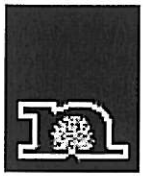
report



Meeting	**COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENTAL BRIEFING**		
date	**15 JANUARY 2008**	agenda item number	**4**

Report of the Strategic Director for Communities

Communities Department Review

Throughout 2007 the department made steady progress in a number of business critical areas including, making improvements in service delivery, maintaining and improving performance, securing recognition and awards for exemplary practice whilst also meeting increased customer and user expectations. Good progress has also been made in improving communications to our users, elected members and partners with recognition that there is more to achieve.

Priorities for 2008

The priorities facing Communities Department over the next 12 months include:

1. Stronger engagement and increased interface with elected members. The next year is likely to see an increase in elected member involvement particularly as Government has vested increased confidence in local government and has enhanced the role of elected members in representing localities and needs of their area and acting as civic leaders.

2. Greater emphasis will be placed on the delivery of excellent services and working with our partners. History confirms that the best organizations maintain a consistent drive for continuous service improvements and ensuring key performance targets are achieved. Communities Department worked consistently throughout 2007 in maintaining and improving its key performance targets. This was reflected in the performance scores for Culture and Environment maintaining a score of 4.

3. There will be an increased priority in supporting and developing the people who work in delivering support and front line operations. Recognition is afforded to the value we place on colleagues, acknowledging that it is their commitment, loyalty and professionalism at all levels that enables us to deliver excellent services. Priority has also been given to ensure we are able to retain and also recruit good people. To assist in this Communities Management Team have approved a number of support and organizational development initiatives. These will complement the work the department will be initiating through the corporate NJE support project.

4. Budget planning and financial management will be a high priority. The efficiency agenda will become increasingly important, as will the new agenda relating to Value for Money (VFM). The securing additional funding from the CSR07 settlement will assist in meeting increased demands particularly in Highways and Community Safety.

5. Reputation management and securing recognition for County Council achievements and successes is also a key priority. The department is planning to ensure it maximizes its efforts relating to good news stories, achievements and celebrations. Public confidence in the services provided and customer feedback is overall very positive. Management will be working to ensure the positive achievements are shared more fully with clear acknowledgment that there is always room for improvement and active communication.

6. The department will continue to drive forward on its cultural change programme ensuring that everyone is able to fulfil their potential.

Opportunities

1. Continued innovations and developments in service delivery, service improvements and delivering to customer expectations.

2. Further connections and coherence between services to enable greater working together and improved outcomes for local people.

3. Bringing more people into play in the delivery of our key priorities, utilizing better the skills, abilities and experience of our people.

4. Successfully delivering projects and initiatives. Including refreshing the successful Building Better Communities (BBC) programme, reinforcing community safety, delivery of the NET, Waste, Community Hubs, Sub National Review, Sherwood Forest visitor centre, Highways improvements and ensuring Holme Pierrepont delivers on its sporting ambitions.

6. Relationship and confidence building with our partners and stakeholders. Ensuring we consult early with partners and stakeholders in the development and formation of policy and strategy. Partners are keen to be more engaged with us at an earlier stage.

Political Support and Commitment

Communities Cabinet Members are absolutely committed to ensuring the department moves forward positively into 2008. Cabinet members are keen to support the delivery of priorities and are particularly keen to ensure we further build on our relationships, communications and involvement with and to all elected members.

Mick Burrows
Strategic Director