



South
Derbyshire
District Council



Service Plan 2017/2018

Finance and Corporate Services

South Derbyshire Changing for the better

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All information presented in this Service Plan was correct at the time of publication.

Introduction

The Corporate Plan 2016–2021 forms an important part of planning for the future and leads our performance management. As well as enabling effective monitoring, it links strategic priorities and objectives directly to the activities of service areas.

As part of this, Service Plans are created for our four directorates – Housing and Environmental Services, Community and Planning, Finance and Corporate Services and the Chief Executive’s department.

Covering the 2017-2018 financial year, the Service Plans (which are updated annually) align current delivery arrangements with changing patterns of demand, making the most effective use of available and future resources.

Key aims

All priorities and activities undertaken by Finance and Corporate Services complement our collective vision of making ‘South Derbyshire a better place to live, work and visit’.

We will:

- positively contribute towards Council policies and procedures
- deliver continuous improvements in performance
- ensure compliance with relevant legislation
- maintain a strong customer focus
- ensure a widespread understanding of core values, key aims and performance measures and encourage participation in their development
- ensure that data quality principles are applied
- encourage a positive health and safety culture

All of these contribute to the main themes running through the Corporate Plan of People, Place, Progress and Outcomes.

The importance of service planning

Delivery of public services occurs in an increasingly dynamic environment, with high community expectations, Government priorities and technological advances.

While the budgetary setting is constrained, there are ever increasing pressures and demands to do more with less.

In this context, it is essential that services are well planned, with the capability to evolve in order to meet community needs.

This allows us to identify requirements and associated enabling services such as technology, workforce, funding, capital infrastructure, together with information management.

Scene setting

Overview of the directorate

The Finance and Corporate Services directorate plays a key role in meeting our strategic objectives for supporting People, Place and Progress. Its main focus is to help the Council secure successful outcomes and manage the core principles which underpin all service delivery.

In particular the aims of the directorate are to ensure:

- Financial health
- Good governance
- Customer focus

Much of the work undertaken by the directorate has a statutory base. The non-statutory services also have a fundamental role in ensuring that the Council operates within statutory powers and regulations. Here is a breakdown of statutory and non-statutory duties undertaken.

Statutory Services

- Financial services
- Administration of Housing Benefits
- Revenues collection
- Internal audit
- Land Charges

Non-Statutory Services

- Prevention and detection of fraud
- Property management
- ICT
- Customer Services
- Secretarial support
- Procurement

Service Operations

The directorate is now relatively mature following a Council restructure in May 2013, which established current functions. The directorate is responsible for:

- Financial services - accounting, budgets and medium term financial planning
- Internal audit
- Asset and estate management
- Land Charges
- Revenue collection
- Processing claims for Housing Benefit
- Customer services and the contact centre
- Detecting and investigating fraud

- Co-ordinating Procurement
- ICT
- Reprographics and Document Services
- Data protection and Freedom of Information
- Co-ordinating the resolution of complaints against the Council
- Secretarial support

On February 1, 2017, responsibility for operational management of several of the above services was transferred back to the Council following the expiration of an out-sourcing contract.

Since January 2012, internal audit has been delivered through the Central Midlands Audit Partnership, of which the Council was a founding member and remains a constituent partner.

In addition, on January 1, 2017, the Council formed a partnership with Derby City Council to prevent and detect fraudulent activity across its area. In particular, this service currently focuses on fraud and error in Council Tax discounts, Business Rate Relief and Housing.

The main functions of the Directorate

Through the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, the directorate is responsible for setting and monitoring budgets, reviewing and advising on the Council's medium term spending plans and its financial strategy

The directorate has a key role in securing the Council's outcomes that underpin the Corporate Plan.

This is not just about finance but encompasses other resources such as land, property and ICT, together with ensuring that the Council undertakes its activities and responsibilities in a proper manner through good corporate governance.

Although many of the services provide support and advice across all Council functions, many others deal direct with the local community and residents contacting the Council, for example in Revenues and Benefits.

