

A Brief Guide  
to the Performance Management  
Framework in  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council



## Introduction

Performance Management is at the heart of any modern, effective organisation. At Stockton, we have been laying the foundations of an effective performance management framework to help us deliver Best Value services since local government reorganisation in 1996.

This framework helps us to:

- Be clear about what we are trying to achieve - strategy and Community Plan
- Set out exactly what we are going to achieve and how we will achieve it - service plans, objectives and targets
- Monitor whether or not we are achieving it - performance review and personal appraisal
- Report to the community on how well we are doing - annual reports and the Best Value Performance Plan.

The purpose of this guide is to outline the performance management framework in simple terms so that you can understand better how we work and importantly how you fit into it.



George Garlick  
Chief Executive

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## What is Performance Management?

1. Performance Management is simply the culture (eg leadership values) and systems (eg service planning) which an organisation puts in place to help it manage and continuously improve its performance. It is an important element in the success of any modern, effective local authority and is essential to the delivery of Best Value.
2. At its simplest, Performance Management can be broken down into 4 elements:

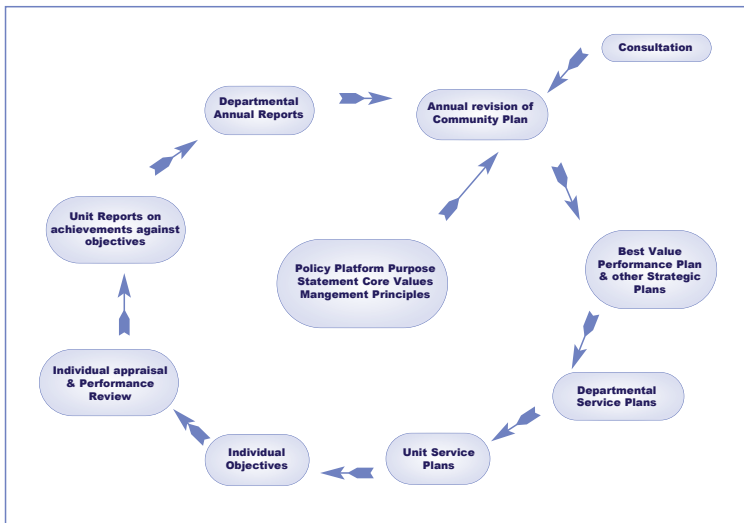


## The Performance Management Framework in Stockton

3. The Performance Management Framework in Stockton is based on a simple planning process. This is set out in Box 1 on page 2.

## Box 1

### The Council's Performance Management Wheel



4. The framework starts with our policy platform, purpose statement and core values and management principles. These set out the general vision and culture by which the Council will operate and set out the high-level policy steer which guides our work.
5. From this, and obviously in consultation with the public and key stakeholders, we produce a Community Plan for the Borough. This outlines the key priorities and objectives for the Borough for the next 3 years together with the concrete actions and targets for measuring achievement.
6. These objectives then cascade down through departmental and unit service plans to provide targets and objectives for groups and individuals. We can then assess the effectiveness of action to achieve these objectives through individual appraisal and the performance review process.
7. Finally, we then report back on outcomes through departmental and Council reports and feed back changes into the next revision of the Community Plan.
8. That briefly sets out the Performance Management Framework in Stockton. The rest of this guide outlines each element in more detail.

#### **Purpose Statement and Core Values**

9. The Corporate Framework starts with our purpose statement - Box 2. This sets out the Council's fundamental purpose and core values or qualities to be upheld throughout all its activities. It is the public statement of why we are here and the cultural values that will guide our work with the Community.

## Box 2

### The Council's Purpose Statement

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is your Council. We exist to ensure you receive services which benefit and improve your lives. We will respond to your needs, provide opportunities and support you to build upon your strengths.

