



# Corporate Plan 2003 - 2008

## Update 2004: Building on Success

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# Corporate Plan 2003 -2008

## Update 2004: Building on Success

### Foreword

This first annual update of the Council's five-year Corporate Plan is subtitled: 'Building on Success'. This reflects a mood of optimism around the Council that our approach to improving the services that we offer to the public of West Berkshire is working well.

We base this view on what others say about us as a range of government auditors, a major Peer Review exercise by the IDeA, and the public of West Berkshire, all echo the same theme that West Berkshire is an improving council.

The last year has seen the Council focus ever more closely on the things that really matter. While constrained financial resources will always be a feature of the Council, our response has been to concentrate our energy on key priorities, and to work with others in a range of partnerships to deliver improvements. We are 'good at partnership' (according to the IDeA Peer Review) and, through innovative links with private, public and voluntary sector groups, we have sought to demonstrate leadership and enthusiasm for the communities we serve. The jointly developed Community Plan articulates our approach with partners and is key document that sets the context for the Council.

The first year of the Corporate Plan has also seen changes in the way we do business, in the light of lessons we have learnt. Delivering value for money, engaging with partners and making improvements to services to the public, require the whole Council to be clear about what is important. The Corporate Plan itself has been important in providing focus and it has quickly become embedded in the culture of the organisation; but equally as important is that Members, the public, partners and staff have the confidence to challenge, to contribute and to change the way we work.

This year we have developed a Medium Term Financial Strategy in parallel with the Corporate Plan and together the two provide a coherent and integrated framework for delivering our goals. As an organisation with a 'can do' culture, learning for itself and with others, we believe that the challenge now is to build on our success.

We hope you see for yourself the evidence of our progress and our commitment for the future to make a real difference and to improve the quality of life of all those who live in or visit West Berkshire.

Dr. Royce Longton  
Leader

Jim Graham  
Chief Executive

## Summary

The 'refresh' of the Corporate Plan has reviewed our progress in the last year and considered the lessons that we have learnt. It also looks forward to the objectives the Council is working towards and the improvements in services that the Council will deliver for the people of West Berkshire.

The Corporate Plan is shaped by many factors, local and national, and is at the heart of the way the Council does business. It sets the agenda for service delivery and resource allocation.

The key messages of the Corporate Plan 'refresh' are

- The Council needs to focus effectively to ensure that money and other resources are spent on priority areas and moved away from lower priorities.
- The focus of Council activity is on outcomes for the public and value for money.

To achieve greater focus the Council is highlighting in the Corporate Plan 'refresh' four Strategic Development Priorities and three Cross Cutting Strategic Themes as follows:

<b>Strategic Development Priorities</b>
Promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities - S3
Achieving better and fairer outcomes for children and young people by delivering high quality integrated services through partnership - S4
Promoting Safer Communities - S7
Enhancing the sustainability of the West Berkshire Community and preserving the local environment - S9

<b>Cross Cutting Strategic Themes</b>
Providing stronger community leadership - S1
Building capacity through partnership and innovation - D2
Customer focus - D3

These will shape resource allocation through budget setting in the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy as well as shaping service planning in all areas of the Council.

### Key Projects

Attached to the Corporate Plan 'refresh' are a list of "Key Projects" which demonstrate the important shorter term deliverables the Council will be concentrating on in order to achieve its objectives.

The Corporate Plan 'refresh' has a clearer articulation of the Council's priorities coupled with a simplified list of deliverables in Key Projects. When read in conjunction with the Medium Term Financial Strategy the Corporate Plan provides a strong framework for ensuring we deliver value for money services to the public and match resources to the right priorities.

## Introduction

The Council's five-year Corporate Plan 2005-2008 was developed last year to take the organisation forward and to provide the focus for all the Council's improvement planning. The plan has been influenced by what the public, partners, government and many others have said about us.

The Corporate Plan has worked well in its first year and has quickly become embedded in the way the Council does business, and now drives service and financial planning for the whole organisation.

The Council is confident in the way it developed the five-year plan and seeks to use this first annual update to refine and 'refresh' the Corporate Plan so that it remains focussed on what is important.

Central to this process of 'refresh' are five key principles:

- The 'refresh' needs to summarise and celebrate achievements and capture the lessons from success and from problems. Learning and adapting are key to our approach.
- The Corporate Plan is a five-year plan that is embedded in the Council's approach and was developed with wide consultation and involvement. It is important that the 'refresh' maintains the momentum and credibility of the plan by providing a disciplined framework for achieving our priorities. In developing the refreshed action plans it has been important to ensure that opportunities for Members, staff, partners and service users to challenge and comment on our approach were made available.
- The Council recognises that the Corporate Plan has to be a 'living document' if it is to remain relevant to managing the Authority. We have learnt a lot since the launch of the Corporate Plan and, in addition, new factors need to influence the shape of the Corporate Plan for next year and beyond. The 'refresh' will outline changes and provide an audit trail for their implementation.
- There has been election since the original Corporate Plan and a continuing Liberal Democrat administration will, in setting the direction for the Council, use the 'refresh' to complement and build upon previous work. The 'refresh' will cover achievements, strategic focus, learning and delivery, and an updated action plan as well as describing the new administration's agenda for action. It will not duplicate or repeat the context set out in the original plan. This reflects our concern to produce lean, focussed and pragmatic planning documents.
- The updated Corporate Plan will guide and shape the Council's use of resources through budget setting, service planning and by integrating closely with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The CPA update in 2003 increased our score for 'use of resources' to the maximum possible, reflecting our strength in priority and policy-led use of resources.

