

# Corporate Business Plan 2007 / 8

**Version 1.0**  
**Approved by Executive 27.2.07**

Contact for enquiries: Judith Sharples, Head of Organisational Improvement  
[Judith.sharples@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.sharples@devon.gov.uk) Tel: 01392 382167

# CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>1</b>	Introduction	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	Our Strategic Plan	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	Opportunities and challenges for Devon	<b>4</b>
<b>4</b>	Audit & inspection findings	<b>6</b>
<b>5</b>	The view of our service users and citizens	<b>8</b>
<b>6</b>	Our Corporate priorities for the year ahead	<b>8</b>
<b>7</b>	Using our resources to deliver our priorities	<b>15</b>
<b>8</b>	Managing our performance	<b>17</b>

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – action in response to CPA corporate assessment

Appendix 2 – corporate programmes structure and accountabilities

Appendix 3 - links between Community Strategy, LAA and Strategic Plan

Appendix 4 - Devon's Planning Framework

Appendix 5 – Planning & Performance Management Cycle

Appendix 6 - Corporate Risk Register

## 1. Introduction

Our vision, shared with our partner organisations, is for Devon to be:

*“a county with safe, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a cherished environment”*

Our Strategic Plan 2006 – 2011 *Focus on Devon’s Future* clarifies the contribution that the County Council will make to the achievement of this vision, setting out our priorities for improving the quality of life of Devon’s communities over the next 5 years.

All staff have an important part to play in helping us achieve our vision for Devon and we would like to thank you all for the contribution you have made over the past 12 months. It has been a challenging year for us all with some setbacks and disappointments but, despite the difficulties, staff have displayed their usual professionalism and commitment. As a result we have achieved improved levels of performance in many areas and made significant progress with the delivery of our Strategic Plan. We will be publishing an annual report in June this year giving details of our achievements and progress to date and explaining how our work has made a difference to the lives of the people of Devon we are here to serve.

Now that the 2007/8 budget has been agreed, this plan looks forward and sets out our corporate priorities for the next 12 months to help us achieve further improvement. It takes account of the opportunities and challenges facing Devon and the resource constraints we have to work within. It also takes account of the findings of recent external inspections of our performance. It is intended to provide a clear framework for action in each directorate and to let directorates know the corporate arrangements that will be put in place to support their work in the coming year

Delivering high quality services and working with others to achieve better outcomes for the people of Devon remains our top priority and, as ever, we are confident that our staff will rise to the challenge of doing just that in the year ahead.

**Cllr Brian Greenslade**  
Leader

**Phil Norrey**  
Chief Executive

## 2. Our Strategic Plan priorities

The Strategic Plan identifies five priorities which will be the focus of special attention and effort over the next 5 years. Our priorities are:

- ♦ giving the best possible start in life to Devon’s children and young people
- ♦ strengthening Devon’s economy
- ♦ celebrating Devon’s culture
- ♦ improving Devon’s environment
- ♦ promoting independence and choice in Devon.

together with an over-arching aim to make Devon England’s greenest county.

For each of our priorities we have identified the objectives we aim to achieve over the next 5 years; the strategies we will pursue to achieve our objectives; and the targets we aim to meet by 2008. We have also prioritised our objectives and identified the following as the most important:

- ♦ Improving health and educational outcomes for under-achieving children and young people
- ♦ Unlocking the economic potential of disadvantaged communities

- ♦ Minimising waste through increased recycling and composting and reducing the landfilling of waste
- ♦ Tackling traffic congestion and air pollution and improving public transport
- ♦ Enabling more elderly and disabled people to stay safe and healthy in their own home.

Our aim is to achieve all of the objectives and targets set out in the Strategic Plan but we will ensure that our resources and efforts are focused on the delivery of these objectives above all others.

Our approach to the delivery of our Strategic Plan is underpinned by our organisational values. In everything we do we aim to:

- ♦ put the people of Devon first;
- ♦ value everyone;
- ♦ work together;
- ♦ improve and innovate.

Further details of the action we are taking to deliver the five Strategic Plan priorities are set out in directorate plans, service plans and partnership plans relating to each priority. The Strategic Plan web pages have links to the most up-to-date plans. This document focuses on the corporate arrangements we will put in place in the year ahead to support the delivery of our Strategic Plan priorities and address other corporate issues.

### 3. Opportunities and challenges for Devon

The way we work and the delivery of our Strategic Plan objectives and targets are influenced by a wide variety of national and local factors. Most importantly, we must ensure that our plans take account of the changing needs, expectations and priorities of Devon's communities, including future generations. Last year we reported that the following factors must be taken into account as we develop our plans:

- ♦ Demographic changes such as the increasing numbers of older people, the falling birth rate and loss of young people from Devon and our increasing minority ethnic population including the recent growth in migrant workers from Eastern Europe;
- ♦ The threat posed by climate change which can only be addressed by encouraging people and organisations to adopt more sustainable lifestyles and ways of working;
- ♦ Technological developments which have the potential to transform many aspects of service delivery and communication.

