the SE Rural Board to make accessibility a priority for public service partners in the South East	

## Risk

The risks to delivery of the Service Plan centre around staffing, in particular a shortage of suitably qualified and experienced auditors. There is a moderate risk of losing staff in any given year and the impacts on the delivery of the audit plan and therefore the Annual Governance Statement would be significant. Equally in the policy and communications team, there is a risk of staff loss and the knowledge and experience associated with those posts. In both internal and external partnership working, the risk also relates to the individual working relationships and trust that are developed over time and which play a major part. The impact could therefore be significant, with work not completed during any period of staff vacancy and then at reduced levels dependent on the skills and experience of any new appointment and the time they take to become established within the Council and with partner organisations.

## **Other Considerations**

### **Customer Satisfaction**

The Policy and Review Service already achieves high levels of satisfaction. Internal audit customers are surveyed on the completion of each audit with 100% of customers being satisfied or very satisfied. Satisfaction rates with policy work are harder to measure but an exercise conducted in February identified a 94 % satisfaction rate. Whilst both elements of the service have scored highly in percentage terms there are learning points on both sides and these have been incorporated into an action plan and will cascade down into individual appraisal targets as appropriate.

### **Customer Involvement**

The creation of the new Wealden Panel of Residents late in 2008 has provided a strong evidence base for consultation on the Council's plans, services and future policy decisions. There is a range of opportunities for the public to engage with the Council so long as these are communicated well and appropriately to all sections of our communities. To sustain that level of engagement we need to demonstrate that the Council listens to public opinion through feedback to groups and individuals and by publicising how we have listened and what we have changed as a consequence.

### **Access to Services**

A significant proportion of the Policy and Review Service is provided to an internal customer base. Both parts have work programmes based on risks to the organisation for internal audit and Government policy and legislation for policy. The outputs from internal audit, policy and performance management are reported openly through Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and the Regulatory and Audit Committee. The Policy team's outward-facing strategic partnership activity is also a key means for promoting and developing the Council's community leadership role.

### **Value for Money**

Through the Transformation Programme we will review all services to determine how we could improve the value for money over the next three years. The following options will be explored:

- Service cessation (where the service is discretionary)
- Reduce the service
- Improve the service by doing it differently
- Shared service with partner / other local authority
- Service provided by others

### **Workforce Priorities**

The Service has recently been reviewed and savings of one FTE post achieved in the last financial year. The following key workforce areas will be investigated as part of the Service Transformation programme during 2009/10.

- Development of the Chief Executive's Personal Assistant post to undertake some policy work. This will provide development within that role and ensure that any perceived capacity within the team is fully utilised / exploited.
- We will investigate early retirement options which enable us to retain the significant expertise of existing staff whilst reducing salary costs through the reallocation of other staff within the team or the procurement of less expensive resources.

- We will use any such opportunities to develop other staff within the team and encourage them to assume new responsibilities and skills.
- In the event of any vacancy we will seek to extend the available resource in preference to the engagement of agency staff.

We will review the roles of the Directors' Personal Assistants in early Summer 2009.

## **Learning & Development**

The service is committed to continuing professional development for all staff and the pursuit of relevant qualifications by individuals, subject to available resources. We are currently supporting one member of the team who is studying for the Institute of Internal Auditors qualification which has ongoing benefits for the organisation. In the short term, the research and learning undertaken by the individual contribute significantly to keeping up to date with new developments in that professional field. In the longer term, the benefits are from more efficient working from suitably qualified staff who have a stronger loyalty to the organisation as a consequence of the support they have received.

## **Equalities and Diversity**

Equality is embedded in all aspects of the service. We strive to be fair and transparent in the way that we provide our services and ensure that they are accessible to all in our communities. This is reflected in our Customer Charters and in the Council's Statement of Values. Our Action Plan is the outcome of our Equality Impact Assessment.

## **Sustainability**

The Policy and Review Service will continue to play a lead and co-ordinating role in managing and monitoring the council's sustainability agenda. It is specifically responsible for co-ordinating the delivery of Cabinet priorities for combating climate change and the Council's role as a Community Leader. Through the Sustainability Co-ordinator, we work to promote sustainable prosperity for everyone whilst respecting the limits of our environment and resources and ensuring that a sustainable lifestyle can be enjoyed by present and future generations.

## **Rural impact**

The Policy and Review Service will actively promote the rural agenda in the work of the Council and through representation of local rural district councils at a regional level. It lobbies and campaigns on behalf of the Council and local communities to preserve rural communities, for example in response to the Post Office closures consultation and through the work of the Local Strategic Partnership.

## **Communication**

All Council communication and media relations will be co-ordinated through the Policy and Review Team, in accordance with Wealden's recently refreshed Communications Strategy. The service is responsible for liaison with the media and keeping our communities informed about what the Council is doing about local and national issues, and what that means for local people and our communities. The service is also responsible for producing the major corporate documents such as the Corporate Plan.

