

MANAGING OUR PERFORMANCE

This section provides information on how we manage overall performance and presents information regarding some of the projects that we are undertaking across the Council.

Introduction

Stroud District Council has a clear vision 'to make the district a better place to live, work and visit for everyone'. The statement is defined by seven corporate aims that are in order of importance as identified through the Stroud District Residents Survey. They are:

- To prevent and reduce crime and disorder
- To maintain and improve the community's health
- To create and expand recreational and cultural opportunities
- To help those in particular need
- To protect and improve the environment
- To help build economic prosperity
- To continuously improve the Council's performance by providing Best Value services.

The council has also identified five key priorities as its focus, which form the basis of the Corporate Delivery Plan and will be achieved through improved service delivery, partnership and innovation.

Corporate Delivery Plan

To enable us to achieve the vision, we have developed the Corporate Delivery Plan. This sets out the actions that will be taken to deliver our priorities, which were established in consultation with the Local Strategic Partnership. The Plan is consistent with the Council's policy planning and resource allocation cycle, service plans and performance management systems. The Plan has a three-year time horizon and will be regularly reviewed by the Executive Board and Strategic Team, who share overall responsibility with Cabinet.

Each of the priorities have specific objectives and actions associated with them. The priorities and objectives are:

Community Leadership

- To provide effective community leadership
- To work within the strategic framework of a community strategy and Local Strategic Partnership to ensure the Council's key priorities are delivered in conjunction with partners.

Environment

- To protect and improve the environment, with particular emphasis on the District's green spaces.

Regeneration

- Working in partnership to realise wealth creation, rural and market town regeneration and economic prosperity

Citizen First

- Delivering improved services, using opportunities identified in the Citizens First strategy to improve 'customer focus' and use electronic service delivery in partnership with others.

Community Safety

- To reduce crime and the fear of crime.
- Delivering the community safety strategy as a Beacon Council with out partners.

Housing

- To maximise the level of resources available to the Council and partners to meet housing needs, with a focus on affordable and decent housing.
- To achieve a long-term approach to housing provision in the best interests of Council tenants and the Council.

In order to deliver these priorities, the Council has identified some priorities concerning its management.

People

- To develop Council members and staff so they can contribute effectively to the Council's objectives and business requirements.

Processes

- To ensure that appropriate resources and systems are in place to meet the Council's priorities for service delivery.

Approach to service improvements

Last year we introduced a new service planning framework. This framework establishes a standard format, which allows each service to identify issues that may affect them over a five year period. They plan their consultation and review their performance over the past year enabling targets to be set. The key element of the service plan is a detailed breakdown of the activities they plan to undertake over the coming year. As part of our Investors in People process, these actions are assigned to staff as part of their annual appraisal.

Each service plan is presented to Strategic Team on a six monthly basis, while performance indicators are reported to Strategic Team, and Councillors every 3 months.

Members of Scrutiny committee meet with the Head of Service on a quarterly basis to monitor BVPI's and the implementation of service plans. Any service that is not achieving its targets can be called to report before the full committee. Through this scrutiny process the council achieves its corporate objective "to continuously improve the Council's performance by providing Best Value services".

Over the next year we will:

Report quarterly to Strategic Team and Councillors on performance.

Review the service planning process and make improvements.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

The Government has introduced an assessment of all local authorities called the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. This assessment is concerned with helping councils deliver better services to local communities.

The assessment process includes a self-assessment by the Council, which is then reviewed and commented upon by an independent group of our peers. This is followed by a Corporate Assessment by the Audit Commission, which is expected to take a week. This assessment will investigate how the Council is managed and will include looking at our performance over a number of years. In addition, assessments of the Council's management of public spaces and progress in meeting the decent homes standard or its contribution to managing local housing needs will be made. Finally, our benefit services will also be inspected.

The assessment for District Councils will start in June 2003 and will be completed by the autumn of 2004. Stroud District Council has been informed that it will be assessed in June 2004.

Peer Review

To help us prepare for the comprehensive performance assessment, Stroud District Council invited a team from the Local Government Improvement Programme to carry out a review of the authority. The Review team assessed the authority against a benchmark of an "ideal authority" and looked in particular at leadership, the way in which the Council engaged with the community, the operation of political structures and the way in which performance is managed.