These continue to be significant issues which we must respond to.

At a national level, the long awaited Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* was finally published in October 2006. This sets out a vision of:

*"...revitalised local authorities, working with partners, to reshape public services around the citizens and communities that use them. This means changing the way we work to give citizens and communities a bigger say; to enable local partners to respond more flexibly to local needs; and to reduce the amount of top-down control from central government"*.

The White Paper has chapters setting out proposals for the following:

- ♦ *Responsive services and empowered communities* – councils are expected to give citizens and communities a bigger say in the services they receive and in shaping the places where they live. There will be new legal requirements to ensure this happens.
- ♦ *Effective, accountable and responsive local government* – there will be three choices of leadership model: a directly elected mayor; a directly elected executive

of councillors; or a leader elected by his / her fellow councillors with a clear four year mandate. Overview and scrutiny committees will have a strengthened role in holding local public service providers to account and demanding responses to their recommendations.

- ♦ *Strong cities, strategic regions* – action will be taken to promote the economic development of cities and proposals to devolve powers and resources to regions and local authorities in cities will be developed.
- ♦ *Local government as a strategic leader and place-shaper* – the local authority's role in bringing together local partners to improve services and shape places will be strengthened. Local Strategic Partnerships will continue to be the overarching strategic partnership for an area. Local authorities will continue to be under a duty to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy and county and unitary councils will also be required to prepare a Local Area Agreement which will serve as the delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- ♦ *A new performance framework* – a new inspection regime known as the Comprehensive Area Assessment will be put in place. This is intended to be a more proportionate risk-based regime that will cut bureaucracy and allow more targeted support or intervention when things go wrong.
- ♦ *Efficiency – transforming local services* – in order to control public service expenditure ambitious efficiency gains will be required as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. All councils will be expected to challenge traditional methods of delivery, root out waste, keep all council activity under review and work with other public bodies to share assets, systems, data, skills and knowledge more effectively.
- ♦ *Community cohesion* – the aim is to draw on the benefits that a more diverse society brings while addressing the potential problems and risks to community cohesion. Central government will work with local authorities facing particular challenges; provide support for areas facing difficulties; help share best practice; and support the establishment of forums on extremism in parts of the country where they are necessary.

Whilst it will take a number of years for some of the proposals in the White Paper to take effect we must ensure what we do reflects the new national agenda for local government. In fact, there is already a strong link between our corporate priorities and the expectations of local government set out in the White Paper so we should not have to make any radical changes to our plans as a result.

The White Paper was accompanied by an "Invitation to all Councils in England" which gave councils in two-tier areas an opportunity to seek unitary status and / or to be pathfinders for improved two-tier working by 25 January 2007. Exeter City Council has submitted a proposal for unitary status. The County Council, Borough, City and District Councils and Association of Town and Parish Councils are developing alternative proposals for improved joint working across the tiers of local government in Devon. Although we have not applied for formal "pathfinder" status, all authorities in two-tier areas will be expected to improve services and become more efficient through stronger joint working.

The Government will announce which proposals for unitary and / or pathfinder status will be permitted to proceed to the next stage before the end of March and there will then be a 12 week consultation period with stakeholders and partners in the areas affected by the proposals. The Government intends to make final decisions by the end of July 2007 with new arrangements being implemented by April 2009 at the latest.

The County Council's view is that the creation of a unitary council for Exeter would be a very disruptive and costly exercise which risks making life worse for the people of Devon rather than better. If Exeter City Council's bid for unitary status is successful this will clearly have very significant implications for the County Council's budget and

responsibilities. Issues in relation to the possibility of local government restructuring must not distract us from our core purpose of delivering improved outcomes for the people of Devon. This will be a major challenge in the year ahead.

As well as strengthening partnership working between the County Council and district councils, closer collaboration with other local public services is also crucial. Restructuring is underway in other parts of the public service. The Devon Fire and Rescue Service will be merging with Somerset and the six Devon Primary Care Trusts have now been replaced by one Devon Primary Care Trust covering the same area as the County Council. This will create new opportunities for stronger collaboration with the health service. One example of this is the creation of a joint Director of Public Health appointment between the Council and the Primary Care Trust. The postholder, Virginia Pearson, is a member of the Council's Corporate Management Board and will help to achieve our shared aim of healthier communities throughout Devon.

Finally, 2007 will see a new Treasury-led Comprehensive Spending Review which it has been well trailed will be tough for public services and require us to make significant year-on-year efficiency savings. We are unlikely to know the outcome of the review for future budgets until November or December 2007 but we anticipate that difficult decisions will need to be made when we come to set the budget for 2008/9 and the following two years.