Operational requirements are largely undertaken in accordance with statute - financial management and internal audit for example, are carried out within specific points of law, together with standards contained in Codes of Practice.

The directorate has a number of smaller, discrete service areas, although joint working and synergy exists between the individual areas. Specific units are as follows:

Secretarial support and corporate administration

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services is the Council's Data Protection (DP) and Freedom of Information (FOI) Officer.

In accordance with this responsibility, this unit co-ordinates day to day activity associated with requests for information under DP, FOI regulations and Subject Access Request. It also monitors the corporate framework to ensure that data and records are managed and maintained correctly.

The unit also provide a range of administrative functions, including secretarial support and co-ordinating complaints made against the Council.

Internal audit

Through the Central Midlands Audit Partnership (CMAP) internal audit is the primary assurance that the Council maintains a sound system of internal control and this feeds into the priority outcome of strong corporate governance. Working under the terms of reference of the Council's Audit Sub Committee, CMAP undertake audits on the main systems and processes that underpin service delivery.

Land Charges

This unit deals with all enquiries and requests for property and land searches, both commercial and residential. The unit provides both a statutory function and direct service within a commercial market.

The financial aim of the service is to 'break even', including the cost of overheads. The income generated by the service is currently around £110,000 per year and is an important income stream for the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan to cover the costs of providing the service.

The unit reports to the Corporate Asset Manager and is part of the Property Services function.

Property Services

This unit is responsible for the overall strategic management of the Council's operational land and property holdings under the Asset Management Plan. This includes identifying and making recommendations regarding assets deemed 'surplus to requirements'.

The unit has a key role in major development/regeneration projects, in particular where the Council has a property/land interest. This is to ensure that the Council maximises the use of its assets to enable service provision, generate capital receipts or to improve local community facilities.

The unit is also responsible for managing the Council's investment (property) portfolio. This includes shops, industrial units and a factory, all of which generate income of approximately £575,000 per year.

Financial Services

This unit is responsible for maintaining the accounts of the Council and assisting the Director on strategic financial issues. The operational aspects of the unit are:

- **Management accounting** - provides day to day support to Council services on managing budgets and maintaining accounts; this involves the monthly reporting of financial performance.
- **Financial accounting** - ensuring the Council complies with accounting standards and statutory financial reporting requirements. It also includes treasury management, insurance, taxation and banking, together with the payment of invoices and the raising of sundry debtors.
- **Payroll** - payments to Elected Members and the workforce and accounting for the associated transactions.

Revenues and Customer Services

The unit is responsible for acting as the first point of contact for people visiting and contacting the Council, mainly face-to-face, by telephone and email. In addition, the unit processes claims for Housing Benefit and collects the Council Tax and Business Rates.

It also provides the link with Derby City Council for the fraud service and undertakes compliance checks to ensure residents and businesses are claiming the correct discounts and housing benefit entitlement.

Procurement

This unit is responsible for ensuring that the Council's services adhere to procurement regulations when buying and contracting supplies and services. To this extent, the unit co-ordinates all tenders.

The unit also has a role to ensure that the Council achieves value for money through this process by advising on the best procurement method and market conditions.

ICT and Document Services

This unit manages and maintains the Council's computer and telecommunications network. They support all services and provide the technological means in order for services to be delivered.

This includes the sourcing and procurement of all hardware and corporate software systems such as email. In addition, the unit manages third parties who the Council utilise for technical back-up and to maintain servers and network connections.

The unit also provides the central print and reprographics facility, together with co-ordinating post and document scanning.

Workforce

As at April 1, 2017, 71 employees were directly employed by the Council and work in Finance and Corporate Services. A breakdown is shown in the following table.

Service area	Employees
Revenues and Customer Services	39
ICT and Document Services	11
Financial Services (including Payroll)	9
Secretarial Support	4
Property Services	3

Land Charges	2
Procurement	2
Director of Finance and Corporate Services	1
Total	71

The Council's internal auditors are employed by Derby City Council as the accountable body for the Audit Partnership. The Partnership employs approximately 20 staff. These provide audit, compliance and investigatory services to six authorities in the Partnership.

