



CABINET

10 July 2013

Subject Heading:

Council Effectiveness Member Project

Cabinet Member:

Cllr Geoff Starns

CMT Lead:

Cynthia Griffin

Report Author and contact details:

Claire Thompson, Corporate Policy and
Community Manager,
Claire.thompson@havering.gov.uk

01708 431003

Policy context:

This project was created to oversee a range of work taking place to improve performance corporately

Financial summary:

This project was delivered within existing resources.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

When should this matter be reviewed?

N/A

Reviewing OSC:

Value

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input type="checkbox"/>
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

At the beginning of this term, ten Strategic Administration Projects were established to help deliver services more effectively and in new ways. The Projects were each to be driven by a Member of the Cabinet, working with a select team of officers, representing a diverse variety of disciplines within the Council.

The projects were:

**Council Effectiveness
Think Family
Open Government
Community Action
Harold Hill Ambitions**

**Neighbourhood Responsibility
Civic Pride
Future Financing
Rainham Compass
Romford Regeneration**

In the last year of this Administration, each Project will be reporting back to Cabinet, to note the achievements attained and the progress made.

The **Council Effectiveness** project has now been completed.

The project:

- **Ensured local voices were heard**, through a range of very successful public surveys and consultation exercises involving over 12,000 local people
- **Resulted in a very positive LGA Peer Assessment** which said the Council offers good value for money, is well run and has a pragmatic approach to doing 'what works'
- **Embedded the Living Ambition vision** in a much-improved strategic plan to improve service delivery, develop the skills of Council staff and deliver value for money
- **Allowed the Council to target communications, consultation and services** at the right customers, in the most appropriate way

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet note the outcomes delivered by the Council Effectiveness project.

REPORT DETAIL

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The 'Council Effectiveness' project was initiated in May 2011 and was completed in December 2012.
- 1.2 The project looked at a broad range of issues to do with how well the Council is run, and how we ensure that we respond to local people's views.
- 1.3 Some key highlights of this project included the hugely successful *Your Council Your Say* survey, the Spring Clean campaign and a glowing report

from the Local Government Association on how well the Council was managing to transform public services in challenging financial times.

2. OUTCOMES FROM THE PROJECT

2.1 Listening and Responding to Local Concerns

2.1.1 In 2011, the Council launched a brand new survey *Your Council Your Say*, to seek the opinions of local people about the Borough and Council services, as well as defining residents' priorities for Havering.

2.1.2 The survey was a huge success. Distributed with the Council magazine *Living in Havering* and also available in public buildings and online, the survey was completed by more than 11,761 local people.

2.1.3 The results showed that 75% of residents were satisfied with life in the Borough and also provided some very positive feedback on key Council services (waste collection 85% satisfied, libraries 82% satisfied).

2.1.4 The survey also highlighted that key priorities for local people were road and pavement repairs, congestion, activities for teenagers and clean streets.

2.2 The Cleaner Havering Campaign

2.2.1 With this in mind, the following year we followed up in 2012 with a survey aimed at specifically tackling issues around cleanliness of the public realm asking residents what they thought of local streets, parks and town centres. Over 7,549 residents took part in the *Spring Clean* survey, which showed that over three quarters of residents were satisfied with the cleanliness of their local area, and gave the Council a huge amount of information that was summarised in the final report about where resources most needed to be targeted in future.

2.2.2 Following the survey, a new campaign was launched to address local issues, called The Cleaner Havering campaign, for which £250,000 was set aside from the council's budget to directly respond to local people's concerns. Using the results of the survey, the campaign has resulted in 100 new bins being installed across the Borough, improved street lighting following requests by local people, installed new benches and trees and launched campaigns to encourage local groups to clean up their neighbourhoods, tackle dog fouling and discourage littering.

2.2.3 We also asked residents to tell us if they would like to get involved in volunteering in their local area. Hundreds of people said yes, and as a result a number of community clean-ups have been held at various locations in the borough, with support from Streetcare (who provide the clean-up equipment) and HAVCO (who are helping to co-ordinate the volunteers).

