

CABINET

15 FEBRUARY 2011

COUNCIL PLAN 2011 –12

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Janice Bamber, Customer First and Corporate Services

Report from: Stephanie Goad, Assistant Director Communications, Performance and Partnerships

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Summary

The Council Plan is the organisation's over-arching business plan which sets out the outcomes that the council wants to achieve during the life of the plan. This year, in response to the changing landscape and the implied freedoms and flexibilities from government for councils to set their own agenda, it has been agreed by Members that the plan will be streamlined. It contains a smaller number of outcomes, which will be measured by meaningful measures of success.

Uncertainty about the size and phasing of funding reductions until very recently, the budget setting process and the changing policy landscape in key areas, have posed a number of challenges in developing the Council plan to ensure it is a relevant document.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Council Plan 2011-12 is a key part of the budget and policy framework that has been developed alongside the 2011/2012 capital and revenue budget proposals in order to align the Council's business planning processes with the budget setting process.
- 1.2 Approval of the Council Plan as a policy framework document is a matter for Full Council in accordance with the Council's Constitution. The Council Plan will be considered at Council on 24 February 2011.

2. Background

- 2.1 As the council's overarching business plan, the Council Plan identifies objectives the council wishes to achieve, and as such it is important that it is considered alongside the budget setting process. The Council Plan will form an essential part of the council's performance management framework, setting out the outcomes against which progress will be measured. Since the last plan was agreed in

February 2010 the national policy and financial landscape has changed following the election and the formation of the coalition government. The last few months have seen the Coalition agreement and the announcement of significant in year budget cuts for both capital and revenue, translating into some £6.2m for Medway, and more wide ranging cuts of approximately 25% are anticipated over the next four years. This should also be set against the backdrop of impending legislation including that relating to: Health, The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill, The Localism Bill, The Munro Review of child protection, the Special Educational Needs review and the dismantling of PCTs. This has made it a time of significant uncertainty and change and a challenging context in which to produce a strategic plan.

- 2.2 In some important ways the council has more freedom to determine local priorities than previously. The inspection regime for local authorities has changed, the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the Local Area Agreement have been abolished and national indicators have been deleted. However, Government has recently opened consultation on a single data list and is therefore starting to identify what information councils will still be required to submit to government. The results of this consultation are not expected until March. There is also a requirement for greater transparency from local authorities to enable local people to understand what money is being spent on and what is being achieved as a result.
- 2.3 Cabinet have already agreed that the Council Plan 2011-12 will be different to previous plans. It is imperative that the Council Plan reflects: council priorities; is fit for on going inspection requirements (notably in relation to children's services and adults social care); is achievable within anticipated resources; and allows Members and senior managers to effectively monitor performance against priorities during the life of the plan.
- 2.4 The changes to the focus of the plan already agreed by Members, mean that this plan will contain for each priority a limited set of outcomes, phrased as commitments the council is making, which will have specific measures of success. The plan will also include a small number of key change projects that are essential to the council achieving the planned transformation and outcomes set out in the plan. Attached is the draft Council Plan (at appendix 1).
- 2.5 Quarterly reporting to Members and senior managers will continue, focusing on the chosen set of indicators. This will be slimmed down from the current reporting. Management and reporting on operational performance will continue to be undertaken by services and directorate management teams.

3. Issues

- 3.1 Significant national funding and policy changes have already taken place, and they need to be reflected in the work that is being prioritised in the Council Plan. Drafting the Council Plan to take into account these new circumstances has highlighted some challenges and tensions. These include:
 - identifying the council's own contribution to what are often broader partnership activities