## Achievements

The success of the Corporate Plan is measured against the improvements to the service we provide the public of West Berkshire. A report of key achievements against the Corporate Plan action plan together with lessons learnt during the last year is included below..

<b>Key headline achievements for the public across the Council</b>	
<b>S1 Providing strong community leadership</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Stronger alignment between the Community Plan and the Corporate Plan.</li> <li>◆ Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Action Groups have made progress. Seed corn funding identified through the LSP.</li> <li>◆ Supporting the development and implementation of Parish Plans with seven completed to date and a further 30 under development throughout the district.</li> <li>◆ Developing our approach to scrutiny to focus it on strategic priorities, agreeing protocols and producing a handy guide to make its operation more efficient.</li> <li>◆ Review of Area Forums and changes to reflect local needs and requirements</li> <li>◆ Communications – Launch of the LSP magazine</li> <li>◆ Greater co-ordination and planning of consultation activities. Forward planning now in place along with a toolkit to support the development of consultation activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A lot of time was needed to scope this large area of activity and the key lesson is that to make progress it must be scoped into manageable chunks</li> <li>◆ It is crucial for Members to be involved in Community Leadership.</li> <li>◆ More simple innovative ways of engaging users, stakeholders and communities are needed.</li> </ul>
<b>S2 Tackling all forms of social exclusion across the District</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Over 80 people with disabilities now participating in supported work activities through local initiatives.</li> <li>◆ A successful partnership with MENCAP/Newbury Day Centre and the Ramblers on the ROAR Scheme where clients are working on a wide range of environmental projects.</li> <li>◆ Provision of placements on Countryside projects for young offenders to carry out community payback has had a positive benefit of gaining environmental skills by participants, and built effective links with the Youth Offending Team.</li> <li>◆ Over £1m additional benefits income achieved for those on the lowest income levels through Community Care welfare benefits advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A significant load is put on staff and resources to set up schemes. We need to link further priorities to resources.</li> <li>◆ Specific skills required for staff to work with young offenders</li> </ul>
<b>S3 Promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ More than 70 people with learning disabilities moved into their own tenancies</li> <li>◆ Over 30 people with physical disabilities arranging their own care through Direct Payments</li> <li>◆ Additional 50 older people helped to live at home with intensive home care support.</li> <li>◆ Numbers of older people whose discharge from hospital is</li> </ul>	

<p>delayed reduced from 17 to 6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ More than 50 older people received intensive rehabilitation which enabled them to return home after a hospital stay.</li> <li>◆ Guide to designing buildings accessible for people with disabilities produced by Access Team.</li> </ul>	
<b>S4 Maintaining high standards of educational achievement across all our schools</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Education performance is strong, with 67% of Key performance indicators in the top quartile compared with other Local Authorities and 60% showing improvement since last year.</li> <li>◆ The establishment of a new Children and Young People's strategic partnership.</li> <li>◆ 10 schools inspected by Ofsted judged to be good or better overall</li> <li>◆ Adult and Community Learning Capital Project at Theale Green incorporating Community Library completed and opened in May 2004</li> </ul>	
<b>S5 Ensuring that the street environment is clean, well maintained and safe</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Revised street monitoring programme has been implemented in line with the ENCAMS/DEFRA Guidance Manual on BV199.</li> <li>◆ Pilot partnership underway with Thames Valley Police for the more efficient removal of abandoned vehicles in the district.</li> <li>◆ Two Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for abandoned vehicles have been met reducing the time taken to remove abandoned vehicles and collecting more vehicles through the free of charge collection scheme.</li> <li>◆ Latest phase of 5 year highway improvement programme successfully completed (42 roads resurfaced in 2003/04)</li> <li>◆ Refurbishment of subways under A339 following transfer from Highways Agency.</li> <li>◆ Target for introducing facilities for the disabled at 95% of pedestrian crossings met in 2003/04.</li> <li>◆ The PSA target for reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents has been met for 2003/4</li> <li>◆ A successful Youth Offending Team (YOT) rated as among the top five YOTs in the Country.</li> <li>◆ Becoming one of only ten plot sites for the National Reassurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Potential for the development of an IT system to monitor fly tipping and street cleansing.</li> <li>◆ Continued promotion of the free of charge collection scheme on abandoned vehicles to ensure continued performance on the PSA.</li> </ul>