#### **4. Audit and inspection findings**

We had two major external inspections of our performance in 2006: the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) corporate assessment of our overall performance and the Joint Area Review (JAR) inspection of services to children and young people. The latter inspection covered the services provided by Health and other partner organisations as well as those that are the responsibility of the County Council.

##### ***CPA corporate assessment***

The report summarising the findings of the inspection team makes many very positive comments about the Council's performance; our strong corporate and community leadership; the effectiveness of our work with partners to improve outcomes for the people of Devon; and our arrangements for communicating and consulting with our communities, including minority and disadvantaged groups. The Council scored 3 out of 4 for ambition, capacity and achievements and 2 out of 4 for prioritisation and performance management. The overall score of 3 out of 4 means that the Council is judged to be performing well and that our performance is consistently above minimum requirements.

The report identifies 4 main areas for improvement:

- ♦ ensuring that the new corporate performance management system results in best practice in every department and enables councillors and managers to be comfortable with measuring and interpreting data and taking the necessary action;
- ♦ ensuring that staff are supported through organisational change;
- ♦ driving up school achievement with the involvement of all parts of the organisation;
- ♦ improving the protection of children at the greatest risk of abuse by reviewing the thresholds which govern access to services and ensuring a more consistent application of eligibility criteria.

The action we are taking in response to these recommendations has been incorporated into our corporate programmes of work. A summary of the action we are taking is provided at appendix 1.

## ***Joint Area Review of services to children and young people***

The report summarising the findings of the inspection team highlights many areas where good outcomes are being achieved and services are innovative and deliver well. The report also identifies areas where outcomes and services require improvement. The report includes scored judgements in 11 areas. In 8 of these areas, the score is 2 out of 4 which means that performance is adequate. In the area of “making a positive contribution” a score of 3 (good) has been achieved and in the areas of “staying safe” and the Council’s social care services for children the score is 1 (inadequate). Whilst some of the judgements are disappointing, the report has provided a further incentive to take action in areas where we recognise the need for improvement and to ensure that priorities and targets are delivered by the Council and partner organisations. The report makes a number of recommendations on action to be taken immediately, in the next six months and in the longer term to improve outcomes for children and young people, particularly children at risk of abuse, looked after children, children with learning difficulties or disabilities and other vulnerable young people. A detailed action plan has been developed by the Council and partner organisations to address all of these recommendations and is being implemented with progress being overseen by the Children’s Trust.

The Joint Area Review also included an inspection of our youth service. The report on this inspection finds that young people in Devon are well served by the youth service; that the service is effective, well-managed and provides good value for money; that achievement and practice are good; and that partnerships are constructive and creative. Scored judgements are given for standards of young people’s achievement; quality of youth work practice; quality of curriculum and resources; and strategic and operational leadership and management. In all of these areas a score of 3 out of 4 has been achieved which means that the service is good and delivering consistently above minimum requirements for users.

### ***2006 CPA scores and direction of travel judgement***

We receive a CPA score each year for each of our main services and for our use of resources. The scores are based on a number of factors including Performance Indicator results, the findings of inspections, performance in relation to a set of key lines of enquiry for use of resources and other judgements about some aspects of performance. Our latest CPA scores (based on 2005/6 performance) are as follows:

Use of resources: 3 out of 4  
Children and Young People: 2 out of 4  
Adult Social Care: 3 out of 4  
Environment: 3 out of 4  
Culture: 4 out of 4

Based on these scores we are deemed to be a “three star” authority. Whilst we were disappointed to lose the top “four star” CPA rating achieved in 2005, we believe that being regarded as a top performing authority by the people of Devon is more important than achieving the top CPA rating. We recognise that there are important lessons to learn from the recent inspections of our performance and have taken swift and robust action in response to the findings. However, we also recognise that we should not rely solely on the findings of external inspections to identify areas for improvement but should also listen carefully to feedback from our citizens and communities and develop our own robust arrangements for monitoring and managing performance. Our aim is to do what is right for the people of Devon rather than pursue higher CPA ratings as an end in itself.

We also receive an annual Audit Commission judgement on our “direction of travel”. The latest judgement published in February 2007 was that we are

“improving well”. Reduced crime levels; reduction in the volume of waste collected and increased recycling rates; partnership working to improve services for older people; promotion of alternatives to the car; achievement of a ‘Transport Centre of Excellence’ award; and improvement of two thirds of the Council’s performance indicators with 42 percent of indicators now in the top quartile were identified as some of our improvements. School attainment in disadvantaged areas and the protection of children at most risk of abuse were identified as in need of improvement. The Council was also judged to have good plans for providing and improving services; to manage its finances effectively; and to have good policies for managing and supporting staff. The need for a clear strategy for managing our buildings and other property was identified.

## **5. The views of our service users and citizens**

We have many ways of seeking and receiving feedback from the people who use our services and the public at large. Some of the feedback we receive is very positive. Other feedback helps us identify areas for improvement and learn from mistakes to stop them happening again. A national survey is carried out every 3 years to find out how satisfied the public are with particular services (including recycling centres, libraries, bus services, public transport information and the handling of complaints) and with the overall service of the Council.

