

**BODY:** **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** **12 December 2011**

**SUBJECT:** **Corporate Plan - 2012/13 Refresh - Public Consultation and Timetable**

**REPORT OF:** **Peter Finnis – Head of Strategy and Democracy**

---

**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose:** To present the findings of the public consultation exercise and set out the timetable for producing the 2012/13 version of the Corporate Plan.

**Contact:** Peter Finnis, Head of Strategy and Democracy, Telephone 01323 415003 or internally on extension 5003.  
[Peter.finnis@eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:Peter.finnis@eastbourne.gov.uk)

**Recommendations:** To note the outcomes of the public consultation exercise and the proposed timetable for producing the 2012/13 corporate plan, and make any comments and/or recommendations for referral to Cabinet on 14 December 2011.

---

## **1.0 Background/Introduction**

1.1 In keeping with the practice established in 2010, a public consultation exercise in respect of current and future corporate plan priorities has been undertaken under the joint ownership of Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee.

## **2.0 The Public Consultation Exercise**

2.1 The consultation exercise, undertaken this year, as a combination of online responses and face-to-face sessions with generic and specific community groups, has now taken place.

2.2 A total of 142 people participated in the consultation exercise. This compares to a total 157 people who participated in the 2010. As can be seen in the appendix, there was considerably more response online through the Council's website and, in particular, through the new social media pages.

2.3 Consultees were asked to rank existing corporate plan priority projects and activities in order of importance, propose their top 3 priorities going forward, and provide any other further relevant suggestions and comments. All the results and commentary arising

from the exercise are set out in detail in the appendix to this report.

### **3.0 Headlines**

- 3.1 As is to be expected, there is considerable consistency with the 2010 results. Under 'prosperous economy', support for the town centre redevelopment project is very strong and top of the list across all consulted groups. Similarly, under 'thriving communities', support for youth provision is consistently strong across all groups but with some useful commentary from the student executive at Sussex Downs College. Under 'quality environment', waste management remains at the forefront but with equal status being given to projects and activities around parks and street cleaning.
- 3.2 The appendix sets out a large number of comments and suggestions but no one subject that is not already picked up in current projects stands out with recurring commentary. Other existing priorities that were frequently mentioned as being particularly important were, help for small businesses, creating employment opportunities, cycling provision and cultural provision.

### **4.0 Attendance and Feedback**

- 4.1 The invited group sessions were scheduled as a result of direct liaison with relevant group organisers. General public sessions were publicised in the local media (newspaper and radio) both at the start of the consultation period and in the week leading up to the public consultation sessions, as well as being promoted through the council's website and social media pages throughout the 12-week period. All sessions were supported by the attendance of a selection of elected members and senior officers.
- 4.2 Despite the considerable promotional activity, public/external attendance at the face-to-face sessions were extremely disappointing but, in discussing this with some of the attendees, a number of potential factors were put forward:
- The relatively non-specific subject matter is less likely to attract large numbers than a major single issue consultation such as Eastbourne Park or the Town Centre.
  - People who attended in 2010 are likely to have decided not to repeat in 2011 as it would have less value to them in the second year.
  - Significant numbers of people may consider that, after quite intensive consultation over the last few years, the Council's priority activities are now broadly on track and consistent with the needs of the community.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding the disappointing turnout at the consultation sessions, feedback from those attending was extremely positive and there is clearly a perceived value in consulting at a personal level.

- 4.4 It is important that we maintain annual 'health check' consultation in respect of the corporate plan in order to be able to demonstrate that priority activity has been set with the knowledge of up to date community evidence. A number of options can be explored for consultation in 2012. As well as maintaining the online availability, among the possibilities to look into include consulting over a longer period through the summer months thus giving more opportunities to attend scheduled meetings of community groups and focusing more on emerging mechanisms such as the neighbourhood management groups. Further discussions will be held with the Council's community development officers in due course.

## **5.0 The Corporate Plan Timetable**

- 5.1 The primary purpose behind the consultation was to provide evidence of priority needs to help us determine the most appropriate priority activity in the corporate plan. The timetable for refreshing the corporate plan for 2012/13 has been agreed as part of the wider service and financial planning timetable but the key parts can be extracted as follows:

- During January - Senior Heads of Service in liaison with Cabinet portfolio holders to draft key projects for 2011/12 refreshed corporate plan theme chapters
- End of January - Leadership Team to agree draft priorities for 2012/13 corporate plan
- During February - Finalising of refreshed Corporate Plan chapters for 2010/11
- 28 March - Cabinet to receive and approve refreshed Corporate Plan subject to Plain English testing and Council approval
- During April - Corporate Plan checked for Plain English by volunteer community groups
- 9 May - Council final ratification of 2012/13 refreshed Corporate Plan

- 5.2 It is important that, in determining the content of the corporate plan for 2012/13, we can be confident that the priority activity listed has taken account of:

1. The outcomes/progress of the 2010/11 priority projects
2. Developing data from Local Futures
3. The messages arising from the public consultation exercise
4. Decisions taken as a result of service and financial planning

Senior Heads of Service and Cabinet portfolio holders will be assisted in this activity by information supplied by Strategic Development.

## **6.0 Financial and Probity Implications**

- 6.1 Other than member and officer time, which has been considerable, the only financial costs relating to the public consultation exercise

was in respect of advertising, printing and refreshments. The total cost came to around £600. There are no probity implications arising from this report.

## **7.0 Equality Considerations**

7.1 A key driver in this consultation exercise has been the objective of making it as accessible to as many people as possible. Special interest groups from across the community, voluntary and business sectors were identified and approached with the offer of sessions and two general public meetings were advertised in the local media and delivered together with the opportunity to participate remotely. In doing this, the widest possible opportunities to participate were provided to all sectors of the community.

## **8.0 Consultation**

8.1 Public consultation outcomes are as shown in the appendix to this report.

8.2 The full public consultation results were reported to the Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 12 December 2011. Any comments and recommendations will be reported verbally at this meeting.

## **9.0 Summary**

9.1 The consultation exercise undertaken is a key element in further demonstrating the Council's commitment to using evidence and engagement to enhance its knowledge in setting priority activities.

9.2 The availability of robust and comprehensive feedback from across the community together with improvements to the use of the Local Futures data provides a solid basis for continuing our improvement journey in respect of corporate planning and strategic direction.

**Peter Finnis**  
**Head of Strategy & Democracy**

---

### **Background Papers:**

- 2011/12 Corporate Plan
- Presentational material used at consultation sessions
- Individual feedback forms received from participants

The above background papers are available for inspection from the report author whose contact details are set out at the front of this report.

(cabinet/corp-plan-consultation/11-12-14)