



**Progress to Date
and
Direction of Travel
Self-Assessment Report**

19th August 2005

WEST SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL

Progress to Date and Direction of Travel Self Assessment

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Setting the Scene	4
Assessment of Improvements and Challenges	8
Future Plans of Continued Improvement	15
Appendix A	17
Appendix B	18

Executive Summary

West Somerset District Council's CPA result of being a 'weak council' became the catalyst for a fundamental 'Change Management' approach to improving its performance. The past twelve months has seen the Council embark on a process called Destination '06, which has been an individual and collective journey for the CMT and others across the organisation of becoming more self aware of the challenges and opportunities facing the Council, as well as stepping more fully into leading by putting in place the building blocks that will create strong foundations for performance improvement. A conscious decision was taken to not go for a 'quick fix' approach, but to take a route that would focus on the development of staff and elected members, not only in equipping them with the right skills, but more importantly by inviting them into the challenge of finding the best way forward fit for the context of West Somerset.

The result has been the Council becoming far more aware of where it is heading, with:

- Prioritised community and service improvement priorities
- A medium term vision defining the identity of what it means of being a 'modern authority'
- A planned course of action with a Corporate Improvement Plan made up of five key strands of activity and an action programme, setting out key actions, deadlines and lines of responsibility
- A programme of building the organisation's capacity to respond to the needs of the community it serves through the development of its staff and performance system
- A communication strategy that keeps staff and elected members better informed about developments

The Council has also, alongside putting in place the building blocks for a performance culture, focused on making improvements to the community and the services it provides. It has continued to strengthen its partnership working with the Local Strategic Partnership, as well as entering new partnerships with neighbouring authorities for the benefit of West Somerset. Customer satisfaction is being explored through a project that has developed a set of corporate standards and actions that governs how the Council interacts with its customers together with a review and monitoring framework.

There is also an awareness of the challenges still facing the Council in both responding to some of the difficult community needs and the improvement of its service provision. Particularly, it acknowledges the continued challenge of building capacity and implementing an improvement plan that targets a change in culture as being the day job. Taking the time to analyse what is most needed, becoming more realistic and making an impact by focusing on the most important areas is some of the practices that have changed at WSDC.

Clear future plans direct the Council's activity and a new sense of purpose and leadership has emerged within the CMT, which is being transferred throughout the organisation. Elected Members are set on their own development route and have already shown leadership in the face of a sustained campaign by a single-issue pressure group and listening to and taking on board the views of the wider community before pressing ahead with appropriately revised plans for development in Minehead. WSDC

is set on improving its performance by fundamentally changing its culture and this has taken courage, which is beginning to reap results.

Introduction

The result of West Somerset District Council's (WSDC) Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) declared it to be a "weak council, which has set a clear vision and begun to plan for future improvement".¹

As of January 2005, the Audit Commission published the framework for assessing progress at poorly performing authorities. In addition to this, the Audit Commission proposed changes to the CPA process in December of 2004 and after a period of consultation, the requirement of Direction of Travel Statements was established in June 2005 for the purposes of recognising progress achieved and also identifying how well councils' are performing and whether or not they are continuing to improve.

WSDC is required to produce a Progress to Date Self Assessment and a Direction of Travel Self Assessment. The challenge on the Council's capacity to produce two separate self assessments has been taken into account and a single self assessment is to be produced by mid September 2005.

The following is WSDC's Self Assessment for both Progress to Date and Direction of Travel

Setting the Scene

Locality

In the one year since its Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA), West Somerset's context has not significantly changed.

Whilst West Somerset has one of the most beautiful natural environments in England, the district continues to face the following key challenges:

- Economy - tourism and agriculture are its two main sectors with seasonal employment and low paid part time jobs and the district has significant levels of deprivations and is ranked as the 81st most deprived in England and Wales
- Cost and availability of housing – West Somerset is a popular retirement and second holiday homes destination
- Access into and within the area – there are no rail links into the district and the two main routes servicing the area do not have stretches of dual carriageway and there is a need for improved public/community transport within the district

¹ CPA Inspection Report, September 2004

The Council

The result of the Council's CPA identifying it as a 'weak council' with the major weaknesses of a lack of performance management and prioritisation was the catalyst for the WSDC to embark on a fundamental process of change.

