



Corporate Strategy

Value for Money Strategy 2013/14-2015/16

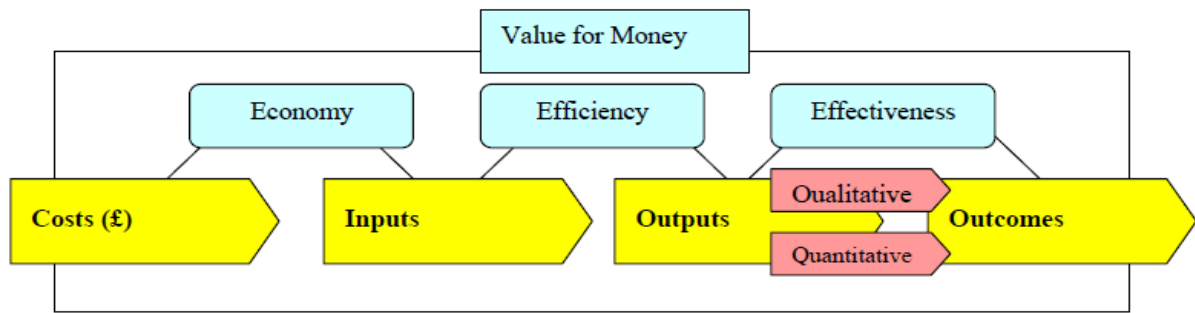


1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Epping Forest District Council is committed to delivering excellent services that meet the needs of all of its residents and service users.
- 1.2 The Council's vision for the Epping Forest District is to make the area a great place to live, work, study and do business. Whilst the district is often considered to be a relatively affluent area, it has very real pockets of deprivation, and the Council faces a number of significant geographic, demographic, cultural and economic challenges in achieving this vision.
- 1.3 The provision of value for money has long been a priority for the Council. Amongst the aims of the authority's Corporate Plan for 2011/12 to 2014/15, it seeks to:
- safeguard frontline services that local residents say are important, against a background of diminishing resources;
 - have the lowest District Council Tax in Essex and maintain that position; and
 - continuously improve efficiency by adopting new ways of working with partners and maximising revenue from assets.
- 1.4 The Council has developed a number of approaches to promote and deliver value for money. This strategy pulls these initiatives together with the authority's overall value for money objectives, into a framework designed to ensure that it makes the best possible use of resources, through a clear, strategic approach to improving value for money to support the achievement of corporate priorities.
- 1.5 Achieving the vision for the district, against an increasingly difficult financial and economic backdrop, places emphasis on the need to change the way that the Council works, to deliver better services and improve value for money. This means redesigning services to make better use of resources and, in essence, 'doing more with less'.
- 1.6 This strategy therefore sets out the authority's corporate arrangements for ensuring that it provides value for money, and outlines how it intends to deliver its ambition for excellent services that fully meet the needs of residents and service users.

2. WHAT IS VALUE FOR MONEY?

- 2.1 Value for money is about obtaining the maximum benefit from the resources available. It is often defined as achieving the right balance between 'economy', 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness', in essence, spending less, spending well and spending wisely. The delivery of value for money is an integral element of the drive for continuous improvement.
- 2.2 From the perspective of residents and service users, the range and balance of services provided, the level of quality to which they are delivered and the extent to which they are tailored to meet local needs, are equally important to the perception of whether the Council delivers value for money.
- 2.3 Value for money is about obtaining the maximum benefit over time with the resources available, so that the Council delivers the best services at the lowest possible costs to residents. Value for money can be illustrated by the following diagram:



Economy – ‘Spending less’

Economy is the price paid for what goes into providing a service. This is about delivering services at optimum cost, through minimising the cost of resources.

Efficiency – ‘Spending well’

Efficiency is a measure of productivity and performance i.e., how much is got out in relation to what is put in.

Effectiveness – ‘Spending wisely’

Effectiveness is a measure of the impact that has been achieved, which can be either quantitative or qualitative. This is about outcomes for customers that should be equitable across communities.