The latest survey was carried out in the autumn of 2006 and the results have recently become available. Although satisfaction with specific services has increased, the number of people saying they are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service of the Council has reduced from 53% in 2003 to 50% in 2006. Whilst this result is disappointing it does reflect national trends and we must be careful not to place too much reliance on this survey alone.

We need to develop further ways of communicating with the people we are here to serve, including those who have difficulty getting their voice heard, to get a better understanding of what people need and want from us. We also need to encourage and support people to take action themselves to improve their quality of life and ensure that Devon remains a good place to live for existing communities and future generations. Whilst we will never be able to satisfy everyone’s needs and wishes, we need to explain the reasons for our decisions clearly and be willing to listen and change our decisions if a better way forward can be found. By doing this we hope that satisfaction levels will improve in future years.

## **6. Our corporate priorities for the year ahead**

Most of the priorities set out in the 2006/7 corporate business plan remain priorities for the coming year. This includes delivery of the Strategic Plan supporting strategies which have now been established as corporate programmes of work. This section describes the progress we have made in 2006/7 as well as setting out our specific aims and challenges for 2007/8.

### ***Managing the delivery of the Strategic Plan***

Last year we restructured our service directorates to reflect our Strategic Plan priorities. The restructuring has meant a period of change and uncertainty for many staff as new roles, responsibilities and reporting structures have been developed. Although the changes have caused a degree of disruption in the short-term, the new arrangements should strengthen our capacity to deliver the Strategic Plan priorities in the longer term and remove some of the organisational barriers that have prevented us meeting the needs of our customers and citizens in a comprehensive and integrated way in the past.

Further changes to our organisational structure, particularly in relation to corporate and support services, are likely to be made in the coming year to facilitate the delivery of our Strategic Plan supporting strategies and other corporate priorities set out in this Plan. Further changes are also likely to be required as we develop new partnership arrangements to deliver many of our plans and services.

As well as carrying out organisational restructuring, we also introduced new programme and project management arrangements to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan in 2006. An interim Programme Support Office was established to help to deliver the new arrangements. The Corporate Management Board carried out a review of the new arrangements in the autumn of 2006 and supported their continuation. Resources have therefore been secured to enable a permanent Programme Support Office to be established from April 2007. This will be based in the Personnel & Performance Directorate. Appendix 2 sets out the current programme management structure with details of key accountabilities. Details of each programme of work will be kept on *the Source* so staff will have a better understanding of how the projects they are involved in relate to other projects and programmes.

Throughout the past year we have carried out quarterly reviews of our progress against the Strategic Plan objectives and targets. These reviews have helped us to assess progress and identify areas where our actions are not achieving the intended outcomes. Further analysis has then been carried out to identify the reasons why targets are not being met and our plans have been adjusted accordingly. These quarterly reviews of performance will continue in the year ahead.

### ***Connecting with our communities***

The aims of this corporate programme are:

- ♦ to gain a fuller understanding of the diverse range of needs of Devon's communities
- ♦ to take the different needs of our communities into account in all our plans so that everyone can share in Devon's prosperity and enjoy a good quality of life.

The focus of this programme is largely on improving the way we plan and deliver services with the involvement of local people in each of Devon's 28 towns and surrounding rural areas and the city of Exeter. To enhance our understanding of the different needs in each town and rural area, a set of 29 community profiles was published in 2006. These profiles will assist with the identification of priorities and development of plans at a local level and will be a valuable tool for the newly established County Committees covering each district council area. Members of the County Committees now have their own budgets to invest in projects and initiatives that are a local priority.

In the coming year we will continue to gather information which will enhance our understanding of the needs of Devon's communities and inform the development of plans at a local, district and countywide level. Another aspect of this programme is to improve our arrangements for communicating and engaging with Devon's diverse communities so that everyone has the opportunity to influence the decisions that affect them and have a say in what the priorities for their local area should be. The White Paper emphasises the need to give communities a greater say in decisions which affect their lives. Improved arrangements for engaging with our communities is also a top priority in our submission for improved working between the different tiers of local government as community engagement activity will be more meaningful and cost-effective if it is co-ordinated across the three tiers.

## ***Providing excellent customer service***

The aims of this corporate programme are to:

- ♦ create an organisational culture that always puts the customer first
- ♦ provide easy access to all our services and other public services
- ♦ resolve enquiries right the first time
- ♦ provide high quality cost-effective services

2006 saw the introduction of new customer care standards and the delivery of a customer services training programme. 80 staff who go the extra mile and make special efforts to meet the needs of their customers were nominated for the 2006 customer service awards which is one opportunity to recognise and thank staff who provide excellent customer service. The many compliments and letters of thanks received by the Council show that many other staff also deserve recognition and thanks.