Talks held with the Audit Commission created the clarity amongst the CMT that embedding a performance management culture within the authority was the top priority for improving both the community and services, and should form the backbone of a new Corporate Improvement Plan, (CIP).

As a first step, the Council reviewed and refreshed its community improvement priorities, and for the first time created service and organisational priorities. At the time it was felt to be unnecessary to prioritise between categories mainly due to the fact that they are each delivered through different channels that would minimise any possible conflict. In reality a 'twin tracked' approach has been adopted, with the organisational priorities being prioritised and subsumed within the implementation of Destination '06 whilst developing the community and service priorities in parallel. Further reference to this approach is made in the following paragraphs.

W.S.D.C. - Priorities		
<u>Community Purpose</u> "To Champion a Balanced Community & Economy in West Somerset" <u>Community Priorities</u>	<u>Service Purpose</u> "To provide Good Services to the Community of West Somerset" <u>Service Improvement Priorities</u>	<u>Organisational Purpose</u> "To support the delivery of the Community and Service Priorities" <u>Organisational Improvement Priorities</u>
<p>1a To increase the number of permanent jobs offering above average pay for the area.</p> <p>1b To increase the number of economically active residents in the district</p> <p>2 To increase the number of houses for sale that local people can afford to buy</p> <p>3 To maintain and where possible increase the opportunities for residents to access facilities and services – particularly in the deeply rural areas and for young people</p> <p>4 To reduce the levels of deprivation of individuals, particularly those living in the rural areas</p>	<p>1 Private Sector Housing</p> <p>2 Waste Collection and Recycling</p> <p>3 Public Conveniences</p> <p>4 New Council Offices and Library</p> <p>5 Building Control Service</p> <p>6 New Licensing System</p> <p>7 Information Technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Staff and Member Development o Performance Management o Internal & External Communications o Local Government Efficiency Gains o Access and E-government o Mainstreaming Community Safety

After a period of reflection the CMT realised that a twin track approach was needed, which would include:

- The traditional track - continuing to improve the community and services through the implementation of projects and specific actions
- The new track - creating a more radical and comprehensive 'change management' process that would fundamentally transform the culture of the authority and the way it operates

It became clear that only continuing on the traditional track of implementing a series of projects and actions, e.g. performance management, etc., would not create the level of improvement needed so that real change and results could be experienced in the community and throughout the organisation.

It was acknowledged amongst the CMT that running two tracks in parallel would be a challenge for the already stretched capacity of the organisation, but they were also clear that although the two tracks would need to initially be separate, they would eventually, through Destination '06 converge into being one strategy of improving performance. This would lead to the validation / creation of new priorities that would also link to the priorities contained within the new Community Plan scheduled for September 2006.

At the core of the new track is a medium term vision, created by CMT and owned by the entire organisation that led WSDC to embark on the journey now known throughout the organisation as **Destination '06**, (refer to Executive Report SC/23/05).

The first stage of Destination '06 began with the CMT drafting and agreeing a medium term vision for the authority to reflect, what is widely considered and accepted to be the characteristics of a 'Modern Local Authority'²:

“The Council delivers quality of life improvements through clear leadership based on the known needs and aspirations of the community of West Somerset. The Council also secures efficient services to the complete satisfaction of the community and interacts with them in a way that suits their needs. The community and partners know, understand and support the Council’s priorities. Through the local strategic partnership and other arrangements the Council and partners work effectively together in implementing common aims. Those working for and with the Council find it tough, rewarding and fun. Staff are empowered and encouraged to be innovative and to develop within a stimulating and forever changing environment. There is an open relationship of trust, respect and support between Councillors and staff and between the Council and the community. The Council is recognised regionally and nationally for being small, successful and doing things differently, such that others seek to emulate and learn from it.”

In terms of timescale this was consciously connected to the then planned centralisation of the administrative offices, hence the branding of the vision Destination '06.

² 'Reframed Benchmark of 'Ideal' Local Authority' published by the Improvement & Development Agency for Local Government (I&DeA).

To ensure this Change Management process maintained momentum and remained on track a structure was set up with the Leader of Council and Chief Executive acting as sponsors and a group of senior managers as a Guiding Team. Managing and monitoring the implementation of the CIP is the responsibility of CMT.