- 2.4 The term value for money is used to assess whether or not the Council has obtained the maximum benefit from the goods and services it acquires and provides, within the resources available to it. The concept of value for money not only measures the cost of goods and services, but it also takes account of the mix of quality, cost, resource use, fitness for purpose, timeliness and convenience, to judge whether or not, together, they constitute good value. Value for money is therefore about achieving the right local balance between economy, efficiency and effectiveness or, spending less, spending well and spending wisely to achieve local priorities for services. Value for money is high when there is an optimum balance between all three elements, when costs are relatively low, productivity is high and successful outcomes have been achieved.
- 2.5 Value for money can be achieved in different ways and is also specific to different contexts. A key component in assessing effectiveness is relevance to and impact on local priorities, and what is value for money for one local authority or locality, may not be for another. The concept of value for money is not about reducing the level of service delivery or providing lower quality services. Whilst value for money maximises outputs and outcomes from the application of resources, it also increases opportunities to provide resources for new investment and the development of services to meet priorities.
- 2.6 Value for money is not just about reducing costs. Whilst very important, especially in the current challenging financial climate, it is the interaction between economy, efficiency and effectiveness that helps to improve services and outcomes for communities. The delivery of value for money also helps to free-up resources for investment in new or improved services.
- 2.7 A glossary of value for money terms used in this strategy is set out at Appendix 1.

3. WHY IS VALUE FOR MONEY IMPORTANT?

- 3.1 Over recent years, value for money has assumed increasing importance both to central and local government. Whilst demand for services has continued to increase, resources are

limited and the Council seeks to ensure that money is spent as carefully, wisely and efficiently as possible, in line with the views of local communities.

- 3.2 Local authorities must be mindful of the need to deliver value for money throughout their actions and services, and the Council's external auditors are required to give an annual conclusion as to whether the authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money.
- 3.3 To improve the delivery of value for money, it is important that the Council has a good understanding of the relationship between its performance and its costs, and that costs compare well with others, reflect priorities and policy decisions and are commensurate with service delivery, performance and outcomes.
- 3.4 This Value for Money Strategy should not be read in isolation. Value for money is one of the Council's core values and is enshrined in all plans and strategies, and in the delivery of all services. The strategy is set in the context of a challenging financial position for local authorities, and is closely linked to the Council's Corporate Plan, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Procurement Strategy. These are essential elements of the delivery of value for money services.

3. VALUE FOR MONEY OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The Council has for many years, delivered good services for a low council tax compared to neighbouring authorities, through careful examination of how resources are deployed. The Council has also responded well to efficiency targets set by the government, but has to constantly reconcile the rising demands on its services and resource budgets, with the reality that resources are constrained.
- 4.2 The Value for Money Strategy is designed to ensure that the Council is making the best possible use of its resources, by providing a clear, strategic approach to improving value for money. The strategy is underpinned by the value for money principles of driving down costs, improving services, and driving up satisfaction.
- 4.3 The strategy also constitutes a framework and the necessary activities and monitoring and review processes that enable value for money to be delivered across all of the Council's services. This means not only having the necessary foundations upon which value for money can be built, such as sound financial management and procurement procedures, budgetary control, performance management etc., but also having and using key monitoring information on what things cost, benchmarking, cost comparisons, outcome measurement etc., so that effective decisions can be made.
- 4.4 The Council recognises its responsibilities as a custodian of public funds, and strives to achieve value for money in the delivery of services. It seeks to achieve, and where possible improve value for money, by ensuring that:
 - (a) services meet the needs of local communities through the most economic, efficient and effective means;
 - (b) employees recognise the need to secure value for money as an integral part of their work;
 - (c) costs compare well with other local authorities, and where appropriate other sectors, allowing for external factors;
 - (d) costs reflect policy decisions, and are commensurate with service delivery, performance and outcomes achieved;
 - (e) performance in relation to value for money is monitored and reviewed;
 - (f) efficiencies are achieved and savings reallocated against other priorities;
 - (g) value for money is taken into account when making procurement and other spending decisions; and

- (h) funding and partnership opportunities are sought in order to enhance the resources available to the Council to deliver services.