- ensuring that the commitments the council makes reflect what is most important to the council at the moment, rather than seeking to cover all council activity
 - reviewing whether existing priorities are fit for purpose in this new climate
 - matching the council commitments to the available resources
- 3.2 For example, the Safer Communities priority is identified as an important priority for residents, but previous plans have relied heavily on police data to demonstrate success, often reporting on indicators for which the council does not have direct involvement or influence. The work of the council focuses more on environmental crimes so consideration has been given as to how best reflect this in this year's Council Plan.
- 3.3 Similarly, with the funding issues impacting on regeneration clarity is needed about what the strategic focus of this work will be. Although Everybody Benefitting from the Area's Regeneration is not identified as an important priority for residents it encompasses a broad range of issues including housing, jobs and skills which continue to be extremely important elements of the council's work and which, individually, the public view as important.
- 3.4 It has been challenging to make sure health is adequately reflected in the Council Plan. To date it has been addressed primarily under the Older and Vulnerable People Maintaining their Independence priority and Children and Young People Having the Best Start in Life. This has made it difficult to properly represent the preventative work that is being undertaken and this is an issue that needs to be considered as responsibility for the Public Health's health improvement agenda moves to the council.
- 3.5 Although 'getting around' Medway is important to the public it was debated as to whether sufficient high-level transport outcomes which are the council's direct responsibility exist to support it as a priority in its own right.

4. Options

- 4.1 In response to the some of the issues identified above the attached Council Plan 2011-12 is considerably shorter and written in a way that makes it accessible to councillors, council staff and the public as well.
- 4.2 The attached Council Plan also contains a number of revisions to reflect the changes mentioned earlier in the report and to better reflect the focus of the Council's work in the forthcoming year. The Adults priority is reworded to adequately reflect the importance of health related work. The Safer Communities and Cleaner and greener work has been brought together under one priority to better reflect the work the council is doing. Earlier drafts of the report incorporated the Transport priority into the Regeneration priority. In response to the recommendation of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny committee this draft reverts to having transport as a separate priority.
- 4.3 As options for meeting the 2011/12 budget gap are debated, some of the commitments included in the draft plan may need to be revisited. Changes made to the budget up to and including Full Council may also have impact which will need to be reflected in the final version which Members agree.

- 4.4 Some national policy agendas continue to evolve on timelines which do not fit our planning, and Member decision-making programme. It is important that the Council Plan is not so fluid as to be meaningless, but at the same time that it can accommodate in year changes if required. If such changes are required they will be presented to Members as part of quarterly monitoring.
- 4.5 Work on measures of success is ongoing and will flow from the Council Plan. This work is being informed by consultation (see 5.1).

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Citizens' Panel were consulted on importance of, and satisfaction with, services. A Citizens' Panel focus group met on 26 January to test out the proposed measures of success and whether they resonated with the public and what changes or additions may be required. The full report from the consultation is being finalised. However, the focus group was in general agreement with the outline measures of success included in the plan but felt that additional measures might be considered. These will be reviewed to ensure they fit with the aim of the Council Plan to measure Council activity and are easily measurable by services. Suggestions included:
- Amount of vandalism in parks and green spaces
 - Feedback from parents
 - Awareness of parks and green spaces
 - Performance at school in addition to key stage results
 - Experience for carers of people with different needs should be disaggregated
- 5.2 The Panel also felt that infrastructure including transport was important to delivering wider council aims and should be reflected. Once the full write up is received these views will be incorporated into the measures of success where possible, and reported to members as part of performance reporting for quarter 1 2011/12.
- 5.3 The plan was circulated to all Overview and Scrutiny Members to enable them to feed comments into the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 27 January 2011.

6. Diversity Impact Assessment

- 6.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 the council has legal duties to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. The priorities in the Council Plan are underpinned by the core value of 'Putting the customer at the centre of everything we do', this reinforces the importance the council places on meeting the differing needs of customers and promoting equality. The Council has a clearly set out diversity impact assessment process which describes how changes to service delivery or new services and policies should be assessed for impact and the requirement for regular review of the equality impact of services and strategies. This is in line with current legislative requirements.
- 6.2 These processes are in place to ensure that the outcomes and initiatives set out by services, and then included in the Council Plan, meet the needs of our customers and are assessed for impact during their development. This means

that officers are expected to identify and address any potential adverse impacts in line with legislation and best practice as part of implementation of the Council Plan.