Based entirely on the vision, a high level Corporate Improvement Plan, (CIP) made up of the following 5 strands of key activity was formulated to demonstrate how it was planned to achieve the vision and become a Modern Local Authority:

- Leading the Change
- Leadership of the Community
- Complete Customer Satisfaction
- Efficient Resource Management
- People and Organisation³

Each strand has its own key actions, (See Appendix A for details) an individual member of the Guiding Team championing it and project teams, offering the opportunity to staff from across the organisation to be involved.

The vision and CIP set the Council's medium term direction of travel, put in place the building blocks of a performance management model and created a framework for making decisions, (coupled with the Council's community and service improvement priorities) i.e. we only decide and implement what is moving us towards realising/living our vision and priorities and we eliminate what isn't.

A sense of urgency amongst staff that change is necessary was set in motion through a whole organisation meeting, where the vision and CIP was communicated. This was also done with Elected Members. Communication has continued through regular updates on developments sent out to all staff through the 'Monday Message' via email and briefings between the CMT and Team Leaders take place monthly.

The second stage of Destination '06 began with the question, 'how do we make this, i.e. Destination '06, the day job?' For example, how can the vision be reflected through the actions taken by a Council Tax Officer?

This question gave birth, firstly to the document entitled Direction to Delivery Guidance, and secondly to the Lower Level Corporate Improvement Plan. These two documents signalled the next level of implementation of Destination '06 and are underpinned by Foundations, i.e. cross cutting areas that span all Strands, Priority Outcomes and Actions/Activities planned on a time line over the next year.

The CIP, further defined through those documents, sets the context on which Service Plans for each Service Area are developed and this in turn defines the basis for individual appraisals and personal development plans. Together this becomes the vehicle for making Destination '06 the day job for all staff and also forms the foundation of creating a performance management system so that the impact of actions taken can be measured and monitored.

³ Subsequent revised of ID&eA's benchmark, (July 2005) includes four themes - Leadership and Governance, Customer Focus and Community Engagement, Resource and Performance Management, Organisation and People

Destination '06 has become WSDC guiding strategy for improving performance and key to this has been working in partnership with KBA, Audit Commission, OPDM and Government Office South West.

Assessment of Improvements and Challenges

Context

The CPA identified the following areas where the Council was found to be weak and needing improvement:

- **Ambition** - Under developed programme for the implementation of Intention 2 (service improvement priorities)
- **Prioritisation** - Lack of clarity of the relative priority of the two corporate objectives
- **Performance Management** - Lack of performance management, (including risk management, staff appraisals, use of performance information to guide decision making, value for money, out of date service standards, weak target setting against priorities)
- **Capacity & Investment** - Capacity in terms of focusing on priorities, the development of staff and Elected Members and the investment of finances, (linked to performance and risk management, scrutiny, prioritisation) as well as the need to build on good partnership working.
- **Achievement in quality of service & Achievement in improvement** - Lack of significant improvement in delivery of a more balanced housing market, management of public spaces, and access to services, as well as some key services satisfaction levels were low.
- **Learning** – learning is not shared across the organisation and customer feedback is under developed to support learning

In response to the WSDC's lack of capacity a successful bid for £293,500 was made to the ODPM's Capacity Building Fund. This has enabled the Council to focus on developing the organisation, in particular its staff, by bringing in the capacity of KBA, Audit Commission and ID&eA on a planned approach through an agreed Action Programme with Government Office South West, (please refer to Capacity Building Fund Action Programme)

This section highlights achievements in terms of the two tracks, i.e. Community and Service priorities and Destination '06 and answers the questions:

- What is the Council trying to achieve? (Also refer to section, The Council)
- How has the Council set about delivering its priorities?
- What has the Council achieved/not achieved to date?

(Please refer to Executive Reports SC/43/05 and SC/55/05 for more information)

Improvement against Community and Service Priorities

One of WSDC's main achievements over the past year has been defining the identity of the Council as a 'modern authority' through its medium term vision, Destination '06.

West Somerset Progress to Date and Direction of Travel Self Assessment

This has not only strengthened WSDC's longer-term vision for the community it serves, but it has also been a catalyst for developing the organisation's leadership capacity and putting in place the building blocks for creating a performance culture.