4.5 These are the Council's corporate value for money objectives.

4. VALUE FOR MONEY ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 The concept of value for money can be difficult to measure in qualitative terms. However, the Council operates a sound, well-established approach to the achievement of value for money, including the development of its four-year Corporate Plan and a Medium-Term Financial Strategy, designed to inform the allocation of resources.

5.2 The Council has an established track record in delivering value for money. The Band 'D' Council Tax is currently the second lowest in Essex and is low compared to other neighbouring authorities outside the county. The Council's commitment and approach to value for money has been recognised by its external auditors, who have repeatedly issued an unqualified conclusion on the authority's value for money arrangements.

5.3 To achieve its vision for the district, the Council recognises that it must make the best use of financial, human and natural resources, to achieve the best outcomes for residents and customers. At the strategic level, the Council has increased its focus on value for money in recent years, and has implemented key initiatives to ensure that it delivers improved cost and quality. Arrangements and activities for promoting and delivering value for money include:

(a) Policy Framework

5.4 A policy framework is in place to ensure that the Council has clear ambitions and objectives for the future, informed by public priorities and needs. The Council has developed a Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which reflect the delivery of value for money services.

5.5 Appropriate mechanisms for corporate governance are vital to the Council's approach to value for money. Anti-fraud arrangements are in place to support the Council's commitment to high legal, ethical and moral standards and the proper accountability of public funds, and the actions it will take to achieve these objectives. Sound arrangements in place for Internal Audit, and audit activities fully support the authority's priorities, whilst targeting high-risk areas. Service planning processes include a value for money element.

(b) Procurement

5.6 The supply of goods and services is a key element of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness balance

5.7 The Council's Procurement Strategy sets out its objectives and principles for the purchase and commissioning of goods and services, to support the delivery of high-quality services and the achievement of the authority's vision and corporate priorities. The Procurement Strategy ensures that money is spent in a governed and properly controlled way, to provide value for money and ensure that the Council offers local economic influence.

5.8 The Procurement Strategy is designed to support the Council's objectives of continuous performance improvement and best use of resources, improved efficiency, achieving net savings necessary to maintain its sound financial position, and helping to mitigate the impact of the current economic conditions.

5.9 The Council has continued to improve its approach to joint purchasing, particularly through membership of the Essex Procurement Hub, which assists in developing and advising on

framework agreements, collaborative procurements and spend-analysis, to help Essex local authorities achieve best value from purchasing.

(c) Human Resources

- 5.10 The Council recognises that its employees are its biggest cost, and seeks to maximise value for money from its staff resources. This is achieved through the regular review of staff structures and vacancies, a robust approach to absence management, the promotion of flexible working practices, and the review of employment policies and procedures. Improved approaches to learning and development have also helped to ensure that employees have the necessary skills and competencies to deliver high quality, effective services.

(d) Financial Management

- 5.11 Effective financial management arrangements are in place, underpinned by a detailed Medium-Term Financial Strategy and appropriate levels of balances and reserves. The strategy sets the Council's financial framework for the medium-term, to manage future budgets and identify necessary savings at an early stage, so that they are managed in a controlled way and that planned developments and investments are affordable.
- 5.12 Annual budgets reflect the priorities of the Corporate Plan and are also set against the context of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. In undertaking resource and financial planning, the Council observes the following principles:
- all spending plans are subjected to rigorous and regular review to ensure they are aligned with established need and provide value for money;
 - changes in service delivery to meet corporate aims and priorities are underpinned by appropriate allocation and use of available resources;
 - resource and financial planning processes cover all services and all expenditure;
 - opportunities to maximise other external sources of funding and income are pursued.
- 5.13 Regular monitoring reports are produced in respect of capital and revenue expenditure. Ongoing General Fund expenditure (the Continuing Services Budget (CSB)) is separated from expenditure on one-off projects (the District Development Fund (DDF)), and DDF/CSB budget growth and savings are identified as part of the annual budget setting process. Cost overheads are allocated to individual service budgets as fully as possible, and guidance is produced to assist the allocation of overheads within service budgets.