What we are committed to

- Putting People First** Key Phrase: Respect  
We will respect all people, their individual privacy and dignity, offering choice wherever possible so that they can fulfil personal aspirations to the best of their abilities.
- Managing Resources** Key Phrase: Efficiency  
Our services will be delivered efficiently and effectively in a way that is valued by people.
- Working with Others** Key Phrase: Partnership  
We will co-operate openly with partners from the wider community, our citizens and the voluntary and business sectors.
- Striving for Improvement** Key Phrase: Challenge  
We will challenge people to use their creativity to innovate and bring about continual improvement.
- Performing Well** Key Phrase: Skills  
Our services will be provided by capable and appropriately trained people.
- Securing the Future** Key Phrase: Protection  
We will balance differing needs to secure a healthy, safe and attractive environment for current and future generations.

### Management Principles

- At the heart of our internal operating framework are our six core management principles - Box 3. These principles set out the culture of the organisation or the values which guide how we work together within the Council. They are put into action through common ownership of management issues and policy direction via the Corporate and Departmental Management Teams, Setting the Standard events and communication methods such as Keeping You in Touch.

### Box 3

#### The Council's Management Principles

- 1 **Managerial Culture:** we need to be managers not administrators e.g. innovative, multi-skilled and concerned with the quality of what we deliver or produce.
- 2 **Tight/Loose Approach:** we must comply with Standing Orders, financial regulations, agreed policies etc. but beyond these, we must have freedom to manage.
- 3 **Accountability:** we must be responsible for our actions/services and accountable to our Members, Clients and the public and be prepared to respond efficiently and effectively.
- 4 **Accessibility:** we must be accessible to our Members, Clients and the public and to each other.
- 5 **Performance Based:** we must seek constantly to improve. We need to be innovative; to analyse and measure our performance against set objectives, benchmark against comparators and embrace best practice.
- 6 **Public Service Ethos:** we must not forget our commitment to the communities and the people we serve.

#### Consultation

11. All local authorities have a statutory duty to consult as part of the Government's Best Value legislation. As a listening Council, Stockton has always been committed to extending its consultation far beyond any statutory requirements. We want to ensure that the residents of Stockton, our service users and all other interested parties have the opportunity to be fully involved in our services and are at the heart of all Council decision making.
12. Our approach is set out in our Consultation Strategy, supported by a Guide to Effective Consultation. At Stockton, we have a wide range of mechanisms for consulting with the public. For example, we use:
  - A biennial MORI residents survey - a survey of a representative cross-section of the community to consider satisfaction with Council services, image, contact, communications etc.
  - A residents Panel - we have a panel of 1,200 residents which can be used for consultation at various levels, ranging from general surveys to specific focus groups.

- Service Panels - many of our services, such as Housing, have established user panels for general consultation and to help review services and set standards and targets for improvements.
  - A Complaints and Commendations Procedure - we encourage people to tell us where we are doing things right and wrong, so we can learn from problems and spread good practice.
13. A full list of consultation techniques is set out in the Council's Guide to Consultation and in the Best Value Performance Plan.

## The Community Plan

14. The Community Plan sets out the key issues and challenges for the Borough to be addressed over the next 3 years. The context of the Plan is Promoting Achievement and Tackling Disadvantage. This recognises the fact that we have alarming levels of disadvantage in the Borough which we need to address in partnership with key stakeholders, whilst at the same time promoting a culture of high achievement in all walks of life.
15. The Community Plan is built on a platform of 5 key policies, which reflect local priorities and also have a close tie-in to the Government's national agenda - Box 4.