The longer-term vision for West Somerset, developed with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and forming the foundation of the Community Plan remains to be:

“By 2020 West Somerset will be a vibrant, balanced and sustainable community. Local people will have opportunities to live and work locally, where skills and innovation are used to develop businesses or have the choice to participate in the growing business opportunities of the wider region.”

In November 2004 members of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended a workshop to develop new community, service and organisational priorities for the Council and in particular rank their order of importance. These priorities were adopted by the Council in December 2004 and have guided Cabinet and Officers in their workload over the last 9 months, (see section The Council and refer to Setting Strategic Priorities Document). This process did not involve the identification of specific non-priorities and it is therefore difficult to demonstrate the movement of resources away from these areas into those of high priority. However, there is evidence of vacant posts on the establishment being deleted and new posts being created in teams that are delivering the priorities. Examples include the deletion of leisure and a grounds maintenance posts and the creation of three new posts in each of the I.T. teams (service priority 7) and Building Control (service priority 5).

By better defining and ordering both its community and service priorities, WSDC has begun to focus the Council's activity and therefore, progress has been made on both community and service improvement priorities.

Progress against Community Priorities has primarily taken place by targeting activity on specific projects either led by the council or in partnership with other organisations. Examples include:

- Affordable Housing – (Priorities 1b & 2). A process has been developed and adopted by the Council, in consultation with relevant partners, to enable families and people on low incomes to buy homes. This is known as the “Affordable Home Ownership Model”. The Summerfield flats at Williton have now been completed and purchased by the Council and sold. There are similar schemes planned in Minehead, Watchet, Alcombe and Carhampton.
- Surestart - (Priorities 3 & 4). This partnership project has provided a network of centres in West Somerset to provide family support, training and childcare and to encourage people with young families to improve their skills and job opportunities. Both nurseries at the Alcombe and Williton centres are now officially open; this is in addition to the Little Vikings Centre at Watchet, (cross reference to CPA Report Point 70)
- Williton Regeneration - (Priorities 1a, 1b & 4). The Council has purchased the “Wrigley's Site” for the creation of a suite of small business units. A planning application to provide 17 work units for this site has been submitted and has been successful. A European Funding bid has been prepared to obtain match funding for the development of the site.

Achievement on Service Improvement Priorities has also occurred. Examples include:

- Private Sector Housing – (Priority 1). This service has been prioritised due to the impact on community priorities and a Home Improvement Agency in partnership with Sedgemoor District Council; Somerset Coast Home Improvement Partnership (SCHIP) has been set up, as well as a loans scheme in partnership with 10 South West region local authorities and Wessex Reinvestment Trust. The Housing Strategy will be more reflective of this focus and impetus was given to new initiatives, which will start to deliver in 2005/06 improving the impact of housing stock.
- Waste Collection & Recycling – (Priority 2). An enhanced kerbside collection service has been implemented whereby cans, glass, aluminium foil and green waste are collected in addition to paper and cardboard recyclables. This service covers 100% of the district and as a result the recycling rate has increased from 16% in 2004/05 to a current level of 20%.
- Public Conveniences – (Priority 3). The four planned new conveniences at Minehead, Dulverton, Watchet and Porlock have all been delivered within budget.
- Building Control – (Priority 5). Three new members of staff have been successfully recruited to deliver the service. In the short term the Council is working in partnership with Taunton Deane Borough Council to train these employees. In the long term negotiations to form a fully developed partnership arrangement are well under way.
- New Licensing System – (Priority 6). Processes and resources have been successfully put in place to deal with the new licensing regulations.
- Information Technology – (Priority 7). Following the departure of the IT Manager the Council have engaged an IT consultant specialist to prepare a Strategy and action plan for taking the service forward. The first phase of which has been completed and included the recruitment of three additional staff.
- Services Generally – 50% of indicators are improving with 39% stable (which includes many indicators already in the upper quartile).

Partnership working is also being used strategically to support service improvements. Examples include, working with Somerset County Council and Taunton Dean on Improving Services in Somerset, (ISIS), as well as the South West Audit Partnership.