- 6.3 It is clear though that in this time of limited resources it will not be possible to fund the full range of services that may be asked of and choices will have to be made. The Council is currently embarking on a significant programme of transformation in the way it delivers its services. The aim of this transformation is to reduce costs and maximise investment in frontline services. We have consulted with our Citizens' Panel both on what is important to them, what they think is important to the community and this has fed into the development of this plan. However, officers will continue to assess and monitor the plan, both prior to its agreement by Council, and throughout the life of the plan, to ensure compliance with all statutory requirements.
- 6.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment of the Council Plan setting out this process is attached at appendix 2, in line with the Council's established procedure for new strategic documents.

7 Comments from Business Support Overview & Scrutiny

- 7.1 The Council Plan was presented to Business Support Overview and Scrutiny on 27 January 2011.
- 7.2 Members commented on the difficulty of consulting on a plan that did not yet have financial certainty and alignment for the areas highlighted within it. However, Members applauded the serious statements of intent that were currently set out in the plan. Following discussion on the transport aspect of the plan, Members agreed that it was a topic of public concern and recommended to Cabinet that it should be kept as a separate priority.

8 Assistant Directors comments on Overview & Scrutiny response

- 8.1 The Assistant Director for Communications, Partnerships and Performance welcomes the comments from Business Support overview and scrutiny committee.
- 8.2 The budget setting process is still ongoing at the time of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and has been particularly challenging so producing a Council Plan that reflects fully the final budget is unlikely prior to Council. However, the plan has been devised in consultation with the Citizens' Panel and reflects the views of residents and the priorities they feel are important for the area. Subject to Cabinet decision the Transport priority will be included as a separate priority People Travelling Easily around Medway to reflect the importance of transport as an enabler to the Council achieving the other priorities set out in the plan.

9 Financial and Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Council Plan 2011-12 has been developed alongside the budget 2011-12. This ensures the financial implications of the Council Plan are considered during its development.

9.2 There is no longer a statutory requirement to have a Council Plan. This means that the Council Plan is no longer listed as a plan or strategy which must be adopted by Council in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000. However, the Regulations provide that where the Council determine that a decision on a non-statutory plan should be taken by them, the decision on adoption of that plan must be taken by full Council. Members have decided to retain the council plan as a key document to guide the business of the council and communicate its direction. The Council Plan remains a policy document within the Council's constitution and so a decision on it must be taken by full Council.

10 Recommendations

10.1 That Cabinet agrees to incorporate "People Travelling Easily around Medway" as a separate priority within the Council Plan 2011-12.

10.2 That Cabinet recommends the Council Plan 2011-12 to Full Council for approval.

10.3 That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Assistant Director of Communications, Performance and Partnerships is delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customer First and Corporate Services, to make minor changes to the Plan prior to publication (if necessary) to reflect the final Budget as agreed by Council on 24 February 2011.

11 Suggested Reasons for Decision

11.1 Strong business planning processes and a clear strategic framework are regarded as best practice, and will enable the organisation to demonstrate how it is using resources to meet locally specific objectives.

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Background papers

Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/14
Budget proposals 2011/2012

Appendix 1

DRAFT Council plan 2011-12

City of Medway – Rich heritage, great future

The Council Plan is the council's business plan. It has five priority areas and sets out what will be done to deliver these and how we will tell what difference has been made. The five priorities are:

- Safe, clean and green Medway
- Children and young people have the best start in life in Medway
- Adults maintain their independence and live healthy lives
- Everybody travelling easily around Medway
- Everyone benefiting from the area's regeneration

Our two core values set out the principles of the how we work to deliver these priorities, they are:

- Putting our customers at the centre of everything we do
- Giving value for money

What we will do

Medway Council wants to continue to ensure high quality services for all residents. We know that some people need extra support and we will continue to ensure these needs are met. We take our roles as community leader, commissioner and provider of services very seriously. We place great emphasis on listening to customers about what services they need and how they need to receive them. By listening to customers we hope to make sure that we commission and provide services efficiently and effectively. Our aim is to commission more services rather than being the provider of services. By doing this we can focus on ensuring customers have access to a range of services that meet their different needs, rather than being limited to the range of services that can be offered by the council.

