

HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PLAN

2011/12 – 2013/14

Hastings Council's Corporate Plan consists of the following 3 documents:

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| Part I Corporate Strategy | Strategic overview and priorities |
| Part II Annual Plan | a) 2011/12 - Targets and Milestones
b) 3 - year performance targets* |
| Part III Report back | Retrospective report on performance in 2010/11* |

** To be agreed and published in June 2011*

Part I: Corporate Strategy 2011/12 – 2013/14

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Corporate Plan sets out Hastings Borough Council's strategic direction and priorities over the next three years to the end of 2013/14.

1.2 Hastings Borough Council is facing a very challenging time over the next four years as we experience a significant reduction in the funding we receive from Central Government that helps us to provide local services. In 2011/12 we will be receiving £2.1 m less Government grant, and in 2012/13 we'll be losing a further £1.6m.

1.3 This represents just under a 30% reduction over two years and makes us one of the most affected councils in the country. The Government have made available a pot of money to support our transition to becoming a smaller Council, but this money is only available for two years. By the start of 2013/14 we will need to have reduced our annual expenditure by a further 2.4 million.

Over the 3 year period from 2011/12 to 2013/14 we will see our external grant cut by approaching 50%, from £12.7m to £6.6m.

1.4 Despite the very challenging financial situation we are operating within, we remain an ambitious Council and there is much to do to continue the regeneration of our town and to improve the quality of life and life chances for local people. **Our most important task therefore is to sustain delivery of our key priorities in a significantly tighter financial environment.** We must find ways to continue to deliver on our priorities within the resources we have available. We need to continue to do things more effectively, more cheaply and with others to spread the costs.

1.5 To maximise improvements within Hastings, we continue to work closely with key partners, including SeaSpace, Sussex Police, East Sussex County Council, Hastings and Rother Primary Care Trust, Sussex Coast College Hastings, and Amicus Horizon Housing, along with representatives from the private, voluntary and community sectors to achieve our long-term shared priorities for the area. The Hastings and St Leonards Sustainable Community Strategy 2003 - 2013, sets out our vision and mission statement:

Vision: ***The renaissance of Hastings through social, economic, cultural and environmental regeneration***

Mission: *To build on the town's strong community spirit, culture, diverse population and extraordinary natural environment to create a safer, healthier more sustainable and more prosperous place with lasting opportunities for everybody.*

2.0 Developing our Corporate Plan and Budget – The Big Conversation

2.1 The first stage in the annual process to develop our draft Budget and Corporate Plan is to decide our Priorities. These are reviewed each year to ensure they remain relevant to current circumstances and opportunities, and are informed by local people's views and evidence about local needs.

2.2 In recognition of the difficult financial period we were entering, we held a Big Conversation with local people in the autumn of 2010. The Leader and Deputy Leader wrote to every household to start a conversation about priorities. We described the activities that we must carry out by law, those we need to carry out to keep the Council running, and those we choose to carry out that could be stopped or reduced. We asked people to tell us what services they valued the most and the least, and which areas they would be prepared to see reductions in.

2.3 We recognised that everything we do matters to somebody and the views given will help to inform the difficult decisions Councillors have to take over the next few years. We also committed to continuing the Big Conversation and to keep talking to local people as the impact of the first cuts is felt, to make sure the services we provide are tailored to their needs.

2.4 During the Big Conversation, people told us they feel strongly about the basics of everyday life in the town, i.e. keeping the town clean and safe; free public toilets; tackling dog fouling and littering. Things that are important included parks and gardens, bringing empty homes back into use, continuing our 'grot-busting' activity and promoting Hastings as a tourist destination. Creating and retaining jobs and regenerating the town also remained high priorities.

Our Priorities

2.5 We listened to what local people told us and our Priorities for 2011/12 – 2013/14 are:

Priority 1: To continue to do everything we can to promote economic growth, employment and economic inclusion in partnership with others and through leading work on the growth of the cultural economy

Priority 2: Improve the quality of life of local people by working closely with partners to make the town safe and clean

Priority 3: Making sure we're efficient, customer-focussed and a good organisation to work for

Priority 4: Promoting equality and an inclusive, supportive community and narrowing the gap – bringing the quality of life of people in the most deprived parts of Hastings and St Leonards up to those of the rest of the town, and the town up to county and national averages

Priority 5: Tackling climate change and making Hastings more environmentally sustainable

Priority 6: Establishing a culture of openness and transparency about everything the Council does, enabling local people to hold us to account.

3.0 Meeting the Budget Shortfall

3.1 When developing our Budget for 2011/12 and 2012/13 and our 4 year Strategy, we looked at every part of the Council's activity, spending and performance. We have reviewed those things we are required to do by law and those things that we choose to do, and have balanced these against the priorities local people told us about and the needs of the town.

3.2 We are working to address our Budget pressures in a number of ways, in order of preference:

- Improving the way we do things – we are always seeking ways to making ourselves more efficient e.g. reducing the amount of energy, paper and printing we use, using IT to streamline our processes and make them quicker, and getting the best deals on our buying and contracts, e.g. we re-let the contract for managing our Leisure Centre, fitness centre and sports halls which saved £300,000 per year.
- Doing things with others to give us economies of scale – we are already working with others to deliver a number of services and share costs e.g. our Fraud Investigation, Stray Dogs and Emergency Planning services are shared with Rother Council; our Abandoned Vehicles work is shared with other East Sussex Councils. There is much more we can do in partnership with others and we are working hard to develop these opportunities e.g. we have agreed in principle to a joint waste collection contract with other East Sussex Councils.
- Increasing income – we have increased our fees and charges to a level we believe is sustainable

- Reductions in activities/scale of services – cutting the level of service we provide or stopping doing something is always a last resort, once we've exhausted all other options.

3.3 The Council is legally required to set a balanced Budget for 2011/12. However the size of the reduction we are facing means we have to take a longer term view. We have detailed Budget plans for the next two years, but we have a strategy that covers the 4 years of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. So, we are taking action now to cushion the further significant drop in funding from 2013/14 onwards. We want to ensure that we can continue to deliver the services local people need and value, and we have to be able to afford to do this when the transition funding runs out.

3.4 Even within these difficult times we recognise that some things are so important that we need to make money available for them. For 2011/12 we have prioritised spending for:

- Investment in a new Houses in Multiple Occupation Licensing Scheme to improve conditions and management of these properties (this Scheme is still subject to consultation and a Cabinet decision)
- Creation of a Recycling Officer post to focus on working with communities to improve recycling rates in the town
- Continuing to spend on the key areas of economic and physical Regeneration, Community Safety, Cultural Regeneration, Seniors and Young People and Community Cohesion.

4. Annual Targets - Corporate Plan Part II

4.1 Part II of the Corporate Plan sets out targets and details some of the activities that will be undertaken in 2011/12 to implement our priorities – these are what we set out to achieve in 2011/12. These are monitored by Overview and Scrutiny quarterly and are the means by which the Council is publicly held to account.

4.2 We ensure that our staff are focussed on achieving our longer term and annual priorities, by linking these to their individual targets, these are monitored through quarterly performance reviews and the staff appraisal process.