## **Health and safety**

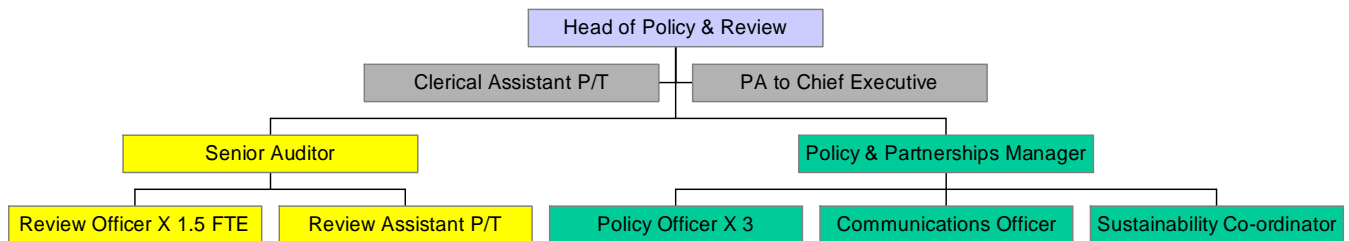
Health and safety remains a key consideration in the way we provide local services and in the way the service is run. Working practices take proper account of the health and safety of our employees and work in ways which minimise the risks to lone workers and of violent incidents associated with the various roles we undertake.

## **Standards**

Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government  
Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2006

## Resources and budget

### Staff Organisation Chart (12.5 FTE)



### Budget

2008/09 £(000)		2009/10 £(000)	2010/11 £(000)	2011/12 £(000)
73	Sustainability	149	149	156
224	Corporate Management	230	230	232
18	Wealden LSP Schemes	5	5	7
318	Policy & Communications	305	305	307
149	Internal Audit	149	149	136
50	Performance Management	71	51	76
<b>832</b>		<b>832</b>	<b>852</b>	<b>832</b>

### Performance indicator targets

The National Indicator Set was introduced from 1 April 2008. In 2008/09 we gathered baseline data which has been used to set targets for 2009/10 and beyond.

PI No.	Description	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2010/11 Target
NI 1	% of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well			
NI 2	% of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood			
NI 3	Civic participation in the local area			
NI 4	% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality			
NI 5	Overall/general satisfaction with local area			
NI 185	CO <sub>2</sub> reduction from local authority operations			
NI 186	Per capita reduction in CO <sub>2</sub> emissions in the LA area			
NI 188	Planning to adapt to climate change			
NI 194	Air quality - percentage reduction in NO <sub>x</sub> and primary PM <sub>10</sub> emissions through local authority's estate and operations			
PRLI 1	% Citizens satisfied with overall service			
PRLI 2	% Complainants satisfied with the handling of their complaint			
PRLI 3	No of Planned Reviews (excluding follow ups)	45	TBC	TBC
PRLI 4	Cost per day	£181.53	£181.53	£181.53
PRLI 5	Cost per productive day	£243.80	£243	£243
PRLI 6	Chargeable Time as % of Total Time	74.46%	75%	75%
PRLI 7	Sickness per employee (Days)	<3.5 days	<3 days	<3 days

Previous years' performance data can be viewed on the Council's website

## How this Service Plan will be monitored

The Council's performance management framework is critical to monitoring and reporting the achievements of the Service and as a catalyst for improvement when targets are not achieved.

In the same way that targets cascade down to individual appraisals, the achievement of those targets is managed at individual, team or service level. Day to day management is used to identify good performance and also those areas where delivery is slower or below the standard expected. There is an underlying principle of "no surprises".

At the end of each quarter, performance against key targets is collated and reported to a directorate management meeting. Based on the above system, management should already be aware and have taken appropriate action to improve a situation subject to the availability of appropriate resources. This quarterly meeting and information review should allow the Corporate Director to balance the outcomes from each of the service areas for which they are responsible and take appropriate action within their directorate.

A quarterly report is prepared by each directorate which is then collated by the Policy Officer with responsibility for Performance Management. This report then forms an appendix to a Cabinet report, with Portfolio Holders commenting on performance for their respective portfolios and recommending any improvement to Cabinet. The Cabinet report is circulated to all Members. Cabinet recommendations are then implemented by officers.

In the Scrutiny cycle following Cabinet's consideration of performance, the three Scrutiny Committees review the decisions of Cabinet and scrutinise the actions taken to improve performance and whether these have been effective.

At the year end, provisional outturn figures are prepared and considered by Cabinet. These must then undergo a process of data quality checks internally and external validation by the Audit Commission prior to final publication around June 2010.

## Other key reference documents for the service

[Corporate Plan](#) - setting out the Council's overall strategic direction and priorities.

[Performance Management Framework](#) - the Council's arrangements for monitoring and acting on performance information and ensuring data quality.

[Wealden Sustainable Community Strategy](#) - Wealden Local Strategic Partnership's arrangements for organisations working together for the good of the district.

[East Sussex Local Area Agreement](#) - a three-year agreement between East Sussex County Council on behalf of service providers, including Wealden District Council, and central government. which identifies priorities for improvement in East Sussex and how they will be delivered.

[East Sussex Integrated Sustainable Community Strategy](#) - a description of East Sussex as it is now and a vision of how it should be in 20 years time and the key priorities for people in East Sussex.

[Communications Strategy](#) - the Council's approach to communicating with people in the district and local and national media.

[Wealden Sustainability Strategy](#) - how the Council will seek to enable the current needs of the district to be met without compromising the ability of future generations living in Wealden to meet their own needs.

[Climate Change Policy](#) - the principles by which the Council is responding to climate change.

[Climate Change Action Plan](#) - what we will do to respond to climate change.

[Internal Audit Plan 2009/10](#) - setting out the priorities and terms of reference for the internal audit service.

[Review of Internal Audit 2008/09](#) - assessing the effectiveness of the internal audit service.

[Community Engagement Strategy](#) provides a framework for co-ordinated and effective engagement of stakeholders and individuals by the Council in its decision-making.

[Wealden Equality Scheme 2007-2010](#) which sets out how we will ensure that all our services and employment opportunities are provided with equity and fairness to everyone.

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