This plan is influenced by all the consultation, comments and feedback received in the last eighteen months. Through consultation with our Citizens' Panel we know that 'Safety' and 'Children and Young People having the Best Start in Life' are currently the top two priorities for people in Medway. We also know that refuse collection is the service that is most important to the public followed by parks and open spaces and activities for young people. This plan reflects our commitment to responding to residents' priorities but there are other services we have a legal responsibility to provide.

In the past few months we have also been responding to significant funding reductions. We are having to make savings, for example we needed to save £6 million from last year's budget and will have to save approximately £23 million during 2011-12, this is approximately 12 per cent of our budget. We

are committed to minimising the impact of these changes on our front line services. We are reviewing what we are doing and how we are doing it to become even more cost-effective. This is going to be challenging for us because Medway Council is already externally recognised as an efficient council that makes good use of its resources.

Partnership

Providing services to Medway residents in partnership with other public sector bodies and the voluntary and community sector is fundamental to Medway's success. This will become even more important as budget reductions start to take effect. However, we are confident that we can continue to improve the services received by customers if we work effectively with our partners. Last year, all partners in the area agreed the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026. That sets out the strategic direction of what we together, as an area, want to achieve between now and 2026. This direction is rightly ambitious for the area, and can only be achieved by service commissioners, providers and local people working together to continue to improve Medway.

The Council Plan 2011–12 identifies the priorities for the Council and what it intends to do to support the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

What's going well

The last year has seen Adult Social Care and Children's Services recognised by external inspectors as performing well. There has been a significant increase in referrals and workload to children's social services, but for this year more core assessments of children's child protection needs have been undertaken within timescales, and the proportion of looked after children's cases reviewed within timescales remains close to 100%. The end of the academic year in July saw excellent performance in keeping exclusions from school low, while at the same time education results for the year were improving at all key stages. At GCSE level there was a continuation of the steady improving trend. At A-level, there has been an increase both in participation and achievement.

There has been a sustained reduction in the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households, while almost all homelessness decisions were made within 28 days. This means homeless households are being helped. This has been important in the context of the recession and more homelessness. The Innovation Centre Medway, which supports local businesses, formally opened and is already over 80% full with business tenants. This has created over 170 new jobs. Employ Medway has helped over 350 local people into employment, particularly young people.

Medway's parks now have four Green Flags for quality. Recycling of waste is on target to achieve 36%, and a new waste contract has been agreed which will increase this further. Crime has been falling steadily, with less people worried about crime too.

The changes to the Chatham road network and the new bus station are being implemented. Although this has disrupted traffic over the last few months,

these changes will improve development and accessibility of the town centre in the future. Improvements to the A228, and the A2 are also underway. The planning application for first homes on Rochester Riverside has been received and Medway has exceeded the target for affordable homes by almost half, although the future funding of affordable homes is uncertain. A bid to have Medway recognised as a city has been launched and the new Medway Park, regional centre for sporting excellence, opened and hosted Modern Pentathlon world cup. Preparations are well underway for 2012 our proposed year of celebration.

What are our challenges?

The council works hard to ensure our customers receive good quality services. There will always be areas that we want to improve and challenges we need to overcome. We know that there will be an increase in demand for some services such as housing during difficult economic times and as our population gets older. Following the tragic death of baby Peter in Haringey we have seen an unprecedented increase in demand for social care services.

Although our GCSE results are improving and are above national average we believe that our key stage 2 results, for 11 year olds, need to be better. This would help allow young people to maximise their potential. We are implementing plans to address this. We are committed to increasing the numbers of users of adult social care receiving 'self-directed support' this means that people have control over their care and the way it is provided to best meet their needs.

We want to reduce both childhood obesity and under 18 teenage conception rates. We want to further increase recycling rates and to reduce waste sent to landfill sites. We want to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow so people can get around Medway easily and safely. All of these issues are important to people in Medway but the scale of the cuts being made to public services mean that, like other councils, we are having to rethink how services are provided to make sure we can continue to meet the needs of our customers.

Why have a Council Plan?

This Council Plan sets out the current priority areas of work that will be monitored quarterly by Councillors and senior managers. The reports look at how well we are doing and how successful we are at making a positive difference in these areas. This quarterly monitoring is also available to the public so that customers can see how we are doing. Summaries will be available on the website and in Medway Matters, the council newspaper.

