

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **8 June 2004**

By: **Director of Law and Performance Management**

Title of report: **Council Plan 2003-04 : end of year monitoring report.**

Purpose of report: **To provide Cabinet with a summary of performance against the Council Plan for 2003-04.**

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to consider the monitoring reports for 2003/04, noting particularly the achievements in paragraph 1.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

1.0 Council Plan Achievements

- 1.1 Following the "Weak" CPA judgement in December 2002, the Council put in place a rigorous Improvement Plan and was keen to see its provisions implemented as quickly as possible, recognising that it can take a good deal of time to achieve improvements in some areas. Our improvement has been quicker than even we envisaged and has been clearly demonstrated by four things:-
- the independent judgement of external inspectors that showed we were the most improved Social Services authority in the country;
 - the independent assessment by the Audit Commission that showed overall we were one of only two councils in the country to improve our overall CPA grading by two grades making us, in that sense, the most improved County Council overall in the Country;
 - the "independent" evidence from the staff survey that they believe we are genuinely improving both as an employer and in terms of the delivery of the public services for which we are responsible; and finally and most importantly
 - the judgement of the people that really matter, the public, in the satisfaction survey.
- 1.2 The Council is delighted with the latest User Satisfaction Survey results that show 76% of East Sussex residents are satisfied overall with the services provided by the County Council. This represents a significant improvement on the 2000/01 top quartile result (for Counties) of 67% satisfied, particularly when other authorities have seen deterioration in satisfaction with their services. Residents have recognised the improvements to services that were confirmed with the "Good" rating in the 2003/04 refresh of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- 1.3 The new County Council website was launched providing a wider range of information on the services provided by the County Council and greater focus on engaging residents in the consultation process. The Community Strategy for East Sussex was published and the East Sussex Strategic Partnership website was launched.
- 1.4 The Council exceeded its e-government target, ensuring that 73% of its services were available electronically by 31 March. We have exceeded our broadband targets with 26 exchanges now activated and 11 in build. BT Wholesale have set trigger levels for all East Sussex exchanges except Isfield. A partnership with BT has been signed agreeing joint activity to promote take-up of broadband across East Sussex. All this places the Council firmly in the vanguard of South East authorities. The CBOSS contract, which is a crucial part of our modernisation agenda, was awarded to ITNET in November. The CBOSS blueprint has now been signed off and the managed services contract was successfully transferred from Fujitsu / Liberata to ITNET.
- 1.5 The Council was awarded the Corporate Investors in People standard following assessment in March 2004. The staff survey showed positive outcomes with improved results in relation to learning and development and job satisfaction. After raising the awareness of staff about the new Disability Discrimination Act definition of disability, 5.11% have declared a disability against 1.65% last year. Our workforce has become more representative of our local population with 2.14% from minority ethnic communities compared to 2.45% of our local population and compared to 1.84% last year. The pilot Fast Track Scheme for ESCC managers has been cited by Employers

Organisation for Local Government as good practice in leadership development. A cross-departmental team of managers representing the Council won first place in the annual national Local Government Chronicle Management Challenge competition and were also victorious as first representatives of the U.K. in the Australasian Management Challenge event.