Further improvements have also been achieved in terms of directing investment and public space improvements:

- The Council has access to a substantial amount of funding through the ODPM, I&DeA and others to invest in the right building blocks to secure future improvement. All improvement has been identified and is driven by Destination '06, specific examples include:
 - Investment through staff resources in the LSP
 - The current staff and member development programme with KBA/I&DeA
 - The new competency framework for performance appraisal with KBA
 - The new Scrutiny framework and member development with the I&DeA
 - The planned performance and risk management work with the audit commission
 - The current and planned e-government initiatives with the I&DeA
- Improvements in the “public space diagnostic” since the original inspection has included:

- The adoption of new planning guidance on planning gain through section 106 agreements
- A radically revised recycling service in partnership with the SWP, including card, bottles, cans and green waste
- Additional composting initiatives
- A new community safety plan created in partnership with the County and other districts following a section 17 audit
- Closer liaison between the CDRP and the DAT and other partners
- Consulting with young people through the annual Pow-Wow

Strategy for Improvement – Destination ‘06

Strand 1 – Leading the Change

This strand has guided the entire change process through establishing a Guiding Team that has developed a medium term vision, five-strand strategy to deliver the vision, CIP, Direction of Delivery and Lower Level Corporate Improvement Plan, as well as identified barriers to change and communication of vision and strategy to staff and Elected Members. This team together have kept their ‘hand on the tiller’ and are steering the changes across the organisation.

Strand 2 – Leadership of the Community

WSDC continues to view working in partnership as a key strategy for improving the community. Connected to Strand 2 – Leadership of the Community of Destination ‘06 the following actions have been taken or are in the process of being taken:

- A Local Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator has been appointed
- The Local Strategic Partnership is currently reviewing its make up and the Community Plan by establishing four Task & Finish groups for reviewing and refreshing the Community Plan, its priority actions, developing a performance management framework for the LSP and the make up of the LSP

The Task and Finish Group reviewing the Community Plan has set up a sub group to specifically respond to the need of undertaking stakeholder engagement. It has been agreed that a forum of people who have been consulted before should be consulted again, to see if anything has changed in the priorities and that people, who have not been consulted before should be consulted now. In particular, ‘gaps’ of stakeholders, such as hard to reach groups need to be engaged as a priority.

WSDC is continuing to forge new partnerships to support community improvements. For example, WSDC is a partner in the emerging Somerset Local Area Agreement ensuring links to the review of the Community Plan and into the Council's own plans.

Strand 3 – Complete Customer Satisfaction

Two core projects have been initiated:

- A Generic Service Standards Project has recently been completed that achieved the following objectives

- The development of a set of corporate standards and actions that govern how the Council in all its forms interacts with its customers together with a review and monitoring framework.
- A definition of customer satisfaction, based on consultation and an action plan to 'complete customer satisfaction in line with Destination 06'.
- The development of a method for customer feedback and complaints to be used in improving service delivery.
- An Access to Service Project was undertaken earlier in the year, which included consulting the public on how they prefer to access the Council. The project is now moving into a second phase that includes:
 - The establishment of a Corporate Information team to provide a co-ordinated approach to information management.
 - Website developments, including introduction of online services and payments and target setting for customer take-up of e-enabled access channels.
 - In conjunction with office accommodation review, identifying options to take services to the customer via alternative means such as, kiosks & mobile services.

In addition, Team Leaders are undertaking a customers needs analysis which includes, identifying who our customers are, identify wants and needs for complete satisfaction, practical steps to work towards complete satisfaction creating a set of service standards

Strand 4 – Efficient Resource Management

The following actions have been taken:

- Council set priorities (see section, The Council)
- Project on creating capacity completed – the aim of the project was to identify non-essential work that could be terminated.
- The required 2005/06 Gershon savings of 2.5% have been identified, progress to-date in their delivery is detailed below. Further as part of the 2006/07 service planning process Team Leaders are expected to identify service efficiency savings of 5%.