The Customer Service Centre (*My Devon*) started operating in June 2006, making it easier for the public to contact us and extending opening hours from 8 am to 8pm on weekdays and from 9am to 1pm on Saturdays. A 2 year phased programme of transfer of services to the Customer Service Centre has been agreed. Information about how to contact the County Council, arrange an interpreter and make a complaint was provided in British Sign Language and made available on the County Council's web site. DVDs containing this material is available at every library in Devon.

Although *My Devon* is new and is still maturing, performance has been creditable to date.

115,000 calls had been handled by *My Devon* by the end of January 2007 on a variety of topics (including adult social care, disability information, roads, traffic, parking, library enquiries and library book renewals and waste & recycling). An independent report by SOCITM "*Better Answered 2006*" identifies Devon Country Council as providing the best customer service of any two tier authority. A survey of Devon residents undertaken during November 2006 shows that:

- 89% of callers are either completely satisfied or reasonably satisfied with *My Devon*
- 84% of callers had their enquiry dealt with by one person
- 91% of callers felt the advisor knew the answers to their enquiry
- 77% felt the service could not be improved in any way
- 90.2% of calls were answered within 20 seconds (compared to over a third of people contacting the County Council not having their calls answered at all under previous arrangements)
- Over 80% calls have been resolved at first point of contact (compared to 48% in 2005)

Qualitative feedback from the public has also been largely very positive.

Our priority for the year ahead is to continue with the programme of transfer of services to the the Customer Service Centre. Calls relating to children, families and schools will be handled by the centre from February 2007. Prior to transfer, the business processes connected with each service are reviewed. Where appropriate improvements are made so that service users' needs are met more effectively and efficiently.

As well as improving telephone access to our service, we will be making improvements to other forms of access to our services in the year ahead including face-to-face access and use of our website. We will also be exploring options for shared arrangements with district councils so that people have a single point of access to a wider range of public services. We will also be continuing to deliver our customer service training programme and identifying training needs at an individual level through the appraisal process and use of the new corporate competency framework.

## ***Delivering through people***

The aims of this corporate programme are:

- ♦ to recruit and retain a high quality workforce
- ♦ to develop our staff and inspire them to achieve high levels of performance
- ♦ to make sure we have the right staff in the right place to meet the needs of our communities.

Our CPA corporate assessment recognised the need to maintain staff morale and support staff through the period of considerable organisational change now underway. We have made a significant investment in the establishment and development of our new Wellbeing@Work service in the past year and we won a regional award for our approach to health promotion in the workplace.

We recognise that the past year has been a period of significant change, Directorate restructuring and the creation of the Customer Service Centre has resulted in job changes for many. Our corporate voluntary redundancy scheme has resulted in the departure of 100 managers in the past few months. Significant numbers of staff will be affected by plans to externalise some of our services and future partnership arrangements or local government restructuring may mean that other staff will be working for different organisations in future. All of these changes will inevitably cause anxiety and uncertainty for the affected staff. By communicating and consulting with staff and trade unions on a regular basis and providing support, advice and guidance we aim to allay concerns and uncertainty where possible and help staff adapt to change. We will continue to comply with the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts for any arrangements which involve the transfer of staff to other organisations.

One of the most difficult challenges in the past year has been the process of job evaluation required to achieve equal pay for work of equal value and avoid potentially very costly legal challenges. We recognise that the outcome has been disappointing for many staff. If staff have appealed, grading decisions will be reviewed and changed where appropriate. Over the three years of pay protection, staff who are still faced with the prospect of a pay cut from April 2010 will be supported to identify and pursue other job options.

It is a tribute to the professionalism and commitment of staff that high levels of service have continued throughout this period of change. However, we also recognise the need to do more to show staff that they are valued, to support them through further change, to help them do their job well and assist their career development. Effective implementation of the Investor in People standards will help to achieve this by ensuring that all staff receive effective support, guidance and direction from their manager; access to relevant learning and development opportunities; and opportunities to express their views and raise issues of concern. Staff in the Personnel & Performance Directorate will be supporting all directorates to implement the Investor in People standards in a meaningful way that benefits all staff. When we are ready, we will seek Investor in People accreditation to check that we are implementing the standards in an effective and consistent way across the whole organisation. However, our priority is not to get the award but to use the standards as a means of ensuring all staff are supported effectively through change.

We recognise the importance of effective leadership and management at times of change and will therefore be continuing to invest in our leadership and management development programmes. We will also be introducing a new competency framework based on our organisational values. This will be used as part of the appraisal process to ensure that all staff develop skills and behave in ways that are consistent with these values. We will also continue to invest in our Wellbeing@Work service in the year

ahead and work with the Director of Public Health to develop working conditions and practices which help our 23,000 staff to stay healthy and which set a good example to other Devon employers.