The review resulted in quite a long report but the findings can be summarised as:

Stroud District Council is a forward-looking organisation with a clear vision and priorities for the district. We are driven by an ambitious programme of change that has a distinct purpose of improved service delivery and customer focus. Stroud has good reason to be proud of the commitment, quality and dedication of its staff. The council is recognised locally and nationally for innovative initiatives and is keen to try new partnership arrangements.

The council faces many challenges ahead. Change is taking place at a phenomenal pace on all fronts. Political arrangements, structures, strategies, processes are all mainly in their infancy. Continuing to deliver good quality services whilst implementing and adapting to change as well as turning strategies and plans into outcomes will be demanding. It will require all members and all officers to be more flexible, more outward looking and more decisive. Good information systems, communication, consultation and participation both within the council and externally will be fundamental principles of success.

Over the next year:

We will implement, monitor and review a plan to address the issues raised by the peer review team.

Arrange a follow up visit from the peer review team.

Community Strategy

Stroud District Council has produced its first Community Strategy. Following consultation, the strategy was adopted by Stroud District Council and endorsed by the Stroud Local Strategic Partnership in December 2002. The Partnership brings together a range of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors, with a diverse wealth of local knowledge and expertise. It has concentrated on three key issues, creating wealth; affordable housing and rural transport, and has formed syndicate groups to investigate these issues. Consultation is a vital aspect of the process and a large amount has been undertaken for various reasons within the District and this has been used as the basis for the strategy.

Both the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership recognise that more consultation will be required before updating it in December 2003. The issues identified and the action plan must be based on what people living and working in the area believe to be important.

A set of indicators that reflect the quality of life in the District have been developed and will be a useful means of monitoring our performance.

The Community Strategy and details of the Local Strategic Partnership can be found on the Council's website, www.stroud.gov.uk.

Over the next year

The Stroud Local Strategic Partnership will monitor the progress made towards meeting the needs of the community. The quality of life indicators will be further developed and reviewed.

We will involve a greater range of people and organisations in the monitoring and review of the Community Strategy and action plan.

Delivering services in partnership with Town and Parish Councils

Partnership working with Town and Parish Council's is fundamental to Stroud District Council's approach to improving the delivery of local services. Through partnership arrangements such as the Local Strategic Partnership, Community Safety cluster groups, Rural Housing Partnership, and the Stroud Concordat; Town and Parish Councils are actively involved in decisions affecting what and how services are provided to their communities.

These communities have seen the benefits of partnership working in a variety of initiatives introduced over the past year:

- Expansion of the Neighbourhood Wardens scheme to Stonehouse, Wotton, Berkeley and Sharpness
- Joint working with Cam, Slimbridge and Coley Parish Council's on skateboard development in Cam
- Support given to Berkeley Town Council in relation to funding for a playground development
- Regeneration project in Nailsworth focusing in on Forest Green football club
- Work with Wotton Town Council and the Community Sport Foundation to deliver a multi-sport facility on ground donated by Renishaws plc.
- Support to Wotton Cinema Club and Arts Centre proposals
- Support to Hardwicke Parish Council in relation to planning/procurement of outdoor playing space

- Management agreement with Stroud Town Council for management of the play area at The Leases.
- We undertake grass-cutting for some Town and Parish Councils whereby they benefit from our favourable contract rates.

Over the next year

We will work towards initiating working groups in towns where such links between Town/ Parish and SDC need developing to ensure a joint commitment to meeting local needs and providing services. Needs will be established through, for example, Countryside Agency Healthchecks, Town/Parish Plans or through the Market and Coastal Town Process.

Local Public Service Agreement

The County and District Councils in partnership with others within Gloucestershire have worked together to put a proposal to Government in which we agree to deliver stretched targets in areas that are important to service users across Gloucestershire. In return for achieving these targets over 3 years, we will receive a financial reward from the Government. The twelve areas covered by the Local Public Service Agreement are:

Gloucestershire Local Public Service Agreement Targets

Target	Target Description	Indicators	Baseline Performance	Performance Target
1.	Increase the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs at Grades A*-G (or equivalent) including English and Mathematics.	The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs at Grades A*-G (or equivalent) including English and Mathematics. This target will be measured using the average figures for all state schools in each local authority area, including special schools and CTCs.	90.1% (Summer 2001)	97% (Summer 2005)
2.	The number of Gloucestershire adults (aged 19 and over) who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, or have learning disabilities or low levels of basic skills, or are unemployed, enrolling on courses funded by Gloucestershire County Council's expenditure on adult education.	The number of Gloucestershire adults (aged 19 and over) who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, or have learning disabilities or low levels of basic skills, or are unemployed, enrolling on courses funded by Gloucestershire County Council's expenditure on adult education.	9,500 (Summer 2001)	11,500 (Summer 2005)
3.	Reduce preventable hospitalisation and ensure year on year reductions in delays in moving people over 75 on from hospital.	Intensive Home Care as a proportion of intensive and residential care services (excluding preserved rights cases added to client record system after 2001/02). (PAF PI B11) Number of older people helped to live at home through provision of intermediate care services per 1,000 population aged 65 year or over. (Subset of PAF PI C32) Number of units of extra-sheltered housing with planning permission agreed and capital and revenue finance committed. (Taken from the Supporting People return to ODPM)	17 (2000/1) 6.4 (2000/1) 207units (2001/2)	27 (March 2006) 20 (March 2006) 233 (March 2006)
4.	Increase the number of adoptions and decrease the time it takes for adoptions to be completed.	Number of looked after children who were adopted during the year to 31 March (Numerator of PAF PI C23) Average time taken from initial enquiry to approval	20 (2001) 15.4 months (2001)	29 (March 2005) 8 months (March 05)
5.	Reduce teenage conceptions in Gloucester City.	Rate per 1000 women aged 15-17 (using data from ONS)	67.4 (1998 ONS Data)	52 (2005 ONS Data)
6.	To reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured (KS1) on roads in Gloucestershire each year.	The total number of people killed or seriously injured (KS1) in road accidents in Gloucestershire.	360 (average 1994-1998)	281 (average 2003-2005)
7.	Improve the condition of local roads.	Percentage of principal roads with less than zero residual life, derived from deflectograph measure, BVPI 96	10.1% (2001/2)	5.6% (2006)
8.	Reduce fire related injuries in the home.	Number of injuries (excluding precautionary checks) arising from accidental fires in dwellings per 100,000 population. (BVPI 143ii)	7.15 (2001/2)	5.95 (2006)
9.	Achieve efficiency savings across all services.	Percentage increase in efficiency		9.8%

Target	Target Description	Indicators	Baseline Performance	Performance Target
10.	Increase the participation of problem drug users in drug treatment programmes.	<p>Clients with addresses in the DAAT area receiving treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client numbers • % Increase on numbers since 1999 baseline of 450 • Number of clients per 1000 of Gloucestershire population (564,841) in 2001/2 • New Clients receiving treatment at agencies in DAAT area • Client numbers • % Increase on numbers since 1999 baseline of 509 • Number of clients per 1000 of Gloucestershire population (564,841) in 2001/2 	<p>928 (2001/2) 106% (2001/2) 1.64 (2001/2)</p> <p>902 (2001/2) 77% (2001/2) 1.59 (2001/2)</p>	<p>1197 (2006) 166% (2006) 2.12 (2006)</p> <p>1206 (2006) 137% (2006) 2.13 (2006)</p>
11.	Increase the take up of Minimum Income Guarantee for over 60s.	Increase in the proportion of housing benefit claimants aged 60 and over that are entitled to and receiving Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG).	Estimate across Gloucestershire 75% (May 2002)	82% (2006)
12.	To increase: The proportion of people who have been arrested for alcohol related crimes and who are referred to the Alcohol Arrest Referral Scheme who attend the scheme. The proportion of those referred who attend the scheme and who remain with Gloucester Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS) to work longer term on their problems. The proportion referred who attended the scheme and who do not re-offend in the 12 months following the attendance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proportion of those referred who attend the scheme (defined as attending one complete session in a voluntary capacity before court appearance for alcohol related crime which generated the referral) 2. Proportion of those referred who attend the scheme and who remain with GDAS to work longer term on their problems. Remaining with GDAS is measured by counting all clients who complete the arrest referral scheme and who voluntarily undertake a comprehensive assessment in the following year. For performance at the end of the period of the Local PSA those undertaking a comprehensive assessment in 2005/06 are counted. 3. Proportion of those referred who attended the scheme and who do not re-offend in the 12 months following attendance. For the performance at the end of the period of the Local PSA this is measured by tracking 20% of those who attended the scheme during 2004/05 through 2005/06, with information available in April 2006. 	<p>70% (2001/2)</p> <p>10% (2001/2)</p> <p>79% (2001/2)</p>	<p>75% (December 2005) 12%</p> <p>(December 2005) 80%</p> <p>(December 2005)</p>