Gershon Savings 2005/06

Action	Amount of Estimated Efficiency Saving	Progress to-date
Purchase and implementation of an intranet / portal to make communications more efficient.	£10,000 uncashable	The portal has been purchased and work on setting up individual profiles is well underway.
To make more efficient use of an asset with the sale for development of a car park	£87,000 cashable	It was anticipated that the receipt from the sale would be received on 1 st August 2005. However, it is anticipated that this will now occur on 1 st November 2005. As a result the estimated saving is reduced to £54,500
To review the procurement of the Internal Audit Service	£9,700 cashable	A signed contract for the procurement of internal audit from the South West Audit Partnership will be in place by 1 st

		October 2005. The agreed 05/06 Audit Plan provides for input of 244 days at a cost of £35,000. The equivalent cost using the previous supplier would have been £62,220, an estimated saving of £27,220
To review the procurement of public utilities	£10,000 cashable	An independent review is partly complete and savings identified. It is anticipated that efficiency savings will exceed those estimated
To introduce transactional efficiencies into maximising the amount of Housing Benefit Subsidy claimed from DWP	£15,000 cashable	A different solution has been adopted than that proposed. A service has been procured from the software provider that provides for an annual audit of the draft subsidy claim together with a process for identifying areas of potential reduced subsidy on a regular basis during the year. This will enable corrective action to be speedily taken to prevent the further loss of subsidy. It is estimated that the targeted £15,000 efficiency savings will be achieved.

- The results from the value for money review that forms part of the CPA 'use of resources' process will be fed into the service planning process.
- A project has been scoped to review corporate systems with an objective of identifying efficiency savings.
- The current budget was drafted prior the conception of Destination '06 and therefore bears little or no alignment to the resources required to achieve its successful implementation or sustainability. To rectify this the medium term financial plan is currently being revised for completion by January 2006.
- The essential building blocks such as: a corporate improvement plan, management training, a competency framework and a generic staff appraisal system that have been put in place through Destination '06 are the initial stages of a comprehensive performance management framework. The next stage will be to bring together the new performance management framework with financial management and budgetary control. To assist with the embedding of performance management within the culture of the Authority the Council have engaged the Audit Commission to facilitate a number of workshops with both officers and members. In addition a 'Performance Committee' has been created to replace the scrutiny role of the old Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- In addition to the previously existing register of strategic risks, assessments have now been undertaken in respect of the risks associated with Destination '06 and related projects. Members have recently approved these, together with an updated risk management strategy.
It is recognised that the lack of existing internal capacity is proving to be a barrier to the successful implementation of a risk awareness culture within the Authority. In response the following two initiatives have been agreed and are about to be introduced:
 - The Internal Audit service is to be provided under a partnership agreement with South Somerset DC, Taunton BC and Mendip DC. The agreed audit plan

includes a provision for fifty-one service risk assessments to be undertaken over the next four years.

- The Audit Commission has been engaged to raise the level of general risk awareness amongst officers and members. This will be facilitated over the next fourteen months through a series of workshops and seminars.
- One of the foundations⁴ for implementing Destination '06 is the completion of the 'Use of Resources' assessment; this will lead to improvements in financial management arrangements. Evidence of this is recently approved updated Financial Regulations and Standing Orders Relating to the Letting of Contracts.

Strand 5 – People and Organisation

The following processes have been developed and implemented or are in the process of being implemented aiming to strengthen the capacity within the authority:

- Review of the political management structures by the I&DeA (Jan-April '05).
- Revised Overview and Scrutiny Function (May '05).
- A mini organisational restructure to better align some services to Destination '06 and assist its smooth passage. This included a reduction in the membership of CMT from 5 to 4
- Management Training
 - Project Management training has been provided for current and prospective project managers
 - Managing Performance training has been undertaken by the majority of senior managers and a small number of staff
 - Building High Performance Team training has been undertaken by the majority of senior managers and a small number of staff
 - Leadership training has been undertaken by the majority of senior managers and a small number of staff
 - Initial personal coaching has been provided to members of the Corporate Management Team to build upon previous training and personal development initiatives
 - Communicating Effectively to achieve Destination '06
- The agreement and initial implementation of training/development programme with the ID&eA for members
 - Probity training
 - Committee chairing
- Project on remote/home working.
- Development of a competency framework
- New training and development framework based upon competencies
- Individual Performance Management/Appraisal System
- New staff recognition system.
- Formalised internal communication system.