In terms of workforce development, an annual training and development plan is produced after Performance Development Reviews are held.

Several staff have attained professionally qualified status in accountancy, revenues and property management; other staff possess vocational and administrative qualifications.

This requires those staff to demonstrate to their professional institute a continuing programme of professional development (CPD). Regular attendance at external training courses takes place throughout the year to maintain standards and to keep pace with changing requirements.

Several staff work from home, in particular in back-office processing for Revenues and Benefits. This provides flexible working in the modern-era and is considered crucial to motivate and engage high performing staff.

Budgets

The directorate's budget for 2017/18 is outlined in the following table. The amounts represent the **net revenue cost** to the Council of delivering these services, including staffing, supplies and services, etc.

Service area	2016/17	2017/18
ICT	£656,868	£661,571
Customer Services	£592,635	£599,566
Revenues and Benefits	£397,813	£472,350
Financial Services	£309,186	£318,815
Property Services	£344,265	£293,567
Procurement	£104,126	£105,477
Internal Audit	£103,115	£103,115

Land Charges	£88,674	£99,517
Reprographics	£78,355	£79,188
Total	£2,675,037	£2,733,166

Notes: The large increase in Revenues and Benefits from 2016/17 to 2017/18 is due to a reduction in a specific Government grant, which is a contribution towards the Council's costs in this area.

In addition, the lower cost in Property Services is due to a restructure which transferred the Land Conveyancing function into the Legal Services Unit, which is part of the Chief Executive's Directorate.

Capital Expenditure

Apart from one-off projects associated with the purchase and sale of land and buildings, the directorate is not directly responsible for any on-going capital programmes.

Relocation of the Council's Depot

Currently, the Property Services unit is co-ordinating the relocation of the Council's Works Depot and the sale of the current site. This project is valued at approximately £3.5m in total and is part of a wider regeneration project for a site on the outskirts of Swadlincote Town Centre. This project is planned to be completed by September 2017.

ICT Replacements

The directorate is responsible for the deployment of the ICT Capital Reserve, which is used to upgrade and replace the hardware associated with the computer and telecommunications network.

Performance

The Performance Board details our key projects for the year. These are broken into quarters to help us monitor and manage our performance effectively.

All actions are essential if the Council is going to achieve its ambitions and aspirations. These are complemented by a set of performance measures which will help us to gauge whether we are meeting outcomes and providing excellent services.

In some instances, proxy measures will be used. These are outside of the Council's control but provide an indication of the overall health of the District. The number in the Corporate Plan is however small. In addition, some measures are included not as a target, but to gather data as a baseline to assess future targets, for example, the number of visitors using a service.

All projects and measures for Finance and Corporate Services are listed below under the themes of People, Place, Progress and Outcomes and these are shown in the following tables. More detail is provided in the main Corporate Plan.

People measures

Aim	Measure	Annual target 2017/18
Protect and help support the most vulnerable including those affected by financial challenges	PE2.3 Average time for processing new Benefit Claims	Less than 18 Days
As above	PE2.4 Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances for Benefits	Less than 8 Days
As above	PE2.5 Housing Benefit Subsidy Local Authority error below target threshold set by the DWP	Less than 0.48%

Outcomes measures

Aim	Measure	Annual target 2017/18
Maintain financial health	O1.1 Generate on-going revenue budget savings in the General Fund	£850,000 ongoing savings made by March 2018 as approved in the Medium-Term Financial Plan

Maintain customer focus

Speed of answering telephone calls in contact centre

O5.1 The average time to answer a telephone call is 20 seconds or less with a call abandonment rate of less than 5%

Outcomes projects

Aim	Project 2017/18	Outcomes
Be aware of and plan for financial, legal and environmental risks	O6.1 Three year review of ICT Strategy and adoption of action plan to 2020	Continue to strengthen the ICT platform and ensure that ICT is able to support change and minimise business risks

Service Indicators

In addition to the Corporate Plan, the directorate also maintain a set of key performance indicators to monitor the progress of its services. These indicators, although more operational, also relate back to the main aims in the Corporate Plan.