2.2.4 These included:

- A community clean up in Elm Park attended by Councillors Michael White and Barry Tebbutt, organised by the Elm Park Regeneration Partnership volunteers, which removed over 300 bags (2 tonnes) of rubbish
- Many more community clean-ups held across the borough, including: Tweedway Hall Residents Association; Friends of Bedford Park; Briar Road Action Group; Friends of Raphael & Lodge Farm Park; Friends of Cotton Park; and the Girls Brigade seniors have also taken place, with equipment provided by the Council. Many more clean-up events are planned throughout this year.
- The success of these clean-up initiatives demonstrate the success of the Cleaner Havering Campaign in galvanising the enthusiasm of local people to get involved and make a difference in their local communities.

2.2.5 Following on from the huge success of these engagement campaigns, a new *Your Council Your Say* survey has been carried out in 2013, with the results pending.

2.3 External Assessment – LGA Peer Challenge

2.3.1 The Council underwent a ‘peer challenge’ review from the Local Government Association at the end of October 2012 to test how well it had responded to the challenges of the difficult economic climate.

2.3.2 Over a four day period, a panel of industry experts, including a Council Leader, a Chief Executive and other senior local government officers, assessed the Council’s performance against a range of tough criteria.

Their findings were extremely positive. Some notable achievements included:

“The London Borough of Havering has made significant progress in recent years and the Council is rightly proud of what has been achieved.”

“What has been delivered has resulted in a modernised and forward looking authority moving towards streamlined customer services.”

“The implementation of the transformation initiatives is seen to have been very well managed.”

“The progress that has been made has not come about by chance. In addition to sheer hard work on the part of elected members, officers and partner organisations”

“The Administration places major importance on ‘what works’ - with value being attached to the outcomes achieved rather than how something is

delivered. This is reflected in the mixed economy of service provision and the Authority's willingness to partner with other councils either to work together or to have services provided by them on behalf of the Council."

"The level of Council expenditure per head of population across the vast majority of services is amongst the lowest when compared with councils of a similar nature and the performance of services is generally good to excellent."

"Havering is an Authority that demonstrates a strategic and calm approach to the challenges it faces."

2.4 Embedding *Living Ambition*

2.4.1 The LGA review team also praised the work we have done within the organisation to embed the 'Living Ambition' vision, the long-term vision for the future of the borough, by ensuring that all our corporate strategies and plans are based around this and the five *Living Ambition* Goals:

- Individuals
- Towns and communities
- Environment
- Learning
- Value

2.4.2 The Corporate Plan is at the centre of the Council's performance management framework and sets out the priority areas of work over the coming year. It is refreshed annually in time for the start of the new financial year, at the same time as budget discussions are taking place to improve linkages with business and financial planning.

2.4.3 The Corporate Plan was also produced as a 'plan on a page', to help demonstrate the 'golden thread' from the Living Ambition down to the priority projects and key performance indicators used to measure improvements in outcomes. The Plan on the Page, refreshed for 2013/14, is attached as a background paper.

2.4.4 At the same time, and in conjunction with this work, the Council's performance review process was re-launched, making it much clearer to demonstrate the 'golden thread' of performance management running throughout the organisation that links the Living Ambition with the corporate plan, service plans and individual staff appraisals.

2.4.5 Following the abolition of the requirement to set targets against the National Indicators set in 2010, a new suite of Performance Indicators - that were felt to be more meaningful to Havering - was developed with Cabinet members, so that we are now only measuring what really matters to Members and which reflect the priorities of local people.

2.4.6 A performance report is now brought to Cabinet every quarter, where it is scrutinised by Members. Each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees are then able to go through performance in their respective areas and scrutinise this information in more detail.

2.5 Targeting communications and services to improve satisfaction

2.5.1 The Council has made use of customer insight more effectively, to enable it to target the right services to those who need them, in a more efficient way. It is also working to improve the customer experience, as well as ensuring improved access to council services for people with disabilities or other protected characteristics.