In order to do this each of the priorities has a limited number of commitments setting out what we want to achieve and several measures of success so we know how we are doing. Also vital to delivering our priorities are a small number of major projects, for example the development of Chatham Centre.

Our commitments

Safe, clean and green Medway

What we aim to do:

We want people to be safe in Medway and, equally importantly, to feel safe. We want to work with local people to make sure they feel they belong to their neighbourhood and can influence the decisions that affect it. Our commitment is to keeping the streets clean, recycling more waste, maintaining our parks and green spaces and reducing our carbon emissions.

Set out below is what we commit to and how we will know when we have made a positive difference:

Commitment:

We will improve public confidence and feelings of safety

Measures of success

- Love Medway campaign outcomes to be confirmed
- Impact of targeted neighbourhood work
- Enforcement activity
- Impact of work to improve road safety

(Note: this section needs to be consistent with the council's contribution to the Community Safety Plan which is under review)

Commitment:

We will increase recycling and reduce waste going to landfill sites

Measures of success

- Percentage of waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting (NI192)
- kg of residual household waste per household
- Quality of and satisfaction with waste services

Commitment:

We will work with the community to keep Medway's streets clean

Measures of success

- Enforcement activity against environmental crime incidents
- Quality of and satisfaction with street cleaning

Commitment:

We will reduce our own carbon footprint

Measures of success

- NI 185 – CO2 reduction from Local Authority operations
- Impact of council's asset management programme

Commitment:

We will work with local people to maintain parks and open spaces that are enjoyed by all

Measures of success

- Satisfaction with parks and open spaces
- Numbers of citizen participation hours through involvement in practical volunteer tasks
- Number of Green flag awards for parks and open spaces

Commitment:

We will support the building of strong communities where people feel they belong

Measures of success

- % of people who feel that people in Medway get on well together
- % of people who think they can influence local decision making

Children and young people in Medway have the best start in life

What we aim to do:

We want all children and young people in Medway to be safe, cared for, to succeed in learning and to thrive. Set out below is what we commit to and how we will know when we have made a positive difference:

Commitment:

Working with partners to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people are safe

Measures of success

- Measures tracking that those in need and those at risk receive timely and effective support
- % of exclusions as a result of aggressive and challenging behaviour in schools
- % of children and young people who feel safe
- *[Recommendations from Professor Munro's review on safeguarding (once finalised in April may lead to additional measures of success being proposed)]*

Commitment:

We will champion high standards in schools so that all children can achieve their potential, and the gaps between the least advantaged and their peers are narrowed

Measures of success

- Educational outcomes at key stage 2
- Educational outcomes for vulnerable groups including looked after children
- Inspection outcomes for teaching, learning and leadership
- *[New measures coming out of Special educational needs Green Paper will be added if required]*

Commitment:

We will promote and encourage healthy lifestyles for children and young people, and reduce health inequalities.

Measures of success

- Under 18 conception rates, including focus on more deprived wards
- Obesity in reception and year 6
- Indications of effectiveness of CAHMS service
- Housing indicator to be added

Adults maintain their independence and live healthy lives

What we aim to do:

We want to make it possible for people to maintain their independence and have choice over the care services they need. As part of this we want to support people in making healthy lifestyle choices that might benefit their longer-term well-being. Set out below is what we commit to and how we will know when we have made a positive difference:

Commitment:

We will ensure older people and disabled adults are safe and well supported

Measures of success

- Measure that person centred assessments are timely and take into account service user views and choices
- Measures tracking safety of vulnerable adults

Commitment:

We will support carers in the valuable work they do

Measures of success

- % of carer's receiving needs assessment or review
- Carers feedback on the services they have received

Commitment:

We will work in partnership to ensure personalised services meet older and disabled adults needs

Measures of success

- % of learning disabled adults we support to achieve independent living
- Number of service users with a learning disabilities and mental health needs in settled accommodation
- % social care clients receive self directed support
- Measure tracking level of independence people achieve through rehabilitation/intermediate care