project in partnership with the police	
<b>S6 Increasing the provision of homes that are affordable to those on low incomes</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Common Housing Register to go live from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004</li> <li>◆ Tenancy support service set up to provide help for the most vulnerable tenants.</li> </ul>	
<b>S7 Improving the quality of life for looked after children and other young people at risk</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ In Children's Social Services, a 7% reduction in numbers in care.</li> </ul>	
<b>S8 Improving transportation</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Successful Service Improvement Day around Transport that resulted in a partnership approach to drafting the next Local Transport Plan through the Transport Action Group of the LSP.</li> <li>◆ The 'strong performance' of the Council was recognised in the Annual Local Transport statement from GOSE.</li> <li>◆ A new guide to passenger transport in West Berkshire published.</li> <li>◆ Demand responsive Call-a-Bus service introduced, serving Lambourn and Hungerford.</li> <li>◆ 9 new wheelchair accessible vehicles delivered to the Handybus volunteer operators.</li> </ul>	
<b>S9 Enhancing the sustainability of the West Berkshire Community and preserving the local environment through improving environmental resource management</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Sending less waste to Landfill by increasing the percentage of household waste recycled and composted from 11% to 17% following the introduction of a green waste separation trial at the Pinchington Lane Civic Amenity Site.</li> <li>◆ Re-launch and re-branding of the Kerbside Recycling Service (September 2003).</li> <li>◆ DEFRA awarded £23.74m of waste PFI credits to West Berkshire following submission of an Outline Business Case to implement the Council's waste strategy founded upon maximised recycling and composting. Contract procurement has commenced for an Integrated Waste Management contract to commence 2006.</li> <li>◆ Following implementation of a recruitment and retention package, the Planning Development Control Team now has a full compliment of Planners. The improvement in performance of the service has resulted in the Council being awarded £470,000 in Planning Delivery Grant and in the service becoming the second most improved planning service in England (according to the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Consider the role of a focus group of residents on waste and recycling issues.</li> <li>◆ Continued education programme to change attitudes towards waste and recycling.</li> <li>◆ A sound recruitment and retention policy is essential if improvement in key service is to be achieved.</li> </ul>



<p>ODPM).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The North Wessex AONB Management Plan, to which West Berkshire Council is a contributor, has been praised by the Countryside Agency and English Nature.</li> </ul>	
<b>S10 Creating attractive and vibrant town centres</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Publication of a new 25 year Vision and Action Plan for Newbury (Newbury 2025)</li> <li>◆ Creation of a community based partnership approach to the delivery of the Vision in conjunction with the Town Centre Management Steering Group</li> <li>◆ Completion of a major Environmental Enhancement Scheme for Bartholomew Street as part of the 'Newbury Vision' project</li> <li>◆ Refurbishment of the Kennet Centre (by Shops Etc)</li> <li>◆ Facilitation and support for the development of a Town Centre Cinema by 2005</li> <li>◆ Completion of an Environmental Enhancement Schemes for the Town Bridge, Mansion House Street and West Mills junctions (achieved through external funding)</li> <li>◆ Ongoing development of a new brand and marketing strategy for the Town Centre</li> <li>◆ Undertaking a range of transportation studies across the Town Centre to facilitate future development</li> <li>◆ Development of a Planning and Development Brief for the Park Way redevelopment and for the Wharf</li> </ul>	<p><b>Progress has been helped by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Active and effective programme group</li> <li>◆ High profile of the activity</li> <li>◆ Political support</li> </ul>
<b>D1 Performance improvement</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 55% of indicators across all services, where comparisons can be made with the previous year, show improved performance.</li> <li>◆ 40% of key Best Value Performance Indicators are in the upper quartile of all authorities.</li> <li>◆ Success of Improvement Planning Group in overseeing improvement efforts and developing improvement toolkit, including SIDs (Service Improvement Days) that involve partners.</li> <li>◆ Improved Performance Management framework through the introduction of Level 1 performance indicators.</li> <li>◆ 95% KPIs within the Amey Partnership Contract were met, and 75% exceeded in year 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Directors and their Management Teams engagement at an early stage is critical to delivering improvement.</li> <li>◆ The involvement of a Member task group in shaping the Level 1 indicators was vital to success.</li> <li>◆ Implementation and monitoring needs to avoid too much bureaucracy – it stifles real action</li> <li>◆ Each programme group would work better with access to Policy support.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk management</b>	<b>Risk management</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Completion of operational (for each service group) and strategic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ New Health and Safety and Risk</li> </ul>

