

SERVICE PLAN
2009/10 – 2011/12

Corporate Services

Service Setter: Wendy Bass



Service Plan – Corporate Services

What we do and why we do it

The service supports the Council in delivering its corporate objectives through a combination of direct delivery and corporate leadership.

The service ensures that corporate policies are in place and that the democratic and decision-making process is clear and transparent. It comprises the following 6 key areas of work:

Electoral services

The aim of the service is to produce an annual electoral register which is a statutory requirement to conduct an annual canvass as at 15 October of each year for the purpose of determining all persons entitled to be registered as electors and entitled to vote or stand for election. The service ensures that parish, district, county, parliamentary and European elections are run smoothly and accurately in accordance with legislation.

Committee and Member services

The service ensures that all council committees are serviced including the preparation of agendas, attendance at meetings, preparation of minutes and dealing with matters arising. A programme of member development is required each year together with seminars as well as an Induction Programme in election year. Other support to elected members includes arranging meetings, advising on declarations of interest and reviewing and advising on the Constitution.

Local Land Charges

Local Land Charges provides a service to Solicitors, Agents and members of the public requesting Search Applications to be made against Residential/Commercial properties and land within the District. Under the Government's code of practice we are required to process searches as expeditiously as possible.

Planning Policy

Planning Policy guides specific proposals for development and use of land and therefore most day to day planning decisions. The main context for this work is provided by the Local Development Framework (LDF) with a Core Strategy Development Plan document forming the basis. The LDF sets out an integrated set of policies based on a clear understanding of the economic, social and environmental needs of the area and any constraints on meeting those needs. The West Somerset Local Plan was adopted in April 2006 and covers the district excluding the Exmoor National Park.

Corporate Information and Consultation

The Corporate Information team provides information about the whole council. This includes:

- Providing economic and social information and policy analysis
- Supplying high quality corporate research, including staff surveys
- Developing a clear approach to consultation

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Consultation provides an opportunity to listen to the views of customers and can help us to use our resources in the best way possible, deliver the right services and deliver services to the right people, in the right way and at the right time. All this personal information must be dealt with properly no matter how it is collected, recorded or used. The Data Protection Act 1998 and other legislation requires that information is properly handled at all times.

The Freedom of Information Act allows anyone to ask for information held by the council subject to exemptions.

Corporate Health and Safety

Staff are provided with health and safety advice and information as well as training. The service ensures that the council complies with Health and Safety legislation.

Civil Contingencies

The council works in partnership with all the Somerset districts and the county in the Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingencies Partnership to ensure the Emergency Response Plan and emergency arrangements meet the Civil Contingencies Act requirements. The Plan will be reviewed at the beginning of 2009. A critical expectation is for key responder agencies including this council to be able to maintain their core services whilst at the same time manage the consequences of an emergency in their community. Business Continuity Planning is afforded high importance in the Civil Contingencies Act and this includes the provision of business continuity advice externally.

Our Customers and their demands

Local government electors – they require an electoral registration system that is easy to use. It is possible to register as an elector during the annual canvass by freephone or online where there are no changes or by post to make any changes and the rolling register allows for any changes to be made during the life of the register. Advice is given to electors who wish to stand for election. Candidates, electors and the Returning Officer demand a smooth running election process.

Elected members of the Council – they require clear agendas received on time, accurate and timely advice to assist in good, consistent decision-making and appropriate training and development.

Staff require support that ensures they have the tools and processes to undertake their work in delivering efficient services.

Solicitors, personal search companies and members of the public contact the Council to search the Local Land Charge register.

Contribution to LAA Targets (WSC leading/key partner)

- **NI 4** - % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
- **NI 179** – Value for money
- **NI 1** - % of people who believes people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

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Contribution to Corporate Objectives

The service contributes to the Council's Corporate Priorities in the following way:

Corporate services provide support to members in their role as decision makers and staff in their jobs to enable the corporate objectives to be fulfilled and in particular:

The Environment

- Promote more Sustainable Planning Policies and Building Techniques – Through the Local Development Framework.
- Maximise sustainability through working with partners for the benefit of the area
- Maximise the interaction and cooperation with other organisations in respect of the LDF process to increase capacity and improve efficiencies

Implementation of the Improvement Plan

Priority 3 of the Improvement Plan requires an increased knowledge and access to council services by the community and this can be measured by e.g. the take up of benefits. Customer Services advisers need to assist in this by providing customers with seamless information regarding all council services in an efficient and effective manner to suit their needs. A further outcome is for improved overall public satisfaction with the council measured by the Place Survey and again customer services advisers will contribute to this measure.

Priority 4 will ensure that the council is meeting the diverse needs of service users and the wider community, and has a positive approach to equalities and diversity.