Commitment:

We will promote and encourage healthy lifestyles for adults

Measures of success

- Number of drug users reported as being in effective treatment
- Number of self-reported 4 week 'smoking quitters'
- Adults access to and use of sports and leisure facilities
- Number of households living in temporary accommodation
- Health inequality measure - to be confirmed
- *[new public health measures to be confirmed once outcomes framework is finalized]*

Everybody travelling easily around Medway

What we aim to do:

The Council recognises that the proposed physical change to Medway must be accompanied by social and economic regeneration and underpinned by the continuing development of a transport system that tackles congestion and provides good quality public transport services and encourages alternatives to the car.

Commitment:

We will secure a reliable and efficient local transport network to support regeneration, economic competitiveness and growth

Measures of success

- Residents satisfaction with transport and getting around Medway
- Principal roads and non principal roads where maintenance should be considered

Everyone benefiting from the area's regeneration

What we aim to do:

The Council is leading on a range of work to improve the lives of residents in Medway. These range from improving housing to providing sporting, learning and cultural opportunities. We are also committed to supporting our residents and businesses through these tough economic times and helping local

businesses to grow and create jobs. Despite funding reductions we remain committed to delivering our 'five towns one city vision' which will develop the area for the benefit of residents and businesses and protect heritage.

Commitment:

We will support the provision of decent new homes and improve the quality of existing housing

Measures of success

- Net additional homes provided
- Number of affordable homes delivered
- Measure on quality of social and other housing

Commitment:

We will work to ensure that people have the skills they need to take up job opportunities created

Measures of success

- Number of local people assisted by the council into employment
- Number of jobs created and protected through council activity
- Care leavers in education, employment or training

Commitment:

We will promote Medway as a destination for culture, heritage, sport and tourism

Measures of success

- Delivery and impact of heritage and tourism projects
- Impact and satisfaction with sports projects
- Attendance and satisfaction with festival programme

Projects to deliver priorities and deliver our core values

Listed below are a small number of key projects which are vital to the council's success in transforming the way it works and delivering its commitments and core values.

Chatham Centre

This project will oversee the transformation of Chatham centre. The work will deliver both physical and environmental changes in Chatham. Substantial progress has been made with the highway capacity enhanced and new bus station opening in the summer. A series of actions are now required to support and facilitate private sector development, community and cultural activities and the delivery of a quality retail offer which will ensure Chatham's role as a regional shopping and business centre. Identified tasks include:

- Chatham Waterfront Development programme
- Queen Street
- St. John Hawkins Car Park, assessment of development opportunities

- Completion of bus facility
- Pentagon Centre access works

Alongside the physical investment activity, priority operational issues have been detailed in the Chatham town centre Action Plan.

City Status/2012 - year of celebration

Medway has made great progress through its regeneration programmes. During these difficult financial times community support and inward investment from the business community is needed to maintain that momentum. Applying for City Status and raising the profile of the area is an integral excellent way to take this work forward. 2012 has already been highlighted as a year of celebrations for Medway. It includes the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the Olympics and Paralympics - with Medway Park, our regional centre of sporting excellence, providing a training camp facility and hosting the British Transplant Games. 2012 is the year when the bid for World Heritage Site status for the Dockyard and its defences is submitted, should it be successful in securing the UK nomination. 2012 sees the 200th anniversary of the Royal Engineers' establishment in Medway and Dickens' bicentenary. Our intention is to maximize the benefits to Medway and to ensure 2012 is a year that the public can celebrate and that brings the community together.

'Narrowing the gap' Social regeneration pilot

This is a pilot project in Luton and Wayfield to establish ways to improve the coordination and impact of children and family services in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Medway. Co-ordinated by the Council a new multi-agency partnership under the umbrella of the Local Strategic Partnership, has been established to lead this pilot which will include: analysis of the services currently provided in the area, identification of investment into the area, identifying any gaps or overlaps in service provision. The group will use this information to agree a range of ways to provide more effective area based partnership working. The project will be measuring whether these changes are having a positive impact on children and families in the area. A key element will be to involve all sections of the community in identifying: what improvements are needed in the area, helping to implement changes and giving feedback on the impact of any changes made. If the project demonstrates that improvements can be achieved by working more closely on a locality basis, this model of working could be taken forward elsewhere in Medway.