### ***Providing better value for money***

The aims of this corporate programme are:

- ♦ to make the best use of our resources to deliver high quality and efficient services
- ♦ to meet or exceed the efficiency targets set by central Government (£64.4m in the three year period up to March 2008)
- ♦ to embed new ways of working which will enable us to become more efficient.

We exceeded our 2005/6 efficiency target of £9.8m with efficiency savings of over £11.5m being achieved. We are due to meet our 2006/7 efficiency target of £21.8m and have plans in place to meet our 2007/8 target of £31.8m. Although these are nationally imposed targets, the financial constraints within which we operate continue to make it crucial that we meet these targets and find as many further efficiency savings as possible if we are to avoid significant cuts to services. The outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review will almost certainly increase the pressure on us to become more efficient and we will need to take radical action ourselves and in partnership with other local public service organisations to achieve a step-change in cost-effectiveness.

### ***Making Devon England's greenest county***

Making Devon greener is a cross-cutting theme in our Strategic Plan. Our aim is making Devon England's greenest county by:

- ♦ considering the environmental implications of all our policies and decisions and ensuring that everything we do helps to maintain Devon's high quality of life, landscape and biodiversity;
- ♦ setting a good example to others by using energy and water more efficiently, reducing waste, and pursuing a strategy to combat global warming by promoting renewable energy generation and reducing our carbon footprint;
- ♦ promoting best practice among other Devon organisations, schools and businesses in our role as a commissioner of services, planner, regulator and community leader;
- ♦ encouraging the people of Devon and our own staff to play their part in helping to make Devon England's greenest county.

We have developed a set of performance indicators to enable our progress towards becoming England's greenest county to be measured and will be benchmarking our performance with that of other leading authorities in the South West region. We have also set a target to achieve a minimum year on year reduction of 2% in the Council's energy usage and carbon production in pursuit of the Government's aspiration of reducing UK greenhouse gas emissions by 60% from the 1990 levels by 2050. Our actions to achieve this target will focus on a managed reduction in carbon emissions in the Council's main emission areas: energy in buildings, street lighting and travel - both commuting and business mileage. In order to reduce business mileage we will need to work with partner organisations to develop new ways of working such as video and audio conferencing which will reduce the need to travel to meetings.

For each of our Strategic Plan priorities, a list of actions to make Devon greener has been identified. Significant progress was made with the delivery of these actions in 2006/7. For example, we have produced a leaflet for all households in Devon explaining what they can do to help reduce their impact on global warming. Through the appraisal process many staff have now agreed their own personal target to make Devon greener.

## ***Improving our performance***

Our CPA corporate assessment report identified the need to strengthen our performance management arrangements. We define performance management as “our arrangements for prioritising and achieving improved outcomes for the people of Devon”. These arrangements include:

- ♦ *understanding* the nature, needs, expectations and aspirations of Devon’s communities through good intelligence and community engagement
- ♦ *making choices* on what our priorities should be and the ways we will meet them based on careful consideration and analysis of the economic, social and environmental impact and risks of different options
- ♦ *taking action* to improve by having clear plans and clear accountability for delivery with sufficient resources, skills, capacity, systems and processes to ensure delivery
- ♦ *evaluating the impact* that our action is having so that we can revise our plans if they are not achieving the intended outcomes.

We believe that some aspects of the existing performance management regime imposed on local authorities have hindered rather than helped us in our quest for improved performance. The introduction of a less prescriptive performance management regime at a national level provides us with an opportunity to review what works and what doesn’t work and to put in place the arrangements which we believe to be right for Devon. In the coming year we will be working with our partner organisations to develop a new performance framework for Devon which will enable us to respond to the needs of our communities and make Devon a better place to live.

All staff have an important role to play in improving performance. Performance is more likely to be improved if work is a positive and enjoyable experience where staff feel they are doing a worthwhile job which is contributing to improved outcomes for the people of Devon. The Chief Executive’s programme of visits to staff at various locations across the county in 2006/7 has helped to improve communication between those at the top of the organisation and people working at the frontline and has generated lots of ideas about how performance can be improved. Over the coming months we want to encourage all staff to take part in discussions about what will help them and their team do a better job. Where possible good ideas should be put into practice straightaway. Where changes to other parts of the organisation are required to implement good ideas, we would expect managers to work together to remove the obstacles which stand in the way of better ways of working. It is only if these obstacles can’t be removed that senior management intervention will be required.

Some staff are employed corporately and in each directorate to support and facilitate performance improvement activity. We will be reviewing the roles and skills of these staff in the coming months and developing action plans to ensure their work is effective and targeted on priority areas. Performance improvement staff will also need to continue to help us meet the requirements of the Audit Commission, CSCI, Ofsted and other inspectorates. Whilst we hope these requirements will be less onerous in future and will help us to improve our performance, there may still be occasions where we have to comply with inspection requirements which seem to have little bearing on our aim to achieve improved outcomes for the people of Devon. However, the risk of non-compliance in terms of damage to our reputation, increased inspection activity and additional work is likely to mean that action to ensure compliance with inspection requirements will be justified in most cases.