### Box 4

#### The Community Plan Policy Platform

The overall context of the policy platform is:

*"Promoting Achievement and Tackling Disadvantage."*

In partnership with others we will:-

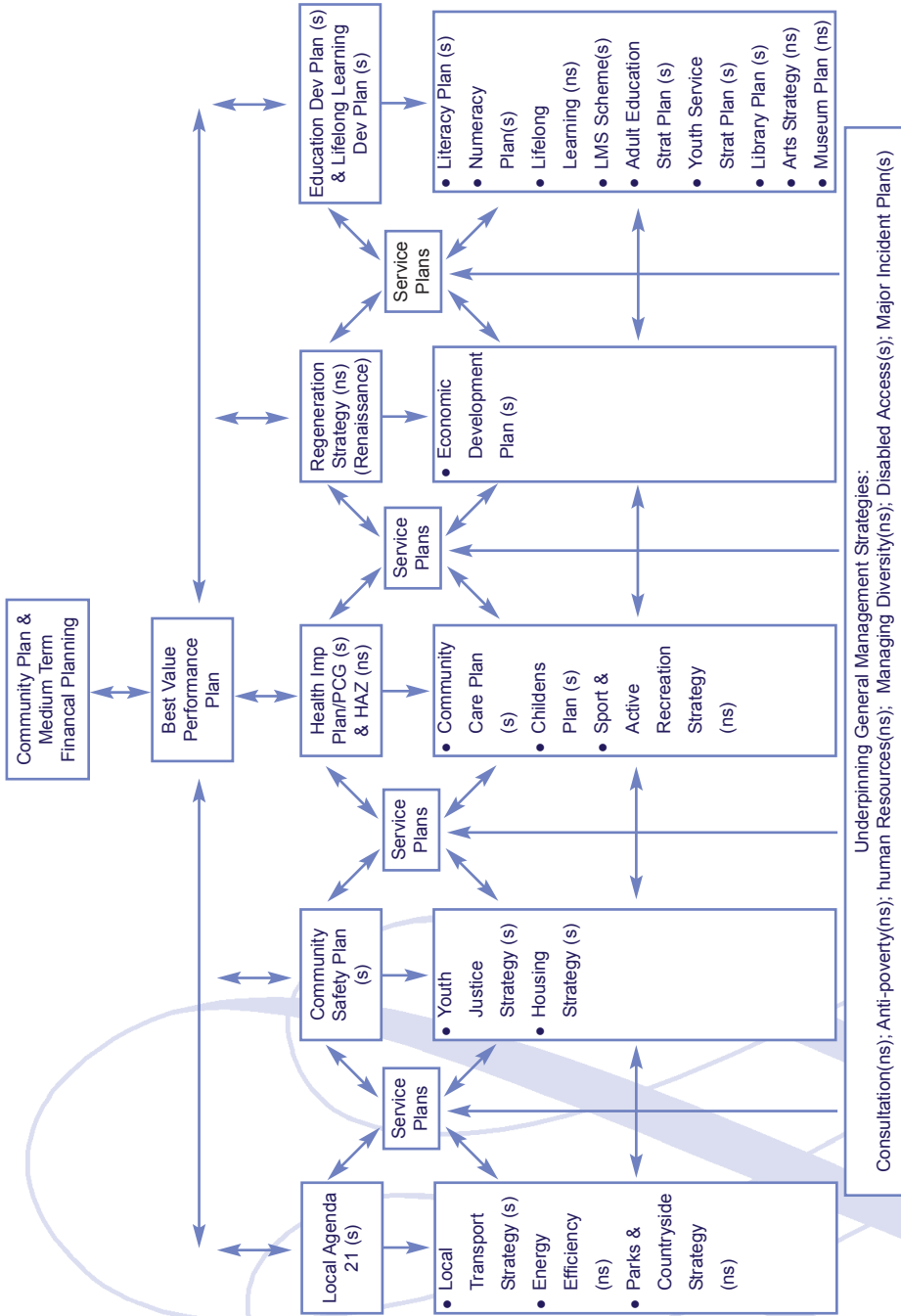
- secure a safe and attractive **environment** for current and future generations.
- promote the **safety and social well-being** of the community.
- improve the **health** of the local community.
- further **regenerate** the Borough and improve the local economy.
- improve opportunity and achievement in **education and lifelong learning**.