(e) Property Management

- 5.14 Physical assets can assist in the delivery of the Councils priorities and objectives and generate investment income, but can also cost significant sums to maintain and repair. Resources deployed to asset management are utilised efficiently and effectively, and appropriate asset management policies and practices are very important to the delivery of value for money.
- 5.15 The Council effectively and efficiently manages a portfolio of 6,500 residential properties. This stock level is likely to increase through a new housebuilding programme intended to deliver over one hundred new Council homes over the next six years. The asset management of Council properties is coordinated by the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan, which is reviewed and updated annually, and forms an important part of the Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. The Council has entered into an innovative insourcing arrangement with an external repairs management company to manage its in-house housing repairs service, to deliver improved performance and value for money services for tenants;

5.16 The Council also owns a wide-ranging and significant amount of commercial and industrial, non-operational property. An Asset Management Plan has been adopted to coordinate the management of the Council's non-property portfolio, and secure an appropriate balance between the use of its non-operational property assets to deliver corporate priorities, whilst also identifying surplus assets for disposal. The Asset Management Plan promotes maximum use or return on the Council's commercial and industrial land and property assets, and is managed through a number of performance indicators.

(f) Information and Communications Technology

5.17 The Council seeks to maximise the value of information and communications technology (ICT) in the efficient management of resources, and the delivery of high-quality services and outcomes for the citizens and communities of the district.

5.18 The Council's ICT Strategy sets out its medium-term plans for investment in appropriate technology, to support and improve the delivery of services and value for money.

(g) Performance Management

5.19 Strong performance management arrangements are in place. The Council identifies a range of 'key' performance indicators each year, which reflect a balance of service delivery priorities, including value for money. A robust approach to target-setting and benchmarking is in place, and performance against the indicators is monitored throughout the year, and timely corrective action taken where necessary.

5.20 The Council's performance management framework ensures that key performance indicators and targets illustrate how the authority is performing in terms of achieving its strategic objectives. Many of the indicators relate to value for money, either directly through the monitoring of costs or key business processes, or indirectly through the achievement of outcomes. The performance management framework ensures that corporate aims and objectives are cascaded throughout the authority, through annual Business Plans to individual performance and development reviews.

5.21 Value for money is a key priority of the Council. Analysis is regularly undertaken to compare and consider the Council's costs and performance, and to take action in areas of unreasonably high cost or underperformance. Scrutiny and improvement of unit costs and performance is undertaken as part of reviews of specific services and functions, and efficiency and cost analysis is a key element of the Council's annual business planning process. However, direct value for money comparisons with other local authorities and organisations can be difficult, because each can have different ways of providing similar services.

(h) Collaboration and Partnership Working

5.22 The delivery of high-quality, value for money services cannot always be achieved by the Council alone. Effective partnership working can enable the authority and other organisations and partners to procure or deliver services in more effective and efficient means than by direct provision, and can lead to improved value for money by reducing overheads and other costs.

5.23 The Council is committed to working with others to make sure it provides services in the best possible way, and to work with other service providers where this represents best value for money. The authority has adopted a pragmatic approach to shared services collaboration, and seeks to identify partner organisations that suit particular services or objectives, and which deliver service improvements, reduce costs and provide value for money.

5.24 Current partnership working by the Council on a range of issues with other authorities and organisations, includes the following:

- a West Essex District Councils Group established with Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils, develops ways to improve value for money, performance and responsiveness to the needs of communities, and works with other public, voluntary and private sector organisations to achieve economies and efficiencies;
- collaboration with neighbouring local authorities on the development of the new Local Plan for the district, particularly to establish the required evidence base;
- joint working with Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils on housing initiatives, including the formulation of a Joint Local Investment Plan and a joint West Essex Tenancy Strategy;
- the development of a Young Parent Scheme with Uttlesford and Brentwood Councils, East Thames Housing and NHS West Essex, to provide self-contained accommodation, support and parenting skills for young parents. The land for the scheme was provided free of charge by a developer and capital funding was secured from the Homes and Communities Agency, due to the partnership approach employed;
- the formation of the Herts and Essex Housing Options Consortium with neighbouring local authorities and local housing associations, to introduce the 'HomeOptions' choice based lettings scheme now operating across six areas, with shared commissioning and operating arrangements;
- the procurement of long-term waste management and disposal capital infrastructure across the county, through active membership of the Essex Waste Partnership with other local authorities in the county ;
- joint working on an initiative with other councils and Genesis Housing Association, to bring back into use empty properties that are in poor condition, to provide short-term accommodation for people in housing need;
- collaboration with East Hertfordshire and Harlow District Councils on the development of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, applying a risk-based approach to flood risk management across local areas;
- the development of a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy with other local authorities in the county, to ensure the provision of sustainable value for money waste management arrangements for the future;
- joint working with Essex Police, Essex Fire and Rescue Service, health agencies, Essex County Council and other organisations, through the Epping Forest Safer Communities Partnership, to give local people an opportunity to influence future priorities;
- membership of the Essex Energy Partnership, a collaborative approach to the delivery of Energy Company Obligation schemes across the county, that provides support for energy efficiency measures and insulation and heating packages to low income and vulnerable households;
- the formation of an Essex and Suffolk Landlord Accreditation Scheme with other local authorities, to support private landlords in letting and managing properties and improve the private rented sector for both landlords and tenants, to share and reduce costs; and
- participation in the North Essex Parking Partnership, for the management of public car parks in the district. The partnership seeks to achieve the efficient deployment of parking attendants, increased responsiveness to customer requirements through new technology, and greater value for money from reduced management and administration costs.

5.25 The Council will continue to explore opportunities for partnership working wherever such arrangements will deliver its aims of improved services, lower costs and value for money.

(i) External Funding and Investment

5.26 External investment can help to improve value for money, and funding that the Council can lever in to support its activities can be spent elsewhere. However, securing such external

funding can be resource intensive, both in terms of application processes and reporting, monitoring and evaluation requirements. External funding also frequently requires that match funding be made available from the Council, and is therefore only sought where it will assist the Council in delivering its priorities.

5.27 The Council has exploited many funding opportunities and secured significant external funding for a range of service enhancements and initiatives, including:

- homeless prevention services;
- tackling rough sleeping;
- housing fraud prevention;
- safer communities;
- youth projects;
- redevelopment of Epping Forest District Museum;
- activities for disabled children and young people;
- community development programmes;
- arts programmes; and
- sports and health development programmes.

5.28 The Council's External Funding Strategy sets out principles, processes and procedures for ensuring that maximum use is made of funding opportunities available to the authority, as a potential recipient or supplier of funds. A Treasury Management and Investment Strategy has also been adopted, setting out the Council's approach to financing and investment.

(j) Creativity and Innovation

5.29 Local authorities are often risk-averse organisations, a situation that stems from high levels of audit and inspection, and the need to have proper controls in place to deal with public money. Whilst the Council has implemented sound corporate governance and financial management arrangements, it also wants to develop a culture of innovation and measured risk-taking, as it believes that new ways of working are key to driving down costs and improving service performance and satisfaction.

5.30 The Council recognises that all of its employees need to contribute to the delivery of value for money. Creativity is the skill to develop new ideas and solutions, or the ability to redesign an established solution. Innovation is the skill of introducing something new, so is more concerned with abilities to implement and manage change. The Council demonstrates creative strengths across its services and has a track record of implementing new ideas. However, the delivery of value for money requires a culture that promotes creativity and innovation, and the Council seeks to foster innovation and creativity by its staff to identify opportunities to improve value for money and service delivery.

(k) Delivering the right services

5.31 From the public perception, it does not matter how efficiently or effectively services are delivered, if they are not appreciated or valued. It is therefore important that the Council engages actively with partners, services users and residents (including non-users and hard-to-reach-groups) to inform the nature and levels of service provision across the Council's functions.