## ***Delivering the local area agreement and LPSA2 and developing a sustainable community strategy for Devon***

We were one of the first 21 areas nationally to pilot the development and delivery of a local area agreement covering the period 2005-8. The local area agreement is an important vehicle for delivering many of the complex cross-cutting aspects of the Community Strategy for Devon and our own Strategic Plan which require effective collaboration with a range of partner organisations. Progress with the delivery of the local area agreement is closely monitored by the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) and is an indicator of the effectiveness of local partnership working and our ability to turn good intentions into concrete action that will lead to improved outcomes for the people of Devon. The Council and partner organisations are therefore committed to the successful delivery of the final year of the agreement.

2007/8 is also the final year for achieving delivery of most of the challenging targets set out in our second Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA2). Many of these targets form part of the local area agreement and if we succeed in meeting all of the targets in full a performance reward grant of over £17 million will be payable. A proportionate reward grant will be payable for partial achievement of the targets. It is therefore important that the lead officers for each target work with partner organisations to identify the action we can take to maximise our chances of success. Some of the reward grant will be reinvested in the same service areas to enable improved performance to be maintained.

Appendix 3 shows the relationship between the Community Strategy for Devon, the Local Area Agreement, LPSA2 and DCC Strategic Plan.

The existing Community Strategy for Devon has an action plan for the period 2004 – 7 and is therefore in need of updating. Through the Devon Strategic Partnership (DSP) we are now working with partners on the development of a new Sustainable Community Strategy based on an updated analysis of the nature and needs of Devon's communities. As part of strengthened governance arrangements, a new DSP delivery board has been established. The Sustainable Community Strategy will set out the DSP's ambitions and priorities for Devon over the next few years and will provide the framework for our next local area agreement which will be developed over the coming year for implementation from April 2008. The local area agreement will be the primary means by which Devon's contribution to the delivery of national priorities will be negotiated as well as being an important vehicle for the delivery of our local priorities.

### ***Strengthening partnership working across Devon***

The delivery of most, if not all, of the above priorities will require effective partnership working between the County Council, our communities and our partner organisations including other tiers of local government. We recognise that improved outcomes for the people of Devon are more likely to be achieved if objectives and priorities for action are jointly agreed with partner organisations based on a shared understanding of the needs of our communities and if action is based on collaboration and shared resources rather than individual organisations working in isolation. We also believe that the people of Devon are more concerned about receiving effective, efficient, integrated services than they are about which organisation provides the service.

The 3 year Devon Improvement Programme funded through £1.13m capacity building funding has helped to lay the foundations for stronger partnership working across Devon. Building on the successes of this programme, the County Council and 8 district councils have agreed to develop a new and innovative model which will provide cost-effective services designed around the needs of the people who use them and which will address the priorities of local communities. A detailed project plan setting out how this will be achieved will be produced by July 2007.

The further integration of health and social care services and closer working between the County Council and Primary Care Trust to promote health lifestyles and tackle health inequalities will also be important aspects of our partnership work in the year ahead.

## **7. Using our resources to deliver our priorities**

We need to be clear what resources (people, money, property, technology, information) will be required to deliver our plans and be realistic about what can be achieved with the resources available to us. We have established an “enablers” programme to ensure that our resources are matched with our priorities and that the right level and type of resource is provided to support the delivery of each approved project. The programme also helps to ensure that our people, financial, property, ICT and information management strategies are aligned, co-ordinated and focused on the delivery of our corporate priorities. We will explore the potential for increased pooling of our resources with partner organisations as part of the development of our proposals for improved two tier working.

### ***People***

We need well trained, skilled and motivated staff to deliver our priorities. Through our workforce planning process we aim to ensure that we have the right staff with the right skills in the right place at the right time. With an enhanced competency based appraisal scheme, we will ensure that every member of staff is clear about what is expected of them and the contribution they will make to the achievement of our priorities. We will build capacity within the workforce by implementing succession planning processes and by offering high calibre graduates and young apprentices the opportunity for structured placements that will prepare them to take up permanent posts within the Council.

Our new arrangements for managing corporate projects and programmes of work help to ensure that staff capacity issues are considered as part of the project initiation phase and that staff with the appropriate skills and expertise are identified to ensure successful delivery of approved projects.

### ***Money***

The Council agreed the 2007/08 revenue budget at its meeting on 15 February. This will result in a net budget of £414 million and a Council Tax increase of 4.75%. Delivering the short term priorities set out in this plan and making progress towards the longer term priorities set out in the Strategic Plan as well as maintaining acceptable standards for all essential services will be a challenge within existing budgets and we must make efficiency savings set out above to achieve this. To enable additional resources to be invested in priority areas the Executive has realigned budgets where appropriate.