Citizens First Strategy

Our Citizens First Strategy forms part of our agenda for modernising the Council based on two principles of taking services to the community and ‘first-time-fix’. We aim to:

- Deal with a high proportion of all enquiries at the first point of contact, however we are contacted, i.e. phone, personal visit or email. The customer has no need to know anything of our internal structures.
- Ensure that new technology does not create a divide between those with access to electronic media and those without.

Over the past year we have improved service delivery by:

- Launching our new website – www.stroud.gov.uk - independently assessed as “the best District Council website we have seen”.
- Enabling council tax and other council bills to be paid on-line.
- Establishing a one morning a week presence at Wotton One Stop Shop, saving callers a trip to Ebley Mill.
- Working with Chalford Parish Council to help set up a new parish centre, which includes a kiosk with free access to our website.
- Funded PC’s at sites in Stroud and Dursley, with free internet access and training.

Over the next year we will:

Extend the one stop facility to Berkeley and Hardwick
Develop the ‘first point of contact’ Centre at Ebley Mill

Equality issues

The Council has produced an Equality Scheme that fulfils its statutory obligations under the Race Relations (Amendments) Act 2000, to promote race equality, eliminate discrimination and secure good relations between different races. The Scheme has been developed to provide a framework for mainstreaming gender and disability, as well as race, into all council policy and practice. This framework will enable us to respond positively to future equality issues relating to religion, age, and sexual orientation.

All Services have carried out an initial assessment of their functions and policies using the process developed by the CRE for the Race Equality Scheme.

Through this process they have produced an action plan, which identifies key tasks in promoting diversity in all relevant service provision and delivery.

The Council has adopted the Equality Standard for local government.

We are committed to promoting equality, not just as an employer but also as a service provider. However, like many other Local authorities, we will not be in a position to reach our proposed target of Level 2 of the Standard, due to the overly complex nature of the documentation and guidelines imposed by the local government employer’s organisation.

They themselves have acknowledged that the process will take much longer for authorities to implement than was initially envisaged.

Over the next year

We will provide diversity and equality training for all Members and staff.

We will be consulting widely to ensure that we take on board the views of all relevant community groups.

Environmental issues – EMAS

We are one of a handful of Councils that have achieved registration to the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). The Eco-Management & Audit System (EMAS) is a voluntary scheme to help local authorities manage their environmental impacts in a systematic and considered way. To gain registration under the scheme an authority must demonstrate “continuous improvements in environmental performance”.

The protection and enhancement of the local environment is one of the prime purposes of local government. At the same time there has been a growing awareness of the global and inter-generational dimensions, commonly addressed through the concept of sustainable development. By implementing EMAS, Stroud District Council is addressing many elements of sustainable development at an organisational level as well as ensuring that it is protecting and conserving the environment

Over the next year:

We will be updating our environmental management system to ensure it is consistent with the performance management framework.

Marketing Plan

The Council has adopted a Marketing Plan, which brings together our present and planned corporate marketing activities into one document. The strategy encompasses the previously separate communications and consultation strategies, going beyond public relations and communications to ensure we start and finish with our customers.

The corporate marketing strategy is framed within:

- The Council's vision – to make the District a better place to live, work and visit for everyone
- Its corporate priorities – community safety, regeneration, environment with a focus on green spaces, housing and citizens first – and
- The priorities established by the Local Strategic Partnership

The Marketing Plan activity includes:

- Welcome pack for new residents
- District news publication
- Improved consultation processes
- Web site content
- Improved marketing
- Tourism plan
- Staff communications
- Increasing involvement in local governance