<p>risk register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Completion of operational and strategic action plans highlighting areas of high risk and the controls needed to manage those risks</li> <li>◆ Inclusion of key risk measures within service plans for 2004/05 and the development of a basket of corporate health indicators for risk management.</li> <li>◆ Management of risk through a corporate Joint Consultative Committee with service group reps</li> <li>◆ Development and enhancement of corporate business continuity plan</li> <li>◆ Start of a comprehensive training programme for risk management</li> </ul>	<p>assessment Manager crucial to success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ JCC effective</li> <li>◆ More resource and focus needed from Corporate Board to embed risk management culture across the Council</li> </ul>
<b>D2 Building capacity</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Developing a partnership culture: 'The Council is good at partnership'.</li> <li>◆ Strong project and programme management support for all improvement projects ensures accountability and delivery.</li> <li>◆ A successful Local Strategic Partnership recognised by GOSE as one of the best in the South East.</li> <li>◆ The support for our voluntary sector organisation, Community Action West Berkshire (CAWB).</li> <li>◆ A highly successful strategic partnership with Amey which is transforming the way the Council does business, including bringing £16m of investment in better infrastructure to support high quality services to the public.</li> <li>◆ Joint Service Heads appointed between the Council and Newbury and Community PCT.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A more structured and disciplined approach, supported by Amey, has transformed the Council's ability to 'follow through' on more projects.</li> <li>◆ The partnership approach is working and the area of sustainability and the environment could benefit from this approach.</li> <li>◆ Council priorities need to influence the milestones in the Amey partnership contract and be kept under review</li> </ul>
<b>D3 Customer focus</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ In partnership with Amey, the Council has opened a new state-of-the-art contact centre to improve the speed and quality of service that the public receives.</li> <li>◆ Increased focus on communication through the appointment of a new Head of Service to lead on communication.</li> <li>◆ Adoption of a Customer Contact Strategy to determine service access improvements in every area of the Council</li> <li>◆ 3 new weekend drop-in services opened for people with disabilities in response to requests from users and carers.</li> <li>◆ Rapid response service established to prevent unnecessary hospital admission for older people, and single point of access to all care services for older people set up across health and social care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Service user input needs to be much earlier in shaping priorities before the 'refresh'.</li> <li>◆ Staff across the Council need more involvement in customer focus initiatives to accelerate change</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Care Managers working in primary care practices to facilitate access to social care.</li> <li>◆ Carers' Forum decided how DH Carers Grant should be spent on services that most helped them.</li> </ul>	
<b>D4 Stronger governance</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>	<b>Lessons for the future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Launch of the new Corporate Plan and its embedding into the way the Council does business. Recognised that the Corporate Plan informs and shapes service and financial planning in the Council.</li> <li>◆ The development of a Medium Term Financial Strategy that supports the Council's key priorities.</li> <li>◆ Head of Legal and Electoral Services has conducted an independent review into the role of statutory officers following the release of national guidelines.</li> <li>◆ Training and Development Programme completed on Code of Conduct issues for both District and Parish councillors</li> <li>◆ Ethical standards issues promoted through the website along with the work of the Standards Committee</li> <li>◆ Biannual report to Standards Committee on Conduct issues and also review presented to presented to Annual Parish Conference.</li> <li>◆ Parish Council report high level of satisfaction with the Council's support in respect of ethics issues and the Code of Conduct.</li> </ul>	

## Strategic Focus

The strategic context for the Corporate Plan is clearly set out in the original document and is not repeated here. However, a variety of circumstances and influences over the last year impact on the strategic focus of the Corporate Plan 'refresh' and it is important to identify, recognise and learn from them.

### Key influences

We have identified eight key influences that will shape the Corporate Plan 'refresh':

The financial outlook as defined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Community Plan for West Berkshire.
The objectives and priorities of the Liberal Democrat administration.	The views of the IDeA Peer Review.
The analysis of community need and public consultation.	The comments and challenge of partners.
National priorities and the views of government regulators.	The learning that we have gained from the first year's experience of the Corporate Plan.

### Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) has been developed over the last year to give a longer and more stable planning horizon for the Council's financial affairs. Though closely linked to the Corporate Plan the MTFS is a separate document that performs two critical planning functions:

- i. It provides a broad picture of the financial environment of the Council and therefore provides a context for service and improvement planning.
- ii. It supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan by providing a robust financial framework in which resources can be matched to priorities in policy-led budgeting.

The key message from the MTFS is that during the time-span of the current Corporate Plan, the resources available to support corporate objectives are likely to remain, in real terms, static, with the possibility of an overall reduction.

This is a challenging environment for service and improvement planning and places strong emphasis on efficiency, value for money and a close focus on agreed priorities. More detailed modelling is included in the MTFS but it is apparent that the overall expenditure on Council

services will need to be closely controlled if a gap between activity and resources is not to develop over the coming three years

The MTFS has set out and modelled the financial impact of various levels of Council tax together with the likely known pressures arising from demographic growth, service improvement initiatives together with inflation. This modelling approach reinforces the view that budget setting for the next three years will need to be carefully managed and requires clear and robust mechanisms to ensure that levels of service activity can be sustained within the resources available. A diagram outlining our approach to “strategic resourcing” is included at the end of this section.

### **Objectives and priorities of the Liberal Democrat administration**

Following the election in May 2003 the Liberal Democrat administration has articulated the priorities for the Council based on their manifesto, the needs of the people of West Berkshire and the feedback they had from the public during the election. They have re-affirmed the commitment to the values and objectives contained in the Corporate Plan 2003-2008 and want to direct the activity of the Council in the next four years to build on existing success and deliver improved services for the people of West Berkshire. The vision for West Berkshire in the Corporate plan 2003-2008 provides context and continuity.

#### ***‘To facilitate a thriving local community and good quality of life in West Berkshire, now and for the future ’***

To achieve this vision the Liberal Democrat Group are committed to supporting and enhancing key services that help achieve better and fairer outcomes for children and young people, support and care for the vulnerable, elderly and disabled and also ensure that we have a sustainable environment.