- 1.6 The Council supported the successful development of the Hastings Broadband Experience Centre and a Knowledge Management Initiative to be partly delivered through the newly-opened University Centre, Hastings. Rural Regeneration Fund grants of £0.9m have helped lever in seven times that amount of inward investment in the rural economy, and a further £0.6m in Global Grants was successfully bid for to aid the unemployed back into work. East Sussex Area Investment Framework (AIF), is unique in that East Sussex is the only county in the South East that has 100% coverage from SEEDA-funded AIFs, and will draw in £1.5m for 2004/05 to address key issues in both the rural and coastal economies. INTERREG European Programme grants of £5.4m have been secured for partners to support a variety of joint Anglo-French projects. Unemployment rates have dropped from an estimate of 5.4% in 1996 to 2.0% in April 2004.
- 1.7 The latest Social Services star ratings show East Sussex is the most improved social services authority in England. The target for Older People receiving intensive home care was met with an 11% increase in the numbers of people receiving intensive home care. The numbers of delayed discharges in acute hospital beds that are the responsibility of Social Services have been significantly reduced from 55 people in March 2003 to 28 people in March 2004 (although pressures continue in this area). A Joint Workforce Plan has been agreed with Health partners. Children's Social Services received the equivalent of a three-star rating from the SSI which placed the service in the top 15% in England. In 2003, Social Services received the highest possible grade from the "Climbié Audit", a self audit of the County Council's services to Children in Need following the sad death of Victoria Climbié.
- 1.8 Education in East Sussex is improving at a rate faster than the national average with the best ever GCSE results for the County and a pattern of improvement at all key stages. Agreement was reached to introduce a standard school year made up of six terms that are more equal in length. This aims to raise standards in the classroom and help to make school holiday dates more predictable for parents. Attendance in secondary schools has exceeded targets with an absence rate of 8.4%, a considerable reduction from the previous year. The improvement is double that of all the authority's statistical neighbours (except West Sussex) and also the national rate.
- 1.9 The Council is leading the way nationally with a new system to improve provision for vulnerable groups of children. The Information Referral and Tracking (IRT) Index system is the first of its kind in the country. There is considerable interest in the East Sussex IRT model (both the Index and the general approach) and it appears likely to influence significantly a national scheme. The Education & Libraries Department have been developing and piloting a brand new module for Performance Plus linked to Ofsted self evaluation assessments. The developmental work is leading edge and being adopted by other LEAs. Electronic transactions with schools have increased with 100% of communications with schools (for which it is appropriate to use electronic channels) taking place through the Virtual School Bag, Ezone or secure data transfer. 132 schools (68%) now have Broadband connections exceeding the target of 65%.
- 1.10 To help meet the Public Library Standards, £150,000 was added to the book fund base budget. This enabled the Council to purchase additional resources (229 items per 1,000 population) and exceed the target of 216 items set by the Department of Culture Media & Sport. The target for meeting library standards was also exceeded with 18 of the standards met against a target of 16. The LearnDirect Centre continues to increase learners with an average of 50 learners per month.
- 1.11 Departmental financial outturns for 2003/04 are expected to be within agreed tolerances of budget allocation. This success has been supported by the roll out of the financial excellence agenda which has focussed particularly on improved budget management procedures, the roll out of budget management training across the Council and improved grant claim processes. The proportion of invoices paid promptly by the Council has risen significantly from 79% in 2002/03 to 90% in 2003/04. The 4/4 ratings for financial performance and internal audit were maintained within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) refresh, and this was reinforced by the conclusions set out in the District Auditor's Audit and Inspection Annual Letter. Looking forward, the Council has been able to set a low Council Tax increase of 5.2% for 2004/05 despite having received the lowest percentage increase in grant of any County Council in the country.

- 1.12 The Council has more than doubled the percentage of buildings accessible to users with a disability to 18.24% and exceeded its disposal target of £5.6m, finally achieving £7.426m. This provides additional funds to support our ongoing capital strategy and a new Corporate Building Maintenance Policy. Prioritised repairs have been completed in 2003/04 and we have reversed the trend of Planned/Reactive Maintenance to be within the Audit Commission's recommended split of 70% Planned and 30% Reactive. The completion of key elements of the 2003/04 office rationalisation programme including moves of Members and staff to the County Hall campus and the opening of the new Council Chamber has brought both financial savings and an improved working environment, as well as the advent of web casting of Council meetings.
- 1.13 Very good progress has been made by East Sussex County Council in partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council on the implementation of the Integrated Waste Services contract with the supplier, Onyx. Recycling activities continue to increase with nearly 22% of the county's total household waste being either recycled or composted. The increase reflects the improvements that have been made to Household Waste Recycling Sites.
- 1.14 The County Council received its highest ever transport settlement approaching £12m. During the past year we have exceeded our Traffic Safety target; 11 schools introduced School Travel Plans and in Hastings 8 primary schools have commenced child pedestrian training. These schemes help to meet the Government's national target to reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured. To make public transport more accessible to people with disabilities and other mobility impairments 67 low floor buses are running on the East Sussex network, compared to 39 in 2001/02. Funding for a further 6 new accessible buses has been secured for Westham, Pevensey and Eastbourne from the successful Rural Bus Challenge Bid.

2.0 Performance against Key Service Targets (Appendix 1)

- 2.1 The vast majority of targets were fully achieved by March 2004 (265 out of 305 performance measures). It is important to note that many of these targets were achieved either within the timescale or often quicker than planned, or in excess of the planned target. Much credit should go to colleagues who have achieved, or exceeded, their original performance measures. 20 targets were legitimately amended during the year to reflect changing circumstances usually outside the County Council's control.
- 2.2 In accordance with the revised more rigorous process, all targets that have not been achieved at the year end are scored Red and are listed in the exception report (Appendix 1). Most of the red targets were achieved in part, many almost completely. Over 80% of the target was delivered against 22 of the red measures. A summary of performance against original target as well as any amended ones is set out in Appendix 1. Of the 40 measures scored 'red' during the year:-
- 23 were unachieved, many due to very stretching national targets;
 - 12 were the result of bid delays or protracted dealings with partners;
 - 4 were the result of slippage of timescales; and
 - 1 was because a priority changed.
- 2.3 The Cabinet will wish to consider what actions they want to take with each of the targets that have not been achieved. It has been our practice in previous years to monitor these targets in the first six months of the following year. Lead members may wish to request detailed action plans and key milestones for some targets or add them to the 2004/05 Council Plan.

3.0 PSA targets update (Please see Appendix 2)

4.0 Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI)

- 4.1 A report on all 2003/04 BVPI outturns will be submitted at the Cabinet briefing meeting on 15 June as part of the final Council Plan 2004/05 update.

Andrew Ogden - Director of Law and Performance Management