Cheshire West & Chester Council

Business Plan
Resources Directorate

Summary 2010-11

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Resources - Foreword to the Plan:

The Council has made a pledge to make the best use of our resources to provide high quality services which deliver value for money and get things right first time. The Resources Directorate, as the hub of the Council’s corporate centre, aims to provide the right infrastructure to help steer the Council towards achieving this goal.

Our main challenge is to ensure we develop processes which are efficient, joined up and meet the needs of our customers. We have made encouraging progress over the last year to address this challenge and hope this will be reflected in external assessments and inspections. Our support has been vital to ensuring the Council was in strong position to hit the ground running on day one with reduced costs of around £43 million. Looking forward, we realise we will be central to supporting all Services in their ambitious goals over the next year. We also recognise that our support will be vital in ensuring we make the best use of Council resources and encourage innovation in a challenging financial climate.

In summary, this Directorate aims to help navigate the Council to meet its aspiration of being one of the best Councils in the country within its first 5 years.

Councillor Les Ford

Julie Gill
What this Document is for:

This document outlines the vision and objectives of the Resources Directorate for 2010/11. Further information can be found within our Business Plan which we will use to

• Outline how the Directorate and its Services will support the Council in meeting its priorities, as outlined in the Corporate Plan pledges.
• Provide a standard by which progress will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Executive member and Directorate Management Teams to ensure we stay on track.
• Provide a foundation for effective business planning by ensuring that necessary actions and resources are in place to deliver against our priorities and that risks are managed effectively.
• Ensure that staff, partners and customers are fully aware of the Services provided by the Directorate.

Our Purpose and Vision

As a Council, we are focused on addressing three key challenges:

• To develop an efficient and modern Council which meets the needs of our customers
• To deliver first class regeneration projects that meet the needs of our communities in these difficult economic times
• To deliver the excellent facilities and services that our residents deserve

By concentrating efforts on these three challenges, the Council will take a coordinated approach to making a real difference to communities.

Looking at the Services we provide it is clear that we have a vital role to play in addressing these three challenges:

• Finance
• Human Resources
• Facilities and Asset Management
• Procurement
• Legal and Democratic Services
• HR and Finance Shared Services
• Policy, Performance, Partnerships and Transformation

We will ensure that these Services are in line with the Councils vision to put the customer first, provide value for money and display best practice.

Our vision for the Directorate is therefore as follows

We will ensure that all resources (human, financial & physical) are effectively managed and operated; offer value for money; and provide the platform for the delivery of high performing services for the benefit of all of the Council’s customers (internal and external)

Our Achievements

Our focus last year was to ensure we had a smooth transition to the new Authority and that service delivery was not severely affected. This was achieved and a selection of our key successes included the following:
• Effective Transition preparation achieving £35m of savings by working more effectively and avoiding duplication
• IT Excellence Award for the Revenues and Benefits service for their work to harmonise and merge the three legacy computer systems into a single Cheshire West and Chester database to be operational for vesting day
• The Finance Service and Legal Service were short-listed in the Local Government Chronicle awards for the support they provided to developing the new Council
• A “good progress” result from our first Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) Inspection. As one of England’s newest and largest unitary authorities, the Audit Commission has reported comments on how well the authority is meeting the needs of the people it serves and how it is planning to meet them in the future
• The directorate has successfully co-ordinated a strategic approach across its service areas to support directorates in preparing a three year budget plan based on priorities and plans for the future
• The Human Resources service have successfully managed the staff restructuring programme where we have downsized significantly and guided the entire organisation through a huge restructuring programme. They have also introduced a package of rewards and flexible benefits – starting the ball rolling to become a great place to work that rewards its staff.
• A review of the Council’s assets has been completed providing a sound basis for future assets decision making across the authority
• Centralisation of Procurement and development of a Value for Money improvement plan
• Successful ‘Everybody Benefits’ campaign resulting in an increased take up of additional benefits by £132,000 for its residents
• 43 out of our 53 performance indicators are on track to be achieved

Our Challenges

Looking ahead we need to recognise the following challenges:

• Responding to changes to Central Government Policy following the General election
• Ensuring we make the best use of the Council’s resources in the current climate of constrained public expenditure
• Ensuring all Services across the Council respond to the Equality and Diversity agenda
• Making the best use of our property assets to provide value for money and facilities which support excellent services
• Ensuring we organise our procurement processes in an efficient and joined up way
• Ensure our capital investment plans for the next ten years allow us to meet our ambitious objectives

Our priorities

The challenges above are reflected in the priorities we have established for the year ahead.

The Council’s Corporate Plan outlines the key priorities that are crucial to our resident’s quality of life. The Council has pledged to focus on these priorities when delivering services and making decisions. Overall, there are sixteen pledges within the Corporate Plan. The pledges which the Directorate is responsible for include:

Resources and Transformation

CP14 We will make sure that our communities can inform and influence the decisions we take
Equality and Diversity

CP16 We will ensure that the design, delivery and commissioning of services are fair, equitable and accessible
CP17 We will build cohesive communities and promote equal life chances for all

In addition, the Directorate has identified the following priorities which are integral to its vision and objectives:

R1 Manage the ‘corporate environment’ to support the transformational aspirations of the authority
R2 Achieve successful outcomes in inspections, accreditations and statutory responsibilities
R3 Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Shared Services and Partnerships
R4 Maximise the use of our operational buildings whilst minimising the cost and environmental impact
R5 Promote sound financial management and value for money to meet the authority’s aspirations and priorities
R6 Improve access to, and take up of, benefits throughout the borough
R7 Continually develop our staff to enable them to achieve the best outcomes for themselves and the organisation
R8 Promote sound governance arrangements to ensure we protect the reputation of the Council and the interests of Members and Officers
R9 Further enhance partnership and area working arrangements to improve local quality of life and outcomes for local people
R10 Develop strategic procurement and commissioning capabilities across the Council to achieve value for money from all procurement activities