(Please refer to Capacity Building Fund Action Programme)

⁴ Guidance Notes for the Direction of Delivery v1.5

Key Challenges

WSDC acknowledges that it still faces some key challenges, including:

- Not becoming distracted from the implementation of Destination '06 as its key strategy for improvement, especially due to external pressures for 'quick win' fixes
- Continuing to embed a performance culture throughout the organisation so that the two tracks of improving the community and services and the organisation's continued development and evolution meet
- Identifying customers and the community's needs through purposeful engagement process that generates useful information
- Matching the need for community and service improvements with the organisation's capacity to deliver in terms of its people and finances
- Continuing to develop the practices of reviewing and reflecting so that the organisation can learn and take decisions that leads to significant improvement experienced by the community
- The Council has already taken firm actions in difficult circumstances by agreeing to dispose of under used assets to generate significant funds. This work needs to be built upon with the assessment of other assets in the Councils Asset Register.

Future Plans of Continued Improvement

Context

WSDC has set a clear course of performance improvement in identifying and prioritising community and service improvements, as a result of embarking on Destination '06.

Progress in this improvement process is not currently sufficiently advanced for an exercise to be undertaken to ascertain the impact it has had on the public. However, the clarity of purpose gained has given impetus to the commencement of a number of large community projects that in return has generated considerable public interest. This amount of public interest reflects the fact the Council is actually undertaking schemes that have a direct impact on the public.

Key learning's to date include:

- Improving performance stems from creating collective clarity on what the Council is aiming to become and achieve, i.e. both long term and medium term visions, drawing on evidence of community and service needs
- Translating the vision into ordered priorities and action plans creates the focus for activity
- Successful implementation of actions is dependent on creating ownership and commitment through continuous communication and engagement across the organisation
- Being a modern council, is creating a culture where collective responsibility and ownership for performance is shared by everyone, so that becoming innovative and implementing improvements becomes a daily practice

This section answers the question, 'In light of what the Council has learned to date what does it plan to do next'?

Next Steps

The aim over the next year is to bring together the two tracks so they become one under the identity of Destination '06. Examples of how this will be achieved include:

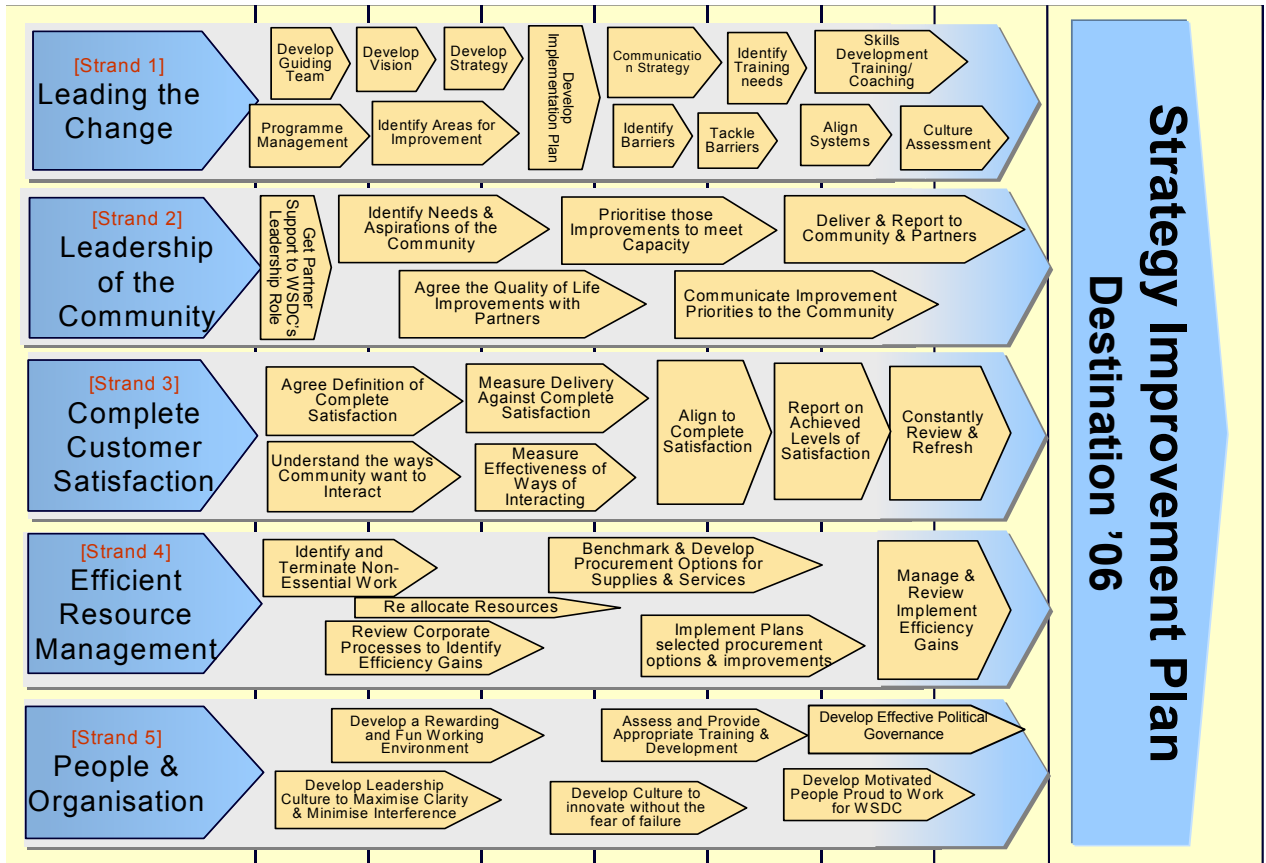
- The examination by each service of their method and levels of working with the customer services team and to implement agreed changes in order to achieve the corporate standards and customer satisfaction.
- Defining service specific customer satisfaction through consultation and implement the necessary improvements in service delivery.
- Undertaking extensive customer consultation to ascertain whether complete customer satisfaction is being delivered.
- Creating service standards based on this
- Refreshing the medium term financial plan
- Service Planning to meet needs and standards in line with national requirements
- Embarking on Stakeholder Engagement process with the LSP, especially with hard to reach groups, in order to test existing community priorities
- Refreshing and reviewing community and service improvement priorities against customer and community needs
- Identifying individual development needs as a result of appraisals
- Implementing a development programme for Elected Members
- Planning the implementation of a document management system
- Implementing a Home Working policy
- Completely reviewing how services are procured