For example, the savings target for Procurement is designed to support the key outcome of 'maintaining financial health' and service standards in the Contact Centre are designed to support the key outcome of 'maintaining customer focus'.

The indicators are maintained to ensure that each service area meets its intended outcomes and are a measure of its success. Several of the indicators are governed by statute, whilst others are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. The targets are based on current benchmarks and are designed to improve on previous year's performance.

These indicators are reported to the Finance and Management Committee and are detailed in the following table. On-going performance monitoring includes benchmarking against other local councils where data is available.

Corporate Plan Aim	Measure	Annual target 2017/18
Maintain financial health	Deliver a balanced budget in accordance with the statutory timetable	Balanced budget agreed by the Council on February 26, 2018
Maintain financial health	Produce regular budget monitoring information	Performance against budget reported to the Council on a quarterly basis
Maintain financial health	Through better procurement, generate budget savings directly or through supporting other services	Total cashable savings meet salary costs of £80,000

Maintain financial health	Collection of Council Tax	In-year collection rate of at least 98%
Maintain financial health	Collection of Business Rates	In-year collection rate of at least 98%
Maintain financial health	Arrears for Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefit overpayments	Reduction in the annual provision for Bad Debts
Maintain financial health	Identification of fraud	Value of fraud identified meets service costs of £35,000
Maintain financial health	Lettings of industrial and commercial properties	Achieve 90% occupancy of all units and less than 10% of properties with rent arrears of less than three months
Maintain financial health	Income from Land Searches	Service breaks-even
Good Governance	Produce a draft set of accounts and financial statements for Annual Audit and Inspection	June 30, 2017
Good Governance	Completion of approved Internal Audit Plan and outcomes reported to the Audit Sub-Committee	At least 90% completed
Customer focus	Expand services in the Customer Contact Centre and maintain facilities for face-to-face enquiries where required	Ensure services remain accessible to residents and visitors
Customer Focus	Minimise downtime of IT	Downtime is less than 1% over the year
Customer Focus	Prompt payment of invoices for goods and services	97% of undisputed invoices paid within 30-days and within 10-days for local suppliers
Customer Focus	Freedom of Information requests answered within the statutory time limit	98% of requests satisfactorily answered with 20-days

Partnerships

Our significant constituted partnerships are outlined below:

Partnership	Main purpose
Central Midlands Audit Partnership	To deliver the Council's Internal Audit and to share best practice with other partners to strengthen the internal control environment
Fraud Investigation Service	To prevent and detect fraud and corruption in Council services

Key considerations

Service transformation

In order for Finance and Corporate Services to positively meet the challenges facing the Council, it will create and develop innovative solutions which will help to deliver the outcomes communities need and want at a cost the Council can afford. This is reflected in current partnership working and working with developers and other stakeholders in order to 'sweat the assets' of the Council. In addition, the following developments have been identified in 2017/18:

- Expansion of services into the contact centre in order for a greater number of telephone enquiries to be dealt with at the first point of contact.
- An options review of the centralised Debt Recovery function in order to refocus and transfer resources to individual teams.

Environmental impact

The Council has attained an internationally recognised environmental standard and this is a key aim in the Corporate Plan. Finance and Corporate Services will seek to ensure continual improvement of our environmental performance. For example, the directorate leads the 'Paperlite' strategy, reducing the amount of printed material and paper used.

Managing risks

The process set out in our Risk Management Strategy has been adhered to. The directorate's risk register is reported to the Finance and Management Committee on a quarterly basis.

Monitoring and review

This Service Plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis as part of our Performance Management Framework and will be used throughout the year to manage service delivery.