The ruling group has also indicated that, within the context of available resources, the Corporate Plan should focus on frontline delivery to the public and in this ‘refresh’ they would particularly like key projects to focus on:

Serving the Community	
Community Safety	Newbury Vision and the provision of a Cinema
Affordable Housing	Develop “visions” for other towns like Calcot/Tilehurst; Thatcham, Hungerford and Lambourn
Highway maintenance and road safety	Improved access to services particularly in rural areas and the East of the district
Leading the Council	
Enhance the role of Members in leading the Council	“Greening the Council”
Financial management to deliver best value	Planning Service: continued re-organisation and improvement

The concept of “key projects” is explained in the section on strategic focus but is a pragmatic recognition that matching resources to priorities in a Local Authority is a complex task requiring a coherent financial and planning framework coupled with responsiveness to the public and political leadership.

#### The analysis of community need and public consultation

The Annual Satisfaction Survey has provided valuable feedback on the public’s perceptions of Council services and on what are the “key” issues. Although this is only one of many ways we listen to public feedback the conclusions are important:

- Overall satisfaction with the authority remains relatively high but levels of very satisfied responses had declined slightly from the original survey in 2000/01.
- Satisfaction of service users has remained high, but overall when the views of non-users of services is included, satisfaction has fallen, highlighting the fact that the overall perception of Council services is less positive than the actual experience of service users
- The fear of crime was a concern for many residents with some calling for more youth facilities.
- There was concern over provision of housing for local people and that infrastructure, such as roads and health facilities, should be there to support new housing.
- Many people commented that some of the road network in the area needed to be resurfaced and also that traffic congestion was of concern.
- The responses now more closely represent the demographics of the area when compared to the census data and previous years’ results.

Dealing with this slightly less positive perception of services will involve better communications linked to clearer articulation of what the Council can and cannot do. At present the public do not have a clear picture of what they expect from Council services. The Council will need to set out the levels of service and make explicit service standards.

Involving users is central to this approach. For example, service users in Community Care have been involved from the outset in the design and development of new day care services, determining location, the way the service should run and the mix of activities on offer. Users with learning disabilities and their carers have been consulted about new housing services, from design stage to occupancy.

The analysis of community need undertaken in services and as part of the updated Community Plan is also indicating growing demographic pressures on health, social care and housing services. Good access to services in an authority with large rural areas is also a key pressure if services are to be open and accessible to all.

#### National priorities and the views of government regulators

The nationally driven agendas in many areas of the Councils activity, especially care services and services to children, are a strong influence on the Council’s planning.

Of vital importance this year has been the “Every Child Matters” Green paper and this has had a significant impact on the ‘refresh’ of Corporate priorities relating to children and Young people.

The first edition of the Corporate Plan 2003 – 2008 underlined the commitment of the Council to support children and young people and highlighted two key priorities:

to maintain high standards of educational achievement across all schools;  
to improve the quality of life for looked after children and other young people at risk.

Over the course of 2003, there has been the active development of a Children & Young People Strategic Partnership, where statutory, non statutory and voluntary sector organisations have joined together to focus on the outcomes we collectively seek to achieve for all children and young people across the District.

There is a strong commitment in the Partnership for all children and young people across the District to be healthy, safe and achieving. Following the publication of the Green Paper, the Partnership agreed in January 2004 that two further outcomes should be added to keep in line with Government expectations i.e. economic well being and “making a positive contribution”.

The revised priorities of Council services for Children & Young People contained within this refreshed version of the Corporate Plan align the Council with wider partnership developments to integrate services to children and young people, and national developments articulated through the Green Paper “Every Child Matters”.

The priority is now articulated as:

**To achieve better and fairer outcomes for children and young people by delivering high quality integrated services through partnership**

This shift in our planning and response is reflected in the action plan attached.

The agenda for social care services for adults is increasingly driven by concepts of choice, user focus and defined timescales for service delivery, a framework shared with the NHS. This has led to a focus on Direct Payments, to enable people to purchase their own care, speedy assessment and discharge from hospital and a radical modernisation of services away from traditional support towards a model of person-centred activity. An increased focus on costs will require a shift from institutionalised care towards independent living or intensively supported housing options, which reflect the wishes with many of many clients.

Partnership working and integration between health and social care is leading us towards integrated teams and pooled budgets, already set up for Intermediate Care and community equipment, and planned for nursing care and the Older People’s Care Management teams. Locally we have achieved a single assessment process as well as a single point of access to services for older people, both helping to reduce duplication across agencies as well as making obtaining care simpler.

Other key examples of national policy in the last year with financial and policy impacts are:

- the instruction from DfES to pass money directly to schools regardless of the impact on the wider finances of the authority that resulted from the withholding of grant in the ODPM “ceiling”
- the fines imposed on care service for “bed blocking” in acute hospitals.

National policy is articulated and monitored through a variety of agencies and the Council has had close contact over the last year with the Audit Commission, the Government Office of the South East (GOSE), together with Central Government. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) has been the mechanism to draw their views together, but each agency has also individually, either through routine contact or inspection work, made their views known.

The broad view of regulators is that West Berkshire has put in place significant measures to focus on service improvement since we were rated as ‘fair’ in 2002. The rating of fair was confirmed in 2003. However, our Annual Audit letter, inspections in Revenues and Benefits and the ratings of our Annual Performance Report on our transport plans, all indicated significant improvement that will shortly feed through to further improved frontline services and recognition through the CPA scoring process.