Service Priorities for 2009/12

Objective	Actions	Lead Officer	Date (Year)
All Corporate services			
Improved efficiencies and subsequent service delivery	Reorganise structure and tasks to focus on delivery	Wendy Bass	Sept 2009
Committee and Member Services			
To improve the Council's overall improvement and Direction of Travel	Implementation of the actions contained within the Improvement Plan	Wendy Bass	2009/2010
To improve the effectiveness of new members	Draft an induction programme for agreement with the Member Forum and CMT	Wendy Bass	September 2010
Implementation of a government initiative	Monitor the Government response to the Local Petitions and Calls for Action Consultation	Wendy Bass	September 2009
Internal Health and Safety			
To improve service delivery arrangements	Review the arrangements for providing health and safety advice from an external provider	Ian Timms	2009/2010

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Local Land Charges			
To retain market share and fee generation capacity	Together with the other Somerset districts, to review local land charge fees	Linda Bulpin	2009/2010
Improve service delivery	To establish an electronic link for responses by SCC to CON29 questions relating to land searches	Linda Bulpin	End of 2009
Planning Policy			
Improve efficiencies	To review the Local Development Framework (LDF) officer structure and partnership working across the county	Ian Timms	
To promote sustainability through planning policy	Ensure climate change and biodiversity feature strongly in the LDF Core Strategy & Supplementary Planning documents	Martin Wilsher	
	Produce Supplementary Planning Guidance on Sustainable Development	Martin Wilsher	
	Develop plans for a local carbon dioxide compensation element to be incorporated into Section 106 agreements and any relevant Supplementary Planning Documents	Martin Wilsher	
Corporate Information and Consultation			
To identify areas for future service improvements	Review actions in LG Reputations toolkit and implement actions arising Develop a clear approach to consultation	Tom Bown	Ongoing

Efficiencies to be achieved

The Council are required to identify 3% cashable efficiency savings per annum. The following table identifies those savings that are being targeted over the next three years.

Description	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	Evidence
Cashable Efficiency Gains				
To be identified				
Non Cashable Efficiency Gains				
To be identified				
Total				

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Resources

Staff

The Council's staff operate in a completely flexible environment and as such are, in a lot of instances, expected to assist with the delivery of a number of services. The table below provides an estimation of the proportion of time spent delivering the services referred to in this plan.

Name	%	F.t.e.'s.
Wendy Bass	50	0.50
Sam Rawle	100	1.00
Elisa Day	100	0.81
Claire Richards	100	1.00
Helen Dobson	100	1.00
Linda Bulpin	100	1.00
Janet Grieve	50	0.50
Tom Bown	100	1.00
Krystyna Kowalewska	100	0.81
Martin Wilsher	100	1.00
Toby Clempson (from 22 Dec 2008)	100	1.00
Ian Timms	5	0.05
TOTAL	855	9.67

Budget

The budget figures detailed below are those directly related to service delivery and do not include projected internal recharges.

Service Element	Budget		
	2009/10 (£)	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)
REVENUE			
Electoral Services	11,100		
Committee and Member Services	174,500		
Local Land Charges	-43,900		
Planning Policy	25,000		
Corporate Information and consultation	33,900		
Corporate Subscriptions	23,300		
Civil Contingencies	14,100		
Salaries	236,749		
GRAND TOTAL	474,749		
CAPITAL			
Severance Costs	130,000-		
GRAND TOTAL	130,000		

Service Contribution to Reducing Inequalities

- An Impact Assessment will be undertaken in respect of Member Development and Electoral services by December 2008.

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Performance

Indicators

There are national indicators (NI) and local performance indicators (LPI) for this service
The service also contributes to corporate national indicators, NI 14 and NI 179.

Indicator	Description	Actual	Targets		
		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
National Indicators:					
NI 1	% of people who believes people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area [PLACE SURVEY]				
NI 2	% of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood [PLACE SURVEY]				
NI 3	Civic participation in the local area [PLACE SURVEY]				
NI 4	% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality [PLACE SURVEY]				
NI 5	Overall general satisfaction with the local area [PLACE SURVEY]				
NI 6	Participation in local volunteering [PLACE SURVEY]				
NI 27	Understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police [PLACE SURVEY]				
NI 37	Awareness of civil protection arrangements in the local area [PLACE SURVEY]				
NI 140	Fair treatment by local services – [PLACE SURVEY]				
NI 159	Supply of ready to develop housing sites - Annual				
NI 170	Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than 5 years - Annual				
NI 182	Satisfaction of businesses with local authority regulation services				
Local Performance Indicators:					
CorpLPI 1	% turnout for local elections				
CorpLPI 2	Form A's returned (Electoral Reg forms)				
Corporate National Indicators:					
NI 14	Avoidable Contact: The average number of customer contacts per resolved request				
NI 179	Total net value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains				

Achievements Against Previous Years Service Objectives

Being the first year that service plans in this format have been produced this section has been left blank and will be completed next year.

Business Risks

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall	Mitigating Actions
In the event of trained staff leaving there is a risk of meetings not being arranged properly and Members' decisions are not supported by comprehensive up to date information	M	H	H	Ensure good management and cover as necessary
Inadequate/Insufficient Training/ Awareness of Health & Safety risks	M	H	H	Review arrangements for provision of Health & Safety advice
Failure of IT systems	M	M	M	Regular backups, maintenance, upgrades and support contracts
Loss of personal data	M	H	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines on use of data sticks Improved security of paper based records