(Please refer to Lower Level CIP for more information on future plans)

Signed: Date:
T Howes - Chief Executive Officer

Signed: Date:
Councillor S. J. Pugsley – Leader of Council

Appendix A



Appendix B

Summary of Weaknesses Identified through CPA and Improvements

Theme	CPA Identified Weakness	Improvement
Ambition	Under developed programme for the implementation of Intention 2	Service improvement priorities identified and ranked and are being delivered through clear political leadership
Prioritisation	Lack of clarity of the relative priority of the two corporate objectives	Community priorities refreshed and reviewed and Service improvement priorities created with priorities ordered in terms of importance
Performance Management	Lack of performance management, (including risk management, staff appraisals, use of performance information to guide decision making, value for money, out of date service standards, weak target setting against priorities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Destination '06 has put in place the building blocks, e.g. staff development & member programme, appraisals, competency framework, etc. o Corporate standards on how Council interacts with its customers have been created o Team Leaders undertaking customer needs analysis from which service standards will be developed
Capacity & Investment	Capacity in terms of focusing on priorities, the development of staff and Elected Members and the investment of finances, (linked to performance and risk management, scrutiny, prioritisation) as well as the need to build on good partnership working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Funding obtained from OPDM has been invested in the development of staff & members o Investment in recruitment of staff in areas where service improvement were needed, e.g. Building Control o Prioritised community and service improvement priorities have formed the basis for focusing Council activity o Destination '06 high level and low level CIP's

		<p>guide organisational development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LSP and Community Plan being reviewed, with Stakeholder Engagement planned for 'hard to reach' groups ○ New partnerships created to support both community and service improvements
Achievement in quality of service & Achievement in improvement	Lack of significant improvement in delivery of a more balanced housing market, management of public spaces, and access to services, as well as some key services satisfaction levels were low.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Affordable Home Ownership Model" implemented and Summerfield flats at Williton made available ○ Home Improvement Agency in partnership with Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset Coast Home Improvement Partnership (SCHIP) has been set up ○ Enhanced kerbside collection service has been implemented whereby cans, glass, aluminium foil and green waste are collected in addition to paper and cardboard recyclables ○ Four planned new conveniences at Minehead, Dulverton, Watchet and Porlock have all been delivered within budget ○ 50% of indicators are improving with 39% stable (which includes many indicators already in the upper quartile)
Learning	Learning is not shared across the organisation and customer feedback is under developed to support learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training across the organisation has allowed learning to be shared coupled with stronger communication