The regulator view is that West Berkshire has significantly improved its focus on outcomes for the public and is better managing resources and performance. The strong message is that momentum needs to be sustained in driving improved management of the Council and that this will support improvements in frontline service delivery. The four development themes within the Corporate Plan have highlighted this agenda and are addressing the areas identified for improvement during the CPA process in 2002.

#### Community Plan for West Berkshire

The West Berkshire Partnership is our Local Strategic Partnership and, since its launch in 2003, it has developed well and is cited as one of the best in the South East region by GOSE. The Community Plan is a key influence on the Council’s Corporate Plan as it sets out the vision and priorities for West Berkshire as defined by a large number of partners and stakeholders.

The LSP has expanded to include the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership; the Community Safety Partnership; and is exploring Economic and Health forums. If the Council is to succeed, it must ensure that its services and activities are actively integrated and aligned to support the objectives within the Community Plan. In partnership the Council will achieve more for the community than acting alone.

The Community Plan contains quality of life indicators together with clear action plans to deliver improved outcomes for the public. The Corporate Plan must tie closely where possible to these shared objectives for West Berkshire.

#### IDeA Peer Review

The Peer Review was an opportunity to ‘hold a mirror’ up to the Council. The recommendations were grouped under the three main headings of the benchmark:



## Leadership

- raise the profile of members
- build on the good relationships within the LSP and deliver integrated services
- take steps to actively consider non-priorities then shift resources away from them
- develop mechanisms to learn from failures and mistakes
- celebrate the Council's achievements with staff

## Democratic Accountability and Community Engagement

- take a more strategic approach of the role of scrutiny and align the activities and work programmes of Select Committees more closely to the executive work programme
- increase the effectiveness of member challenge around key issues
- raise the profile of high ethical standards across the council
- continue to improve communication and consultation with local people, businesses and stakeholders
- develop a social inclusion strategy and voluntary sector compact

## Managing Performance

- encourage members to visibly drive the performance of the council
- continue to manage recruitment and retention difficulties
- embed process and deliver outcomes which local people will recognise
- take regular reality checks with the Amey contract
- improve communication across the council for the benefit of members and officers
- involve staff in service planning
- identify and use external challenge in service development

### The comments and challenge of partners

As part of the process of developing the action plan for the Corporate Plan, all areas have been through a process of challenge and comment with partners and other stakeholders. A description of the challenge element for each theme is to be found in the action plan Annex.

### The learning that we have gained from the first year's experience of the Corporate Plan

In setting out ten Corporate Priorities and four development themes in the Corporate Plan, the Council was seeking to provide a clear framework for the improvement priorities of the Council. As a focus for improvement, the priorities have worked well and have become embedded in service and financial planning and in the decision protocols of the Council.

However, the priorities do not tell the whole story as the Council carries a wide range of functions, both statutory and non-statutory, that are not explicitly part of the priorities. This was a deliberate result of defining priorities more closely following CPA in 2002. The CPA felt that the Council's priorities at that time were too broad to usefully inform improvement planning.

Developing fewer and more focussed priorities has helped to channel the Council's energy into what really matters but the experience in the last year has raised four key strategic issues:

- 1) As a Council we must be clearer that some activities and services are not directly linked to a corporate priority. The complex range of statutory and non-statutory services the Council delivers makes this situation inevitable. However, as part of maintaining strategic focus, the Council must define the levels and standards of service that it is offering in all areas. This is vital to ensure that the public's expectation from services is clear and that we secure best value for money
- 2) The Council must also be clearer about what it does not do and to actively look for areas of service from which it must dis-invest to provide resources to support other priority areas. The Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the likely resource picture for the future and it is clear that increased efficiency and effectiveness from within existing resources is the likely sustainable scenario for the future. Growth is not an option. While significant downward pressure has been applied to costs within Council services, it is likely that further efficiencies will only be realised from stopping or reducing the level of some services. The Corporate Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy provide the Council with a coherent framework in which to identify service dis-investments and to implement them.
- 3) The experience of the Improvement Planning Group (IPG) and of the Corporate Priority/Theme sponsors and programme groups is that it is difficult to progress all ten strategic priorities and four development themes simultaneously with equal vigour. Driving improvement will require a clear framework and mechanism for moving resources from lower priorities to higher priorities. Building our capacity to deliver will help but the key must be a closer match of resources to agreed priorities. Both the IDeA Peer Review and our Audit Commission relationship manager have reinforced this view.
- 4) The integration of financial planning and strategic planning, which is essential to have policy-led budgeting focussed on the customer, takes time. The Council has made rapid and significant progress over the last year which has been recognised by the Audit Commission but will need to spend more time over the coming year to ensure greater effectiveness.

In the context of 1 + 2 above, it is important to acknowledge that a tighter focus of improvement resources on key projects does not undermine the continued importance and credibility of each of the corporate priorities and development themes. There will inevitably be some key projects that lie outside stated high priority areas that are necessary to meet statutory, national, local or service needs. The role of the Corporate Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy is to provide a clear framework for weighing the relative priorities of projects and for targeting resources to meet the agreed priorities,

In the first year of the Corporate Plan we have learnt a considerable amount about what drives successful delivery. The primary purpose of the Corporate Plan is to provide a strong framework to manage the Council's activities, to provide good quality and value for money service to the public of West Berkshire.