5.32 The Council conducts a wide-range of consultation and engagement exercises and ensures that it monitors and learns from its compliments and complaints procedures, to help develop and improve services where required.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE VALUE FOR MONEY STRATEGY

- 6.1 The outcomes intended to be achieved from this Value for Money Strategy over the three years to the end of 2015/16 are set out in Appendix 2.
- 6.2 Specific actions illustrating how individual directorates or service areas contribute to the achievement of the Council's value for money objectives are included in annual Directorate Business Plans. Progress against such actions are reviewed and monitored as part of the authority's business planning processes.

7. DOCUMENT HISTORY

- 7.1 The Value for Money Strategy is reviewed every three years. This version of the Strategy reflects the Council's senior management structure in place in December 2013. A full review of the Strategy will be undertaken at the end of 2015/16.

Prepared/Revised	Written by	Agreed/Authorised	Details of Change(s)
December 2013	Performance Improvement Manager	Management Board (11/12/13)	Update of strategy for three years from 2013/14 to 2015/16
January 2014	N/A	N/A	Release of revised strategy. Published to website and intranet.

APPENDIX 1 - VALUE FOR MONEY GLOSSARY

Benchmarking: Comparing costs, performance indicators and processes for a service with those of an equivalent service e.g. the 'Housemark' benchmarking service, which compares across a range of housing management functions?

Business Plans: Directorate Business Plans provide details about the authority's key priority objectives as well as each directorate or service's strategic and operational objectives for the year ahead, and how these will be achieved. Business Plans provide a link between corporate objectives at the strategic level and the individual personal action plans of staff.

Comparator Performance/Comparative Costs/Comparator Groups: The Audit Commission's Value for Money profile enables local authorities to compare costs and performance with a range of groups or clusters of authorities. The following comparators are considered most useful in comparing the Council's costs:

- Nearest Neighbours – those Districts (not London Boroughs) which are deemed to be geographically and demographically similar to the Council, and generally lie just inside or outside the M25;
- Office of National Statistics (ONS) Local Authority Cluster – those District Councils which the ONS considers to be similar to the Council in key ways; and
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) Family Group – those District Council areas which are considered to have a similar crime profile to the Epping Forest District.

Continuing Services Budget: As part of the Council's prudent approach to financial management, the authority separates General Fund expenditure into two elements. The Continuing Services Budget (CSB) accounts for ongoing annual costs in the General Fund (see below for District Development Fund (DDF)).

Cost Effectiveness: A form of analysis that combines cost and outcomes – for example, comparing the costs of alternative ways of producing the same outcome for users.

Council Plan: The Council Plan reflects the Council's medium-term aims and priorities, and the aspirations of the Community Strategy.

Council Vision: The Council's vision for the Epping Forest District is to make the district a great place to live, work, study and do business.

District Development Fund: As part of the Council's prudent approach to financial management, the authority separates General Fund expenditure into two elements. The District Development Fund accounts for one-off expenditure over 1-3 years for specific projects (see above for Continuing Services Budget (CSB)).

Economy: The price paid for providing the service (staff, materials, assets etc.) e.g. how much it costs to empty a refuse bin.

Effectiveness: The measure of the impact achieved, e.g. how satisfied customers are with the refuse collection service (qualitative) or how many bins were emptied on the correct day with no spillages (quantitative).

Efficiency: How much is got out from what is put in, e.g. how many bins are emptied.

Efficiency Gains: Efficiency gains allow resources to be diverted to other front-line services whilst maintaining the same output, less inputs for the same outputs. Non-cashable efficiency gains occur through increased productivity, the same inputs for greater outputs.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): The KPIs are a measure of the Council's performance in terms of its corporate priorities and core areas of service provision. The aim of the KPIs is to provide focused improvement and achieve comparable performance with that of the best local authorities.

Medium Term Aims: The Council's medium-term aims reflect the core issues that the authority faces in respect of the provision of services over the period of the current Council Plan.

Value for Money (VFM): VFM is about obtaining the maximum benefit over time with the resources available. It is about achieving the right local balance between economy, efficiency and effectiveness or, spending less, spending well and spending wisely to achieve local priorities for services. VFM is high when there is an optimum balance between all three elements - when costs are relatively low, productivity is high and successful outcomes have been achieved.

APPENDIX 2 – VALUE FOR MONEY OUTCOMES 2013/14-2015/16

OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	MEASURE(S)
Services meet the needs of local communities through the most economic, efficient and effective means		
1. Value for money is a key priority within all management, planning and review processes;	Chief Executive	The active demonstration that the achievement of value for money is sought for all services and functions;
2. Services meet the needs of users and local communities;	Service Directors	The involvement of stakeholders in key aspects of service design and delivery, to ensure value for money and user satisfaction;
3. Optimisation of income to help alleviate budget pressures;	Director of Finance & ICT/Service Directors	The maximised collection of Council Tax, National Non-Domestic Rates and income from other revenue streams;
4. Focused attention on corporate objectives and service priorities, and the improvement of performance;	Members/Management Board	The development of annual suite of key objectives and key performance indicators;
Employees recognise the need to secure value for money as an integral part of their work		
5. Value for money is central to the Council's strategic direction and its organisational values and behaviours;	Chief Executive	The promotion of value for money culture, and appropriate attitudes and behaviours by employees;
6. Sharing of value for money best practice, practical actions and achievements, to improve performance;	Deputy Chief Executive	The communication of the Council's approach to value for money to key stakeholders and the regular updating of progress;
7. Employee innovation and creativity identifies opportunities to improve value for money, including measured risk-taking;	Service Directors	The introduction of arrangements to identify and investigate opportunities to reduce costs and/or improve service delivery and performance;
8. Reduced costs and/or improved service delivery and performance;	Chief Executive	A culture is fostered where officers (and Members) are open to opportunities presented by new ways of working, through innovation and the use of technology;

Costs compare well with other local authorities and appropriate sectors, allowing for external factors		
9. Full understanding of the Council's costs and performance;	Service Directors	A regular cost and performance analysis is considered alongside the identification of appropriate value for money indicators;
10. The Council 'learns' from the best performing organisations, and adopts recognised good practice where appropriate;	Service Directors	Benchmarking of services and functions against other similar councils and organisations is undertaken where considered useful;
Costs reflect policy decisions, and are commensurate with service delivery, performance and outcomes		
11. Improved value for money in service delivery, savings and efficiencies identified and implemented;	Service Directors	Specific services and functions are reviewed, including unit costs and performance, as necessary;
Performance in relation to value for money is monitored and reviewed		
12. Improved performance of services through use of comparative data and information;	Service Directors	Performance and cost information is routinely used to assess value for money;
13. Services are provided through the most economic, efficient and effective means;	Management Board	An unqualified external audit opinion on the Council's value for money arrangements is secured each year;
14. Timely monitoring and review of performance, and consideration of corrective action where necessary;	Members/Management Board	Progress in respect of capital and revenue expenditure and the achievement of Key Performance Indicators is regularly reviewed;
15. Maximisation of use or return on the Council's commercial and industrial land and property assets;	Director of Corporate Support Services	Performance targets for the Asset Management Plan are achieved;
Efficiencies are achieved and savings reallocated against other priorities		
16. Identification of budget growth and savings as part of the annual budget setting process;	Service Directors/Director of Finance & ICT	Savings are achieved in line with the Council's budget strategy;
17. Targeted reinvestment of efficiency gains to improve performance;	Service Directors/Director of Finance & ICT	Efficiency gains are identified and implemented wherever possible;

Value for money is taken into account when making procurement and other spending decisions		
18. Procure goods and services economically, efficiently and effectively;	Director of Finance & ICT	Delivery of the annual action plan for the Procurement Strategy;
Funding and partnership opportunities are sought in order to enhance the resources available to the Council to deliver services		
19. Full cost recovery across all services;	Service Directors	Review fees and charges and explore possible opportunities for the generation of additional income;
20. Identify and secure appropriate funding opportunities;	Service Directors	Maximum use is made of external funding available to the council, as a recipient or supplier of funds;
21. Work jointly and collaboratively with partners and other organisations, where there is a business case to do so;	Service Directors	Improved value for money through economies of scale, and achievement of cost savings and efficiencies.