Consultation

Consultation is a vital component of the Marketing Plan and guidance has been provided in the form of a toolkit to ensure that all consultation follows these principals:

have a clear purpose. The Council should have a good reason to consult and decisions must not be predetermined. All those involved should understand from the outset what can or will change as a result of the exercise. Consultation must not be used as an information provision exercise;

are co-ordinated, to ensure the best use of resources and make use of existing information to avoid duplication of work;

make full use of the results of existing consultation;

are managed competently, the process must be well planned, adequately resourced and effectively followed through so that it produces a valid outcome;

are targeted at the right audience which could include residents, service users/non-users, businesses, voluntary organisations, police, Health Authority, other councils etc;

are inclusive, or where appropriate, targeted at equalities groups so that there is a representative cross-section of the public, including disabled people, young people, older people and minority ethnic groups, etc;

consider what method would be appropriate prior to undertaking any consultation. Services are encouraged to try out a variety of methods and not be restricted to questionnaires;

ensure that results are acted upon. The views expressed by members of the public must be adequately reflected in policy and decision making processes and be reported in the Service Plan;

give feedback to the consultees so that people know their contributions were valued and can see how the issue was progressed even if the Council's subsequent decisions and actions do not fully align with the consultation findings;

are evaluated to check that the aims of the exercise have been met; to help develop best practice; and to ensure resources are used wisely;

consider the need to involve/work in partnership with other local service providers such as the Police, Health Authorities, Voluntary Organisations, Businesses, etc.

Consultation in Stroud District

Strategic Consultation

Consultation is an essential element of developing strategies and plans. Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders will continue to be undertaken in respect of the following:

Community Strategy – the Council has a duty to prepare a strategy that will outline how we, and our partners, will work together to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. It is essential that the priorities that are addressed are chosen as a result of consultation.

Community Safety Strategy – working with the many partners that have come together to form the Crime and Disorder Partnership, we have issued a revised strategy for 2002 to 2005. This strategy was drawn up following a wide-ranging consultation exercise.

Local Plan – The Council's Deposit Draft Local Plan has been the subject of extensive consultation throughout its preparation. The large response we had to its proposed modifications prior to the Local Plan Inquiry has led to some revisions in our policies.

Housing Strategy – This strategy outlines the Council's plan for meeting the housing needs of the district. It is developed following extensive consultation and partnership with many organisations.

Housing Tenants consultation

We carry out regular ongoing consultation with our tenants and are committed to ensuring that they are fully involved in the management of their homes. We produce a regular newsletter, which keeps tenants informed about all aspects of housing.

Satisfaction Surveys

A number of services carry out customer satisfaction surveys. We use the results of these surveys to make improvements in our services. Over the next year, we will be carrying out the following in-depth satisfaction surveys:

- General satisfaction with the Council.
- Planning Service
- Benefits Service
- Council House Tenants

Citizens' Panel

In the next year, we intend to establish a citizens' panel,

which we hope will play an important role in the Council's approach to consultation.

Stroud Household Survey 2002

In October 2002, a telephone survey was undertaken in which householders were asked a number of questions.

Over half of those interviewed were able to recognise all of the services provided by the District Council.

However the survey showed that residents were more likely to identify services such as Kerbside Recycling, Street Cleaning and Car Parks as the responsibility of the Council, rather than services such as Grants to Voluntary Organisations.

When asked about the Council Tax, half (54.3%) of all residents said that they were aware of the way in which their Council Tax is divided between the District Council, the County Council and others. This is a significant increase on the figure for last year (35.5%).

The survey asked about resident's priorities. In terms of future spending by the Council, residents believe that the highest priorities were 'Reducing Anti Social Behaviour' and 'Helping the needy', ahead of Recycling. They attached particularly low priority to spending on 'Arts & Heritage' and 'Leisure'.

Just over half of all respondents had access to a computer and 86% of this group had access to the Internet. This is about the same level of access to the Internet as last year (43%). Amongst those with access to the Internet, 69% have either visited the Stroud website or have heard about it. The number of visitors to the website (20% of those with access, 9% of all residents) is a significant improvement over last year. Also almost all of those with access to the Internet used it for one of the main services. In particular, 85% used the Internet to look for general information, 58% purchased goods / services and 49% used it for on-line banking and paying bills.

Council Tax

Residents were told about falling investment returns and changes in the Government Grant System to local Councils, yet only 18.5% of respondents said that they would accept an increase of 6% or more in the District Council share of Council Tax. A further 29.4% believed there should be no increase at all, and 22.2% would not say without knowing about changes in services. Larger increases (i.e. 6% or more) were more acceptable to residents in the 35-54 age group.