

REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 6
DATE OF MEETING:	12 JUNE 2003	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	OPEN:
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	CLLR R BELL (CHAIR OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	MONITORING OF COUNCIL PLANS AND STRATEGIES	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That the Committee receives this report and considers the issues raised in Section 4.

2.0 Purpose Of Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- explain the background to the review of arrangements for monitoring Council plans and strategies by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee
- outline the findings
- identify issues for further consideration by Policy Committees

2.2 It has also been presented to the Environmental & Development Services and the Housing & Community Services Committees.



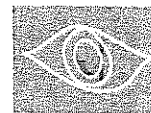
3.0 Detail

Background to the review

- 3.1 The scrutiny of plans and strategies that comprise the Council's budget and policy framework or form part of Best Value Reviews is an important part of the work programme for both the Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committees.
- 3.2 The volume and nature of this work prompted the Corporate Scrutiny Committee Members to investigate arrangements for monitoring all Council plans and strategies and the contribution of Policy Committees in this process.
- 3.3 A small Working Group comprising Cllr Harrington, Cllr Rose, Cllr Mrs Robbins and myself was set up to carry out the investigation, supported by officers from the Policy and Best Value Division.

Baseline information

- 3.4 The first task for the Working Group was to produce a comprehensive list of all the Council's current plans and strategies, along with those planned over the next 12 months or so.
- 3.5 This list contains over 100 items covering:
 - plans and strategies comprising the Council's budget and policy framework (as set out in Article 4 of the Constitution)
 - other corporate or service related plans and strategies
 - Service Plans
 - improvement/implementation plans resulting from Best Value Reviews
 - action plans following reports by the District Auditor
 - other action plans linked to specific initiatives (e.g. Investors in People)
- 3.6 Annexe A lists the plans and strategies relating to this Committee. Details are also provided about:
 - the plan status -
 - whether it is required by law (i.e. *statutory*) (e.g. Best Value Performance Plan)
 - whether it is required by *Government*, usually linked to funding or the delivery of national policies/programmes (e.g. Housing Strategy/Housing Investment Programme)
 - whether the Council has a choice about producing the plan or strategy (i.e. *discretionary*). These plans or strategies are usually produced to assist the Council in particular areas of work (e.g. the promotion of Tourism)
 - date of approval and review
 - the responsible officer within the Corporate Management Team
 - the Committee responsible for the development and implementation of the plan or strategy



Consideration by the Working Group

- 3.7 Given the large number of plans and strategies that had been identified, the Working Group considered that it would be impractical for them to review monitoring arrangements in detail, but that the issue should be referred to Policy Committees for further discussion.
- 3.6 This approach was endorsed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10 February 2003 (Minute No. COS/50 refers).

4.0 Issues for Policy Committees

- 4.1 The investigation has illustrated the large number and broad range of Council plans and strategies. The concern is that without 'ownership' by Members and Officers and effective monitoring arrangements, some plans and strategies may 'stay on the book shelves' rather than contribute to the provision of high quality, value for money services to local people.
- 4.2 This raises a number of important questions for the Committees:
- **The need to have a clear understanding of the terms 'policy', 'plan' and 'strategy'**
 - **Are all the plans and strategies still relevant and/or needed? Is there any scope for rationalisation?**
 - **What arrangements are in place for monitoring existing plans and strategies? To what extent do Members wish to be involved in this process and by what means?**
 - **How can Members contribute to the development of new plans and strategies?**
 - **Are changes needed to Committee agendas and/or working arrangements to give Members the opportunity for considering important plans and strategies in more detail?**
- 4.3 In thinking about these issues, Members should also be aware of the changes that are taking place at the national level.
- 4.4 In the White Paper '*Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services*', the Government announced proposals to streamline and rationalise the number of plans that it requires Councils to produce. Further details are contained in the paper '*Freedoms and Flexibilities for Local Government*', which was published last November 2002.



- 4.5 Essentially, Councils judged 'excellent' under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment would have to prepare just two plans – the Best Value Performance Plan and the Community Strategy. However, other Councils can also expect some reduction.
- 4.6 A key decision for Policy Committees will be whether they wish to retain certain plans and strategies (even though they may no longer be required) in order to support the effective management of the organisation.
- 4.7 A further consideration in terms of rationalisation is the proposed South Derbyshire Community Strategy, which will form the overarching plan for the district. A draft Community Strategy is expected to be in place by the end of 2003.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 None arising directly from this report. Some rationalisation of existing plans and strategies and greater attention to monitoring arrangements will help to ensure that resources are directed to priority areas.