Better for Less

The Better for Less (BfL) programme is a council-wide project to address the future challenges of reduced funding for local government, increasing demand for many of our services and the need to continue to improve the experiences of our customers.

The programme will transform Medway Council and ensure it is able to continue to deliver high quality services to residents in Medway in the future. In the first year it will cover a range of issues including:

- Improving customer contact (see below)

- Making administration and business support more efficient
- Reducing layers of management at the council

Transformation of customer contact and assessment

This project is about improving the experiences of our customers whenever they contact us – for example to ask for information, report something or apply for something. This could happen in person, by phone, email or online. Our research shows that half of residents say they have contacted Medway Council at least once in the past year. Handling customer contact well is really important for making sure residents are satisfied with the council – our research shows a clear link between us handling customer contact well and residents that are satisfied with our services. At the moment there are more than 130 different numbers that customers can call the council on. This means often that we have to transfer calls or ask customers to call back on a different number. This isn't a good experience for customers and is inefficient for the council as well.

The project will bring together all customer service into one team which will be responsible for handling all customer initial enquiries and assessments. Combining these activities will reduce staff and office costs and would cut the average cost of transactions – for example by preventing the need for some letters or follow-up phone calls as customers would know sooner whether they were eligible for the service they are asking about. It will also allow us to reuse customer information more effectively, so that our customers do not have to explain their needs repeatedly as they deal with different people within the council. This will be a significant improvement for our customers as well as more efficient for the council.

Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

Directorate	Name of Strategy	
Business Support	Council Plan 2011-12	
Officer responsible for assessment	Date of assessment	New or existing?
Stephanie Goad	31 January 2011	Existing
Defining what is being assessed		
1. Briefly describe the purpose and objectives	The Council Plan is a key element of the Budget and Policy Framework. It is the council's business plan. It has been developed alongside the 2011/12 capital and revenue budget proposals in order to align the Council's business planning processes with the budget setting process. The plan will come into operation on 1 st April 2011.	
2. Who is intended to benefit, and in what way?	Residents of Medway, Members, Council managers and partners.	
3. What outcomes are wanted?	Locally specific objectives are met effectively, within budget and in a timely and coordinated way.	
4. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?	Contribute Members commitment to the Plan Clear outcomes and robust performance management structures in place to monitor the plan Effective communication of the plan.	Detract Uncertain and extreme external economic circumstances Ineffective performance management
5. Who are the main stakeholders?	Residents of Medway, Councillors, Medway Council officers, Local partners, other public sector bodies, voluntary and community sector, local businesses & employers, suppliers/contractors, tourists and other visitors to Medway, Central Government.	
6. Who implements this and who is responsible?	Officers of Medway Council, and (for some parts of the Plan) services provided on our behalf by contractors.	

Assessing impact		
7. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to racial groups?		Services are tasked with reviewing their work through the established Diversity Impact Assessment Process to ensure that it does not have inappropriate differential impact on particular customer groups. They do this by consulting and engaging with their service users and undertaking consultation. The Council has good links with Medway Ethnic Minority Forum and Medway Equality and Human Rights Group.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	Groups such as the LSP, CSP, Equalities and Community Cohesion and other community groups continue to discuss and review Council services on an on going basis and provide feedback. The Citizens' Panel fed into the development of the plan.	
8. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to disability?		Services are tasked with reviewing their work through the established Diversity Impact Assessment Process to ensure that it does not have inappropriate differential impact on particular customer groups. They do this by consulting and engaging with their service users and undertaking consultation.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	Groups such as the LSP, CSP, Equalities and Community Cohesion and other community groups continue to discuss and review Council services on an on going basis and provide feedback. For example the council has good links with the Medway Access Group.	
9. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to gender?		Services are tasked with reviewing their work through the established Diversity Impact Assessment Process to ensure that it does not have inappropriate differential impact on particular customer groups. They do this by consulting and engaging with their service users and undertaking consultation.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	Groups such as the LSP, CSP, Equalities and Community Cohesion and other community groups continue to discuss and review Council services on an on going basis and provide feedback. The Citizens' Panel fed into the development of the plan.	
10. Are there concerns		Services are tasked with reviewing their

<p>there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>sexual orientation</i>?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>work through the established Diversity Impact Assessment Process to ensure that it does not have inappropriate differential impact on particular customer groups. They do this by consulting and engaging with their service users and undertaking consultation</p>
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>The Council is working with Stonewall and using findings of the recent Metro Report to inform its work.</p>	
<p>11. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>religion or belief</i>?</p>	<p>NO</p>	
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>Groups such as the LSP, CSP, Equalities and Community Cohesion and other community groups continually discuss and review Council services on an on going basis and provide feedback. The Citizens' Panel fed into the development of the plan. The Council has good links with Medway Interfaith Forum</p>	
<p>12. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>people's age</i>?</p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>Services are tasked with reviewing their work through the established Diversity Impact Assessment Process to ensure that it does not have inappropriate differential impact on particular customer groups. They do this by consulting and engaging with their service users and undertaking consultation.</p>
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>Groups such as the LSP, CSP, Equalities and Community Cohesion and other community groups continue to discuss and review Council services on an on going basis and provide feedback. The Citizens' Panel fed into the development of the plan. In particular the Council Plan takes account of the views expressed in Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to commission appropriate services. The council user Young Inspectors and Commissioners to inform its work and has good links with groups representing older people.</p>	
<p>13. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>being trans-gendered or transsexual</i>?</p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>Services are tasked with reviewing their work through the established Diversity Impact Assessment Process to ensure that it does not have inappropriate differential impact on particular customer groups. They do this by consulting and engaging with their service users and undertaking consultation.</p>
<p>What evidence exists for</p>	<p>The issue of how to gather evidence in an</p>	

this?	appropriate way regarding any differential impact due to being trans-gendered or trans-sexual is challenging as individuals privacy must be respected. The council will continue to consider this issue when making changes to policies and implementing new services and will use national good practice as guidance.	
14. Are there any <i>other</i> groups that would find it difficult to access/make use of the services in the Plan (e.g. people with caring responsibilities or dependants, looked after children, those with an offending past, or people living in rural areas)?		Looked after children remain a major priority for the Council and their needs are considered in under the Children and Young People priority in the Plan.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		
15. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to <i>multiple discriminations</i> (e.g. disability <u>and</u> age)?		
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	Priorities in this Plan are developed developed by LSP, CSP, Children's Trust and cross-Council working demonstrate that needs of all residents	
Conclusions & recommendation		
16. Could the differential impacts identified in questions 7-15 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact?		The concerns raised above relate only to monitoring of equality.
	NO	
17. Can the adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or another reason?		
	NO	
Recommendation to proceed to a full impact assessment?		
NO	Policy complies with the requirements of the legislation and services are tasked with ensuring that there is evidence to show this is the case.	

Action plan to make Minor modifications		
Outcome	Actions (with date of completion)	Officer responsible

Use information and data analysis to identify how different customers have differing needs and requirements and ways of accessing services	The council is continuing to roll out its monitoring arrangements and to review findings as part of identifying equality objectives for the Council in line with the Equality Act 2010	Stephanie Goad
Any groups of customers who may not be accessing services they need are identified.	Review monitoring information regularly and identify any remedial actions required	All responsible managers Stephanie Goad

Planning ahead: Reminders for the next review		
Date of next review	The Plan is reviewed annually.	
Areas to check at next review (e.g. new census information, new legislation due)	Continue to review resident satisfaction information gathered during the year will be used to inform the review of the plan.	
Is there <i>another</i> group (e.g. new communities) that is relevant and ought to be considered next time?	No. However, as an active member of the Kent Equality Network the Council keeps up to date with new issues that might be arising in the local area and nationally.	
Signed (completing officer/service manager)	Date:	
Abi Cooper	1st Feb	
Signed (service manager/Assistant Director)	Date	
Stephanie Goad	1st Feb	