Through the medium term financial strategy process, we have developed budget details for 2007/8 with provisional targets through to 2009/10. The Formula Grant for 2007/08 represents an increase of £3.8 million compared to 2006/7. 2008/9 and 2009/10 fall into the next Spending Review period, so no indicative grant figures are available.

The Executive also set limits for capital expenditure in future years and decided that the Capital Programme should be set at a level which does not give rise to capital financing charges amounting to more than 12% of the net budget requirement for each year. Projects that are contained within the Council’s capital programme should be subject to an option appraisal and only those that fulfil established criteria, including their relationship to the delivery of the Strategic Plan objectives, are to be included within appropriate programmes.

## **Property**

Significant improvements to the delivery of our property functions have been made in the past year but we believe that further improvement will be achieved by entering into a joint venture agreement with the private sector. A new company "NPS South West Ltd" is planned to be established from 1 April 2007 to deliver the Council's property functions in an efficient and effective manner. It is expected that existing staff will transfer to the new company through a TUPE agreement. NPS South West Ltd. will work in partnership with the Council to help us deliver our key property objectives.

In addition, we have commenced a programme of Area Property Reviews starting with the Barnstaple Review. These reviews are carried out with partner organisations and will help us to achieve a number of objectives including reduced expenditure on office accommodation, more efficient and flexible ways of working, reduced travel and energy use and improved access to services for our customers. We will work closely with affected staff and trade unions on the delivery of changes arising from these reviews.

## **Technology**

*Transforming Services* – ICT Strategy 2006-2009 represents a fundamental shift in the role of information and communication technology (ICT) within the Council and is designed to facilitate service transformation and customer focus through technological innovation. It sets out a direction of travel for the effective investment, application and development of technology to support business change over the next 3 years. It also shows how our corporate ICT team will change its approach to work more closely with business teams and external partners to drive innovation and business transformation across the Council aimed at giving better and more efficient public services in line with corporate strategic priorities.

Key principles underlying the strategy are:

- improving accessibility and flexibility of services for the public including groups at risk of disadvantage through new ICT-enabled channels such as the Customer Service Centre and via the web
- designing all services enabled by ICT around the citizen or business and delivering them consistently through co-ordinated channels
- exploiting existing investment made in e-services and the Customer Service Centre by deploying this as a common solutions architecture which can be reused for the benefit of the Council and its partners
- linking corporate systems such as HR, finance, management information and geographic information to provide a 'customer-centric' view of information held
- reducing the number of business applications by standardising and maintaining fewer, more compatible open systems
- facilitating seamless and joined up working between multi-agency partnerships to encourage a shared service culture
- enabling new ways of working through the use of mobile technology and electronic document records management to help improve efficiency, provide better services and the better use of resources.

The Council needs to be confident that the technology underpinning services is reliable, secure and flexible, and is managed in a cost effective way to national standards. Our technological platform must also:

- ♦ support our staff, and those of partner organisations, working from anywhere, at anytime, utilising public networks
- ♦ provide authenticated access to the Council's and partner organisations' information and systems through standard interfaces such as the internet browser
- ♦ reduce the need for travel and open up more flexible use of property through improvements in telephony, data networking facilities and mobile computing.

Achieving the real benefits of business transformation will require a step change in the way that technological innovation is viewed and managed across the whole Council. Corporate ICT will develop as a centre of best practice and excellence with an expert client role in technology procurement, vendor management, and in the application of our common solutions architecture. It will be more proactive and take a leadership role and work better to understand business need. However, embracing technological innovation to achieve greater efficiency and service improvement also challenges Directorate IT teams, business managers and service managers to identify and implement projects which deliver this transformational change.

To maximise the benefits, clear corporate support and governance of this process is key. The strategy was approved by CMB and Executive in July 2006. Revised ICT governance proposals have also been approved by CMB and implementation is likely during the early part of 2007/8 financial year.

### ***Information***

Information is a key resource which helps us identify our priorities and to measure the progress we are making towards their achievement. In the past year we have brought together our intelligence and information management functions into one team under the leadership of a new Head of Strategic Intelligence. This team will be a centre of excellence in the governance of research and intelligence, for effective and improving services for people in Devon.

## **8. Managing our performance**

The delivery of this plan will be managed in accordance with the *Devon Way Framework for Improving Performance*. The plan forms part of a set of business planning documents to support the delivery of our Strategic Plan. Related documents include our corporate and directorate workforce plans, learning and development plans, medium term financial strategy and directorate business plans. Appendix 4 sets out our planning framework and appendix 4 sets out the corporate planning and performance management cycle which supports the delivery of the Council's priorities.

Identifying and managing the risks associated with the delivery of our plans and day-to-day business is an important part of our performance management arrangements. Appendix 6 sets out the key strategic risks we have identified and the arrangements we have put in place to manage them.