

BODY: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 6 December 2010

SUBJECT: Corporate Plan - 2011/12 Refresh - Public Consultation and Timetable

REPORT OF: Peter Finnis – Head of Strategy and Democracy

Ward(s): All

Purpose: To present the findings of the public consultation exercise and set out the timetable for producing the 2011/12 version of the Corporate Plan.

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Recommendations: To note the outcomes of the public consultation exercise and the proposed timetable for producing the 2011/12 corporate plan, and make any comments and/or recommendations for referral to Cabinet on 15 December 2010.

1.0 Background/Introduction

- 1.1 At their meetings on 5 and 14 July 2010 respectively, Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet received a report on progress with regard to the managing performance improvement journey. This included approval to obtain a peer review of progress from the Government Office for the South-East, the encouraging results of which have previously been received.
- 1.2 Looking to the future, it was also approved that there should be a comprehensive public consultation exercise, jointly owned by Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee, to seek the views of a wide cross-section of the community as to what should be considered as priority projects and activity in the 2011/12 edition of the corporate plan.

2.0 The Public Consultation Exercise

- 2.1 The consultation exercise, undertaken purely in face-to-face sessions with a combination of generic and specific community groups, has now taken place. All the results and commentary arising from the exercise are set out in detail in the appendix to this report.
- 2.2 A total of 157 people attended the consultation sessions. This

compares to a total 58 people who participated in the 2009 online budget consultation. Having regard to the much larger number of participants, the amount of background context given, the more personal nature of the consultation activity, and the demonstrable engagement with a wide cross-section of the community, the quality and relevance of the feedback is far more robust this year. As a result, the unprecedented level (by Eastbourne Borough Council) of qualitative engagement and opportunity should not be underestimated.

- 2.3 Attendance was higher and more consistent at established community groups compared with the general public sessions. However, this is to be expected as many people committed to participation tend to be connected with specific groups. Also, the fact that sessions were delivered to such a diverse cross-section of community groups plus the availability of general public sessions at different times, dates and venues, means that there was a genuine opportunity for the vast majority of our community to participate.
- 2.4 Significantly, on corporate priorities, there was considerable across-the-spectrum support for the continuation of some of the existing corporate plan priority projects, in particular:

Prosperous Economy

- Town Centre Redevelopment
- Science Park Project
- Enhanced Events Programme – both in respect of tourism and more community led events

Quality Environment

- Continued increase in recycling and reduced landfill
- Green Transport Projects – Park and Ride and Cycling Strategy
- Continuation of project to tackle the top 10 eyesores

Thriving Communities

- Improved youth activities – involving youth forum, youth clubs and community centres
- Provision of decent and affordable homes
- Continue benefits service improvements

Many of the new suggestions were specific to the interests of the respective groups. However, the following should be highlighted:

- There was a lot of feedback about maximising use of the voluntary sector in partnership in order to maintain quality public service delivery in the current economic climate, and placing more emphasis on asking the community to take more responsibility. This feedback was in the context of the recently announced public spending cuts, and the promotion of the 'Big Society' concept.

- Communities of interest groups were all keen to express their wish for a centrally located facility/building for all members of the community to access as part of the consideration of the town centre master plan.
- The youth consultation showed a strong desire for the Council to enable as far as possible the work being done with youngsters through community centres. A key point raised was that there was a perceived favouritism in assistance for youth centres located in areas with high crime figures leaving other areas less valued.

3.0 The Corporate Plan Timetable

3.1 The primary purpose behind the consultation was to provide evidence of priority needs to help us determine the most appropriate priority activity in the corporate plan. The timetable for re-drafting the corporate plan for 2011/12 has been agreed as part of the wider service and financial planning timetable but the key parts can be extracted as follows:

- During January - Senior Heads of Service in liaison with Cabinet portfolio holders to draft key projects for 2011/12 refreshed corporate plan theme chapters
- 31 January - Leadership Team to agree draft priorities for 2011/12 corporate plan
- During February - Finalising of refreshed Corporate Plan chapters for 2010/11
- 30 March - Cabinet to receive and approve refreshed Corporate Plan subject to Plain English testing and Council approval
- During April - Corporate Plan checked for Plain English by volunteer community groups
- 25 May - Council final ratification of 2011/12 refreshed Corporate Plan

3.2 It is important that, in determining the content of the corporate plan for 2011/12, we can be confident that the priority activity listed has taken account of:

1. The outcomes/progress of the 2010/11 priority projects
2. Developing data from Local Futures
3. The messages arising from the public consultation exercise
4. Decisions taken as a result of service and financial planning

Senior Heads of Service and Cabinet portfolio holders will be assisted in this activity by information supplied by Strategic Development.

4.0 Financial and Probity Implications

- 4.1 Other than member and officer time, which has been considerable, the only financial costs relating to the public consultation exercise was in respect of advertising, room hire, printing and refreshments. The total cost came to £1100. There are no probity implications arising from this report.

5.0 Equality Considerations

- 5.1 A key driver in this consultation exercise has been the objective of making it as accessible to as many people as possible. Special interest groups from across the community, voluntary and business sectors were identified and approached with the offer of sessions and three general public meetings were advertised in the local media and delivered in three different areas of the town. By delivering every session face-to-face, it was possible to design each session to maximum effect for the specific audience involved.

6.0 Consultation

- 6.1 As shown in the appendix to this report.

7.0 Summary

- 7.1 The consultation exercise undertaken is a key element in further demonstrating the Council's commitment to using evidence and engagement to enhance its knowledge in setting priority activities.
- 7.2 The availability of robust and comprehensive feedback from across the community together with improvements to the use of the Local Futures data provides a solid basis for continuing our improvement journey in respect of corporate planning and strategic direction.

Peter Finnis
Head of Strategy & Democracy

Background Papers:

- 2010/11 Corporate Plan
- Presentational material used at consultation sessions
- Individual feedback forms received from participants

The above background papers are available for inspection from the report author whose contact details are set out at the front of this report.

(cabinet/corp-plan-consultation/10-12-15)