

Performance Highlights

Please note - many of these actions have been completed in partnership with other Departments/Services throughout the Organisation whose contribution was essential and is greatly appreciated.

Governance

- Implementation of new Committee Structures in June 07 (following the Governance Review) which streamlined 5 Committees and 10 Sub-Committees resulting in 5 Committees and a Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to oversee decisions taken at the Committee level (a new Licensing Committee and Audit Panel were established as part of this exercise).
This led to a reduction in annual meetings from 275 to 127 and also:
 - The establishment of a Strategic Policy & Resources Committee to provide strategic direction to the organisation; and
 - The removal of all Sub-Committees.
- A revised Scheme of Delegation has been adopted to enable lower level decision-making by Officers/Staff and alleviate Councillors time to concentrate on strategic decisions;
- A new minutes system has been implemented - modern.gov - allowing the public, Councillors and Staff full access to committee reports, minutes, agendas etc;
- The Review of Members' remuneration has been carried out;
- Individual training budgets have been established for all Members and a Member Development programme has been established; and
- Members now play a more integral part in new developments - including the development of the new corporate planning process.

Strategic Planning, Performance Management and Programme Management

- Strategic Planning and Performance has been brought to the top of Council's agenda - in order to provide a clear strategic direction for staff and ensure the organisation improves efficiency and accountability. Strategic frameworks have been created for: planning; performance; information management; assurance; human resources; and financial management.
Frameworks for Value for Money, Asset Management and Customer Focus are currently under development.
- The Corporate Plan (2008-2011) and the integrated planning process have been developed and approved by Committee- outlining six strategic themes for the organisation;
- We are beginning the process of implementing a Corporate Performance Management system for the entire organisation to provide clear, accountable information for Councillors and Officers,
- Phase 1 of the Value Creation Map process (ie the business planning process) is complete. We are evaluating Phase 1 with Phase 2 roll out underway.
- We completed a major consultation exercise with Residents, Members and Staff in Summer 2007 the results have helped inform the development of the new Corporate Plan 2008-2011.

- The results of these exercises have formed the Council's new strategy for 2008-2011, anchoring the plans of the Council in the needs and priorities of local people.
- Ongoing policy responses on a wider range of issues (eg Post Office closures, suicide prevention etc.)

Improved residents satisfaction

The residents survey was conducted on a door-to-door basis covering a representative sample of 1,517 residents across Belfast. The survey results indicate that people enjoy living in Belfast and have seen many improvements during the past three years

Satisfaction with the council and our services is improving

- 74% of residents are satisfied with our overall service provision - up from 65% in 2004
- 64% of respondents feel that council services are available when they need them
- 60% of residents believe that we are efficient in delivering our services

Communication between the council and residents is improving

- 91% of those who received and read City Matters said that it helps increase their understanding of the work of the council
- 61% are satisfied with how easy it is to find information about the council

Belfast is getting better

- 96% of respondents enjoy living in Belfast compared to 92% in 2004
- 68% feel that Belfast has got better during the past three years while only 8% feel it has got worse

Neighbourhoods are improving

- 81% feel that their neighbourhoods have got better or stayed the same during the past three years

Best things

- The best three things about living in Belfast are good neighbours (29%), family and friends (22%) and local amenities (10%)
- 62% said that recycling facilities have improved during the past three years and 60% feel that the general appearance of the city has improved

People want the council to lead the city

- 86% of residents agree that the council was important to their everyday lives - a 17% increase since 2004
- 56% feel that the council is the organisation best placed to direct the future shape of the city
- 87% of residents feel it is important for the council to consult them

When asked what the council's priorities should be, residents highlighted:

- Working to make local areas safer (54%)

- Working to make local areas cleaner and greener (42%)
- Creating a clear vision for the city's future (37%)
- Promoting good relations between communities (34%); and
- Helping to create a better city for children (29%)

We asked residents what they felt would most help to improve their quality of life. The top four things identified include:

- Activities for teenagers (41%)
- Cleaner Streets (29%)
- Facilities for young children (25%)
- Access to affordable, decent housing (18%)

Review of Public Administration

Has taken a lead role in coordinating and driving forward the Council's continued engagement within the Review of Public Administration process. In so doing, has been:

- Instrumental in the development of corporate positions and formal responses to emerging RPA related issues and/or consultations.
- Actively engaged within the delivery mechanisms established to take forward the implementation of the RPA and the associated policy and legislation formulation.
- Working in partnership with both central and local government to ensure that the best interests of Belfast and the wider local government sector is pursued.
- Engaged with NILGA and negotiated new contractual arrangement

People Management

- The HR Strategy and Workforce Development plan have been developed and a People Panel established to move this forward;
- The Absence Management Framework has been implemented which has led to a reduction in absenteeism;
Absence figures for April 2007-January 2008 are 12.0 days per employee, down from 12.91 days for the same period in the previous year. Target figure is 10.9 days per employee.
- Single Status arrangements successfully implemented;
- The MAD Awards and the Brainwave scheme continue to be successful with more than 280 Brainwaves put forward to date and numerous implemented or being worked on; and
- We have appointed our Internal Communications Manager to drive the internal Communications process. The staff intranet is currently being reworked for a re-launch later in the year.

Efficiency Management

- The implementation of the Efficiency Programme have resulted in approximately £4million savings realised to date (£1.15million 06/07,

£1.5million 07/08 and £1.22million in 08/09;). These have been real savings taken from base budgets which in themselves have tightened up considerably.

- Undertaken a rates maximisation review of vacant properties which has realised £2.3m to date
- Produced a Councillors guide to Rates
- We have implemented the new Gateway Process for capital projects; and
- Commenced the development of a Asset Management Strategy for the Council

City Investment Strategy / Capital Projects

- Identified potential assets for capital receipt
- Undertaken an asset mapping exercise with other agencies across the city
- Finalised a project activity map for Council activity across North, South, East, West and City Centre
- Taken the lead role in the management of £30m Connswater Greenway Project
- Lead role in undertaking a due diligence exercise to examine BCC funding position of Titanic Signature Project
- Working with DSD on Glen 10
- Developed policy document and briefed Minister on Tall Buildings
- Directed and managed city hall decant, refurbishment and associated issues
- Completion of Grove multi functional centre
- Ongoing work on the development of a National Stadium
- Co-ordination of a new Belfast Group of major infrastructure providers

Customer Focus

The Council is aiming to ensure that customer service is consistent for every customer in the contact they make with the Council.

- We have seconded a Head of Service to drive the customer focus agenda;
- A baseline assessment has been completed with improvement actions identified for each service; and
- A visioning exercise and gap analysis have been undertaken to inform the development of this strategy.