Available as an Appendix 2 is a document to capture the learning and to outline our approach to delivering the Corporate Plan based on what we know and what we have learnt in the last year.

## Direction of travel

The Council is continuing to improve its performance and wants to concentrate on what is important to the people of West Berkshire. It is committed to its vision

***‘To facilitate a thriving local community and good quality of life in West Berkshire, now and for the future ’***

### What changes to priorities have we made?

1. As indicated above a number of factors including the Green paper “Every Child Matters” and the development of our Children and Young people’s partnership has led to the merging of two of our Corporate priorities relating to children and young people into one. “To achieve better and fairer outcomes for children and young people by delivering high quality integrated services through partnership” and designated S4.
2. The importance of Safer Communities to the public has been highlighted from the public (for example during the election) and is a key part of the Community Plan of the LSP. Safer Communities had been part of Corporate Priority S5: “Ensuring that the street environment is clean well maintained and safe” To recognise this importance it has been made a Corporate priority “Promoting Safer Communities” and designated S7.
3. The re-titling of S9 to “Enhancing the sustainability of the West Berkshire Community and preserving the local environment through improving environmental resource management” to fully reflect its content
4. The Development Theme Building Capacity – D2 has been re-titled “Building Capacity through Partnership and Innovation” to emphasise that its goal is increase our capacity to improve service as far as is possible without growth in overall Council costs.

With these refinements the Council continues to have ten Corporate Priorities and 4 Development Themes as indicated in the table below:

<b>The Council’s Strategic Priorities</b>	
S1	Providing strong community leadership
S2	Tackling all forms of social exclusion across the District
S3	Promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities
S4	Achieving better and fairer outcomes for children and young people by delivering high quality integrated services through partnership
S5	Ensuring that the street environment is clean, well maintained and safe
S6	Increasing the provision of homes that are affordable to those on low incomes
S7	Promoting Safer Communities
S8	Improving transportation
S9	Enhancing the sustainability of the West Berkshire Community and preserving the local environment
S10	Creating attractive and vibrant town centres

The Council's four Development Themes	
D1	Performance improvement
D2	Building capacity through partnership and innovation
D3	Customer focus
D4	Stronger governance

### How will we match resources more closely to priorities?

Building on last year's success the Council will increase its strategic focus by designating four corporate priorities as "strategic development priorities" and three corporate priorities/development themes as "cross cutting strategic themes" to guide strategic planning and resource allocation. The framework of the Medium Term Financial Strategy will support the transfer of resources into these priority areas.

The Council has identified key projects for delivery from across each Corporate Priority and Development Theme that will be resourced to improve the quality of life and services for the public of West Berkshire. In this way the Council is seeking to ensure that it matches resources to priorities across a complex range of statutory and non-statutory services and it that it has a clear programme of work focussed on priorities with resources identified to support delivery.

The Corporate Priorities designated as Strategic Development Priorities are shown below.

Strategic Development Priorities
Promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities - S3
Achieving better and fairer outcomes for children and young people by delivering high quality integrated services through partnership - S4
Promoting Safer Communities - S7
Enhancing the sustainability of the West Berkshire Community and preserving the local environment - S9

### Why these as "Strategic development priorities"?

Adult social care is high on the agenda locally and nationally. The number of West Berkshire residents needing such care is growing and the Council must respond to their needs by focussing on service delivery.

Children and young people issues have always been at the heart of the Council's approach. The Children and Young People's agenda has moved significantly since the Corporate Plan was drafted. The Council's CYP service, together with partners, have refined the priorities in this area to encompass delivery in Corporate Priorities S4 and S7. This integrated strategic development priority is critical to setting the direction for the council and informing planning and resource allocation.

As indicated above Safer Communities is a key issue for the public and is an important part of the Community Plan objectives and Members are keen to make progress in this area.

The sustainability of the local economy and environment are key to improving the quality of life for West Berkshire residents and the LSP is a key focus for action. This strategic development priority includes provision (via a PFI) for Waste Management across the Authority and is central to our goal of maintaining a sustainable community.

The Corporate Priorities/Development Themes designated as Cross Cutting Strategic Themes are shown below.

<b>Cross Cutting Strategic Themes</b>
Providing stronger community leadership - S1
Building capacity through partnership and innovation - D2
Customer focus - D3

### **Why these as “Cross Cutting Strategic Themes”?**

Community Leadership –S1 has been at the heart of the Council’s role in co-ordinating a range of partners and resources to improve the quality of life for those that live, work and visit West Berkshire. The experience of the last year has demonstrated that Community Leadership touches every are of the Council’s activity and is a vital component of success.

Building capacity through partnership and innovation– D2 The experience of the last year has shown that the Council needs to explore a variety of approaches to improve its capacity to deliver. This includes direct support for staff and Member development to improve skills and effectiveness and also in supporting the partnership approach to delivering goals with and through others. This will ensure that we deliver value for money from all the available resources.