16. In order to achieve this policy platform we have set a number of high level objectives which feed and are fed by the Council's other strategic plans (eg Education Development Plan) and departmental service plans. All objectives have clear targets and outcomes which will form a running performance indicator of success.
17. These objectives and targets are meant to be challenging and in most cases are set in conjunction with our local partners. Targets, for example, to reduce burglaries, increase the numbers of pupils leaving school with qualifications, and reduce unemployment.

## The Planning Framework

18. Each department produces annual service plans which detail all objectives for all services delivered by the Council for the current year. As stated above, the key objectives in the Community Plan are, in some cases, taken from strategic plans or service plans and in some cases will influence service plans. Their common denominator is that achievement against stated targets will form a running performance indicator of each department's success in achieving their key aims and objectives. These objectives then flow into objectives for individuals and groups of staff and are assessed through the appraisal process.
19. The Council produces a number of strategic plans - some are statutory required by the Government (eg the Education Development Plan) and some are produced by the Council to help achieve local aims and objectives (eg the Community Plan). Each feeds into the high level Community Plan (which sets the overall strategy) and Best Value Performance Plan (which tells the public how well we are performing in delivering services and our targets for improvement).
20. A diagram showing how the plans fit together is shown in Box 5. This diagram does not provide a complete list of Plans, but does highlight some of the more important ones. It also demonstrates Stockton's joined up approach' - no one department or service can achieve the Council's objectives in isolation. We all need to work together in partnership within the Council and with other organisations such as Cleveland Police, Tees Health Authority etc. If you are interested in knowing more, the Community Plan lists all the Council's key partners against each objective.

# Box 5 The Council's Plans



## Financial Planning

21. The service and financial planning processes are firmly integrated in Stockton. The key elements of the financial planning framework are:
  - Delegation (trust)
  - Flexibility (opportunity)
  - Forward resource allocations (certainty)
22. The key characteristics are:
  - It is medium term and hence supports the Community Plan
  - It encourages innovation, efficiency and the recycling of resources into the priorities of the Community Plan
  - It demands accountability to members and the public.
23. Our financial framework ensures that budgets are highly devolved, so that responsibility for spending is with the front line managers that need it most. Managers are also able to carry forward underspends and overspends, where a planned business case is agreed. We also give indicative resources allocations for services for the next 3 years, to ensure that managers are able to plan and manage their budgets over the medium term, rather than be forced into the traditional year end spending spree for unused budgets or knee-jerk action to find cuts.

## Performance Review and Personal Appraisal

24. This is simply the systems and processes we put in place to help us review how well we are performing. For individuals and groups, it is based on the Council's appraisal system. This helps ensure all employees and sections:
  - Are clear about their own and/or their section's objectives and targets
  - Assess how well they are doing in meeting those objectives and targets.
25. The process is clearly an important part of the employee development framework, helping to identify and remove barriers to improved performance through training etc.

26. For the organisation, performance review will centre on:

- Assessing whether or not we have achieved the objectives and actions set out in strategic plans and services plans
- Monitoring and reviewing our performance indicators (internal and national Best Value PIs) and assessing whether we are achieving targets for continuous improvement
- Undertaking fundamental Best Value reviews of all our services at least once in every 5 year period - challenging the need for the service; consulting users; comparing ourselves to other providers; and demonstrating the competitiveness of our services (see the Plain English guide to Best Value for further details)
- Quality assurance processes, such as Investors in People (IIP), Charter Mark, Business Excellence etc.

## Reporting

27. Clearly, the final stage in the Performance Management Framework is reporting our performance. There are a wide range of people who need to know how well we are performing - individual employees and sections; Departmental and Corporate Management Teams; Members; partner organisations; the Government; and most importantly the public.

Reporting back takes a variety of forms - from Committee reports, to articles in Stockton News, to the Best Value Performance Plan. The key message is to keep people informed about the good (and the bad!): the more informed they are, the more involved they become and the more satisfied they will be with the Council and its service.

## Notes