2.5.2 The council has developed, in conjunction with Experian plc, a customer profiling tool which allows it to segment the population and target more effectively council services, consultation and other communication methods. We have had successes this year in targeting energy efficiency grants to those residents who are eligible for them, resulting in approximately £300,000 of grants for free insulation and new heating systems being targeted at only eligible people.

2.5.3 The Council has also used customer insight to target engagement and consultation exercises, as well as volunteering campaigns, resulting in a much greater take-up of volunteering than in previous years, such as the community clean ups.

2.5.4 We are also targeting communications more effectively, by asking residents whether they'd prefer to receive information by email or in hard copy. Over 3000 residents now receive a monthly e-bulletin by email from the Council informing them about what's happening in their local area and giving them the opportunity to take part in consultations.

2.5.5 As part of the customer services transformation project, with the use of better technology, the Council is now more able to direct customers to its improved website, enabling customers to self-serve wherever possible using online service requests and application forms, such as benefit applications. This makes it possible to channel the Council's resources more effectively, reduce 'avoidable' contact – which is good for both customers and the Council - and provide a better service to vulnerable customers who require more help from staff, and for those without access to the internet.

2.5.6 Staff training is designed to ensure that the Council provides the best possible service to customers, acting as ambassadors for the Council. Customer satisfaction surveys are used to gain valuable customer feedback and to identify the areas where we do well and areas that can be improved. Our current performance is in the region of 85% customer satisfaction achieved through the contact centre.

2.5.7 The Council is committed to ensuring equality and diversity in service provision and as an employer. A new single equality scheme is being produced, which sets out everything the Council will be doing as part of its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, including promoting equality and positive community relations in the community, as well as being a fair employer. One example of this type of activity is a planned focus group carried out by the Corporate Policy and Community section with residents who are deaf, to help make improvements for people who are deaf and need to access Council services.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 A huge amount of activity has taken place over the last eighteen months as part of the Council effectiveness project, and will continue to be rolled out. A number of significant outcomes have been generated as a result of this project , including:

- The Cleaner Havering campaign was launched, resulting in £250,000 of improvements based on what local people told us they wanted such as new park bins, benches, better street lighting, responsible dog campaigns and clean-ups.
- An extremely positive independent assessment of how well the council is run which stated that the Council offers very good value for money services and has a “calm and strategic” approach to delivering good quality services.
- An improved corporate plan and service planning framework based around the *Living Ambition* that now forms part of the staff appraisal process.
- An improved performance management reporting process, offering more opportunity for public and Member scrutiny and challenge
- Improved use of customer insight, allowing the Council to target communications, consultation and services at the right customers, in the most appropriate way, including 3000 people who now receive communications electronically
- Better training for staff in customer services to be able to offer even better service to customers.

3.2 All the improvements which this project has put in place will continue to be built upon over the coming year.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

This report is being brought to cabinet to provide Members with an overview of what the Council Effectiveness Member project delivered between 2011 and 2012.

Other options considered:

N/A

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

This project was delivered using existing resources. The Peer Challenge was provided free of charge by the Local Government Association. The project and report raise no specific financial issues.

Legal implications and risks:

There are no legal implications or risks arising from this report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no HR implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

This Member Project directly aims to address the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty to minimise barriers to accessing public services, for all customers, but particularly those with 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The Council has put in place rigorous processes to assess for equality impact affecting all new policies, procedures, strategies, and other major changes to services.

The Council is committed to engaging with customers from all protected characteristics to help break down any hidden barriers to accessing council services and improve access to public services for all.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Corporate Plan 2013/14 can be accessed at:

<http://www.havering.gov.uk/Documents/Corporate%20Plan%20on%20a%20Page%202013-14.pdf>

Havering's LGA Peer challenge report can be accessed at:

<http://democracy.havering.gov.uk/documents/g2239/public%20reports%20pack%2023rd-jan-2013%2019.30%20cabinet.pdf?t=10>

Cabinet, 10 July 2013

The spring Clean survey can be accessed at:

<http://www.haveringdata.net/research/library.htm>