Customer focus – D3 Shaping services from the perspective of the public is crucial to getting accessible, responsive and effective delivery. The Council has through partnership with Amey made significant investment in modernising the way the council does business and ensuring that all areas of the Council use and develop this approach is essential to offer value for money and good services.

These four strategic development priorities together with supporting cross cutting strategic themes provide a core of key activities that will improve service outcomes across the community of West Berkshire. The action plans attached include the detailed objectives for each project together with activities in the remaining corporate priorities and themes.

### **Key projects**

The Corporate Plan and MTFS provide the framework for moving resources from lower to higher priority projects in a controlled and managed way. To provide a sharp focus on deliverables within the available budget the Council, will each year, set out its “key projects” for action. The key projects will provide a simplified way of communicating to the public what the Council will be focussing on each year and will highlight valuable milestones within the overall

framework of the five year Corporate Plan. The Council believes that by identifying tangible developments in this way we will “make sense” of the Council’s corporate planning and budget setting approach for the public so that planned improvements are clearly visible to the customer.

The key projects currently identified are shown as Appendix 1. Examples include:

- Reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour through the expansion of the Community Warden Scheme and partnership working (S7)
- Deliver and implement a sustainable integrated Waste PFI (S9)
- Secure a Cinema for Newbury (S10)
- Complete the restoration of Shaw House
- Complete the safer routes to school programme (S8)
- Park Way redevelopment in Newbury (S10)
- Supporting local communities in preparing long term Visions / Plans including Hungerford, Thatcham and communities in the East of the District (S10)

Detailed action plans in each priority area are available as Appendix4.

## Strategic resourcing

This Corporate plan 'refresh' sets out the refinements that have been made to the priorities for the Council. The focus has been learning from our experience and maintaining continuity and coherence so that we can remain focussed on improving services to the public.

As indicated above the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) has highlighted that the financial context for Corporate Planning for the next three years indicates that demographic, inflationary and service improvement pressures as currently modelled are likely to outpace the available resources unless the Council acts.

To meet this challenge the council will take a number of steps to ensure that resources are brought in to line with activity and focussed on priorities. The comprehensive approach that we are adopting will involve dis-investing from non-priority areas, making efficiency gains and savings, building capacity through partnership and innovation, setting service levels and investing any resources released in development priorities through a rigorous process of business case building. This business case approach will be linked to the process of designating "key projects" for the council

### Strategic Resourcing Mechanisms

- 1. Review of services with Corporate Directors** – A small group of Members of the Administration will work with each Director to identify potential efficiency gains and savings. (Approach outlined in MTFS) This will inform the MTFS and each year's budget setting.
- 2. Service Levels Review** – This project (part of Building Capacity D2 Action plan) be a comprehensive look at service levels to ensure that resources are best used to support service levels in priority areas. It will also help with clarifying for the public and partners the level of service the Council offers.
- 3. Modernisation of Services** – A key driver of the Council's partnership with Amey was to secure the expertise and investment in customer focussed services that will drive the modernisation of the Council's way of working. This approach should improve services and provide efficiency gains to lower unit costs. (part of Customer Focus D3 Action Plan)
- 4. Invest to save bids** – Linked to 4 above this will channel any available investment either to improve services or deliver efficiency savings and will be tied to a business case methodology.

Clearly these mechanisms have significant overlap and the real strength of this approach will be realised through close integration of each of them in a "whole Council" approach.

Other factors in relation to resourcing:

- ◆ Government Grant –Continue to lobby for changes in the ceilings/floors that act to withhold grant from WBC
- ◆ Council Tax –Council tax increases must be kept as low as possible
- ◆ PSA reward Grant – Build the potential reward grant from our public service agreement with Government into our plans for improving services to the public.
- ◆ Partnership working – Build capacity by aligning our activities with others in private, public and voluntary sectors to deliver more effective outcomes.



- ◆ External fund raising – Put additional emphasis on securing external grants for West Berkshire in partnership with others.
- ◆ Income generation – Continue to maximise income where appropriate from activities and agreements that generate income
- ◆ Explore reasons for budget underspends and adjust base budgets

A diagram outlining this approach is available as Appendix 3

### How will we use this approach to match resources to priorities?

The MTFS has set targets for savings for each service area within an overall three year financial framework that are based on “no growth” in base budgets other than for statutory or demographic reasons and dis-investment from non-priority areas.

This approach linked to the work Corporate Directors are doing with the Budget Review Group (1 above) is likely over the duration of the Corporate Plan to release resources that can be invested in supporting priorities. In addition the Modernisation of Services through the investment that partnership with Amey is bringing and the close review of service levels is likely to release further resources for priority investment. In essence a range of activities outlining the MTFS is likely to identify resources from dis-investment that can be focussed on supporting priorities.

The Corporate Plan and MTFS create a clear framework which sets out the policy agenda (linked to Community planning and service planning) integrated with the strategic resourcing model within which the Council can set its budget. The preparatory work for building the budget for 2005/2006 will begin as soon as the Corporate Plan and MTFS are agreed. The Budget build timetable will be shaped to reflect the new Corporate Plan and MTFS framework. Key stages are:

