

Use of Resources Assessment for 2008/09 – Action Plan for Areas for Improvement

The Use of Resources Assessment is a key part of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Our Use of Resources Assessment for 2008/09 was carried out in March and April and initial feedback on it was provided by our auditors, Grant Thornton, at the end of June. Our auditors identified 48 Areas for Improvement which have been condensed into 29 actions in this Action Plan.

The actions have been split into 14 themes:

- A. The use of Financial and Performance Information in Decision Making
- B. The link between Corporate Priorities and Outcomes
- C. Risk Management
- D. Partnerships
- E. Fraud
- F. Data Quality
- G. Procurement
- H. Equalities
- I. Systems Thinking Reviews
- J. Internal Audit
- K. Finance
- L. Sickness Absence
- M. Members' Development
- N. Shared Services

A four-point scale from 1 to 4 is used for this assessment. Actions at Level 2, performs adequately, are identified in the Action Plan by dark shading in the action number column and those at Level 3, performs well, are not shaded. We will address the actions at Level 2 whilst striving to achieve Level 3 status for the other actions. Progress with the Action Plan has started because we have been advised that our Use of Resources Assessment for 2009/10 may be carried out as early as November/December 2009. The Action Plan was reviewed and updated by Lead Officers last month so the comments in the last column are up-to-date as at 20 October 2009.

No.	Action	Start date	End date	Lead Officer	Comments
Theme A: The use of Financial and Performance Information in Decision Making					
1.	Consider examples of how other authorities approach the use of unit costs and activity-based costing and, if appropriate, introduce such an approach.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Simon Davey	We will need to ensure that any approach to be introduced does not distract from our Systems Thinking principles.
2.	<p>a) Consider alternative options as part of the capital appraisal decision making process.</p> <p>b) Consider wider information, for instance the wider social and environmental impact of options, than just cost and value when making decisions on value for money, capital schemes and revenue spending. This needs to be clearly identified in the decision making process.</p>	Sept 2009	April 2010	Simon Davey	<p>There are no longer any large enough capital schemes for options appraisals.</p> <p>The need for appraisals is being built into the Financial Strategy for 2010 onwards which the Executive Board will be asked to adopt in November 2009. A method of appraisals needs to be developed for the start of 2010/11 unless any schemes come forward beforehand.</p>
3.	Financial and performance information must be used by members in decision making and to drive the strategic priorities.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Simon Davey/Bob Darbourne	Reports should be drafted seeking decisions like the budget monitoring report to Executive Board in September which is proposing positive actions for members to consider.
4.	Financial and performance information for monitoring should be reported to the Executive Board at the same time to provide an integrated view of value for money.	On-going	April 2010	Simon Davey/Bob Darbourne	<p>The quarterly monitoring of the Corporate Strategy has been reintroduced for 2009/10. This will include some high level Budget Monitoring that requires the Budget to be realigned to the Corporate Strategy's Priorities.</p> <p>A working group will develop more robust</p>

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					arrangements for the joint monitoring of financial and performance information for 2010/11. (See also actions 7 and 8.)
5.	Demonstrate the shifting of resources from low priority areas to high priority areas at the service level where the budget available cannot cover all requested spend.	On-going	April 2010	Simon Davey	Budget monitoring and review by members is undertaken and the Leader's Service Transformation Group (LSTG) is likely to shift resources. The shifting of resources will be explicitly set out in the Budget for 2010/11.
6.	a) Demonstrate that that budget has been met as a result of financial planning. b) Reinvest the £12m general reserve accumulated in previous years, to provide additional services rather using it as a safety net.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Simon Davey	The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will continue but the use of the general reserve in 2009/10 was an exception.
Theme B: The link between Corporate Priorities and Outcomes					
7.	Strengthen the MTFP's links with the Corporate Strategy, Service Plans and Service Budgets to demonstrate how the MTFP delivers the strategic objectives.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Simon Davey/Bob Darbourne	We need to demonstrate spend is vired to reflect priorities and the outcome of the LSTG is an opportunity to do this. A working group will develop more robust arrangements for strengthening these links for 2010/11. (See also actions 4 and 8.)
8.	a) Make arrangements to monitor and measure performance outcomes against the corporate priorities more robust, particularly where more than one service is responsible for the delivery of a corporate priority. b) Consider introducing a separate delivery	On-going	April 2010	Bob Darbourne	a) The template for Service Plans for 2010/13 makes their link to the Corporate Strategy's Priorities clearer. b) A working group will consider introducing a separate delivery plan for 2010/11. (See also

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	plan to ensure priorities will be met.				actions 4 and 7.)
Theme C: Risk Management					
9.	Update the corporate risk register (CRR) so that it is 'fit for purpose'.	On-going	On-going	SMT/Heads/Managers/Tanith Cox	The new CRR is now up and running and fully populated. It will be the subject of regular review and update. Review dates and email reminders have been set up within the system to ensure Directors and Heads are reminded to update when necessary.
10.	Ensure the active use of the CRR and service risk registers, in particular the monitoring of service risks.	On-going	April 2010	SMT/Heads/Managers/Tanith Cox	Ongoing as stated above.
11.	Update and re-enter significant partnerships risks from the old CRR system into the new CRR system	Sept 2009	April 2010	Peter Jeffs/Tanith Cox	A new policy has been adopted by SMT. The strategic risk element of the CRR contains an over-arching strategic risk relating to the continuity of contractors. Street Scene makes specific mention of the Refuse and Recycling contract and Leisure East Devon.
12.	Embed partnership risk management so it is an integral part of the Council's own risk management.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Peter Jeffs/Tanith Cox	See above.
Theme D: Partnerships					
13.	Introduce a robust central register of partnership working to: a) Show the resources (other than	Sept 2009	April 2010	Peter Jeffs	A new policy has been adopted by SMT.

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	<p>financial) invested in partnerships.</p> <p>b) Demonstrate integration with partners to deliver priorities.</p> <p>c) Record all network arrangements (outside bodies).</p>				
Theme E: Fraud					
14.	Clarify the role of Internal Audit in fraud investigations.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Diccon Pearse	In response to the recently published Audit Commission report 'Protecting the Public Purse' the Council's governance and counter-fraud arrangements are to be reviewed.
15.	Embed a zero tolerance approach to fraud and wrongdoing.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Diccon Pearse	See above.
16.	Review counter fraud arrangements and performance against professional guidance, best practice and findings of own reviews.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Diccon Pearse	See above.
Theme F: Data Quality					
17.	<p>As a result of Internal Audit's PI audit:</p> <p>a) Supply all PI responsible officers with information on where to obtain PI definition and reporting updates.</p> <p>b) The responsible officers will then need to monitor whether their own PI requirements are amended during the year.</p> <p>c) Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the responsible officer and the sign-off officer.</p>	On-going	April 2010	Tanith Cox/Tessa Ryall	Internal Audit's PI audit report which includes these actions, was considered by the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee and SMT in September 2009.

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18.	Gain robust assurance from partners that the processes which supply information to the Council through partnership arrangements are secure.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Chris Powell	This action is already on the Data Quality Action Plan.
19.	Specify and monitor the standards for the quality of data the Council shares or relies on internally and externally.	Sept 2009	April 2010	Chris Powell	We are in the process of developing an overall Information Management Strategy which will encompass Data Quality both internally and externally. This is reliant on resources being available from within ICT.
Theme G: Procurement					
20.	<p>Accelerate progress with the initial positive action taken on procurement by:</p> <p>a) Embedding involvement of the wider community in the procurement of services.</p> <p>b) Increasing the use of technology in procurement.</p>	On-going	April 2010	Colin Slater, Procurement Officer	<p>In early stages of development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intranet procurement portal – procurement forms, procedures, guidelines. • Internet procurement pages e.g. our procurement strategy, doing business with EDDC/how to bid for work. • Devon Tenders/ProContract – online system for supplier registration, advertising of tenders. • Contracts Register – register of current contracts (mostly over £10,000 total value). <p>Although the above will be in place by April 2010, they will be subject to continuous development. In the longer term we will be introducing an e-procurement system and wider use of Purchasing Cards.</p> <p>We continue to collaborate with other councils on joint procurement activities, and with organisations such as the HCA in order to utilise existing (e.g. OJEU compliant) framework agreements. We will consider how to share procurement expertise and</p>

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					buying power with town and parish councils.
Theme H: Equalities					
21.	Achieve level 2 of the Equality Standards.	On-going	March 2010	Peter Jeffs	These standards no longer exist and have been replaced by a new framework. A fixed-term Diversity Officer has been taken on for one year with Mid Devon District Council to reach the next level of the new standard.
22.	Achieve level 3 of the Equality Standards	April 2010	March 2011	Peter Jeffs	
Theme I: Systems Thinking Reviews					
23.	Develop a broad timetable/programme for Systems Thinking Reviews after the conclusion of the LSTG.	Oct 2009	Dec 2009	Denise Lyon	We are currently awaiting the final LSTG report, but work is in place to make sure all Heads of Service have identified their 'purpose' and measures between now and Christmas. Plans are also in place to work in depth with StreetScene in the third quarter.
Theme J: Internal Audit					
24.	Implement the Action Plan to improve the effectiveness of the Internal Audit service.	On-going	April 2010	Diccon Pearse	The progress made in delivering the issues raised within the Action Plan will be reported to the December Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.
Theme K: Finance					
25.	Upgrade the Reserves Policy in line with Executive Board resolution of 10 June 2009.	On-going	June 2010	Simon Davey	This will be reflected in the 2010/11 budget setting reports and the Policy will be revised when the outturn position is known for 2009/10 (June report to Executive Board).
26.	Improve linkages between the budget,	Sept	June	Simon Davey	The budget and outturn are prepared on a different

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	outturn and final accounts to aid understanding.	2009	2010		basis to the accounts. Finance staff have identified that members' understanding of reconciling items could be improved. 2008/09 report was improved and further refinement will be made when the 2009/10 Accounts are presented.
Theme L: Sickness Absence					
27.	Continue action to reduce the average number of days lost per staff due to sickness absence.	On-going	April 2010	Karen Jenkins	A Quarterly Absence Monitoring Report to the Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee commenced in September 2009.
Theme M: Members' Development					
28.	Maintain progress in the proactive areas of members' development.	On-going	April 2010	Diana Vernon	The Member Development Working Group meets regularly to discuss member development issues including the annual training plan, progress in respect of the Member Development Charter and issues which may be acting as a barrier to Councillors in carrying out their roles. The Charter framework for Member Development is being used as a useful tool to help embed training and development within the Council. The initiative is Member-led. The Working Group recommended that a Member Champion for Member Development be appointed and that appointment was made at the Annual Council meeting in May 2009. The Champion now works closely with the Portfolio Holder – Resources and the Democratic Services team to promote and progress member development

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					for the benefit of the Council and its services.
Theme N: Shared Services					
29.	Accelerate work on shared services and joint workforce planning to deliver benefits such as reducing costs, more integrated services and reduced unproductive competition between public sector bodies for scarce resource.	On-going	April 2010	Diccon Pearce	Work on shared services is ongoing and may be more actively pursued as a result of the LSTG.