1.0 Introduction

Our Performance and Improvement Framework is a key part of the way in which we manage the organisation. We deliberately use the word "improvement" to indicate that the whole purpose of performance management is to make sure that we continue to improve in all aspects of how we work and what we deliver. It helps us to ensure that we know what we are trying to achieve and sets out how we monitor progress and then take action as needed.

The main principle is that we decide what we want or need to deliver, and performance management helps to ensure that we get there and in a way that achieves value for money.

Performance management essentially involves:

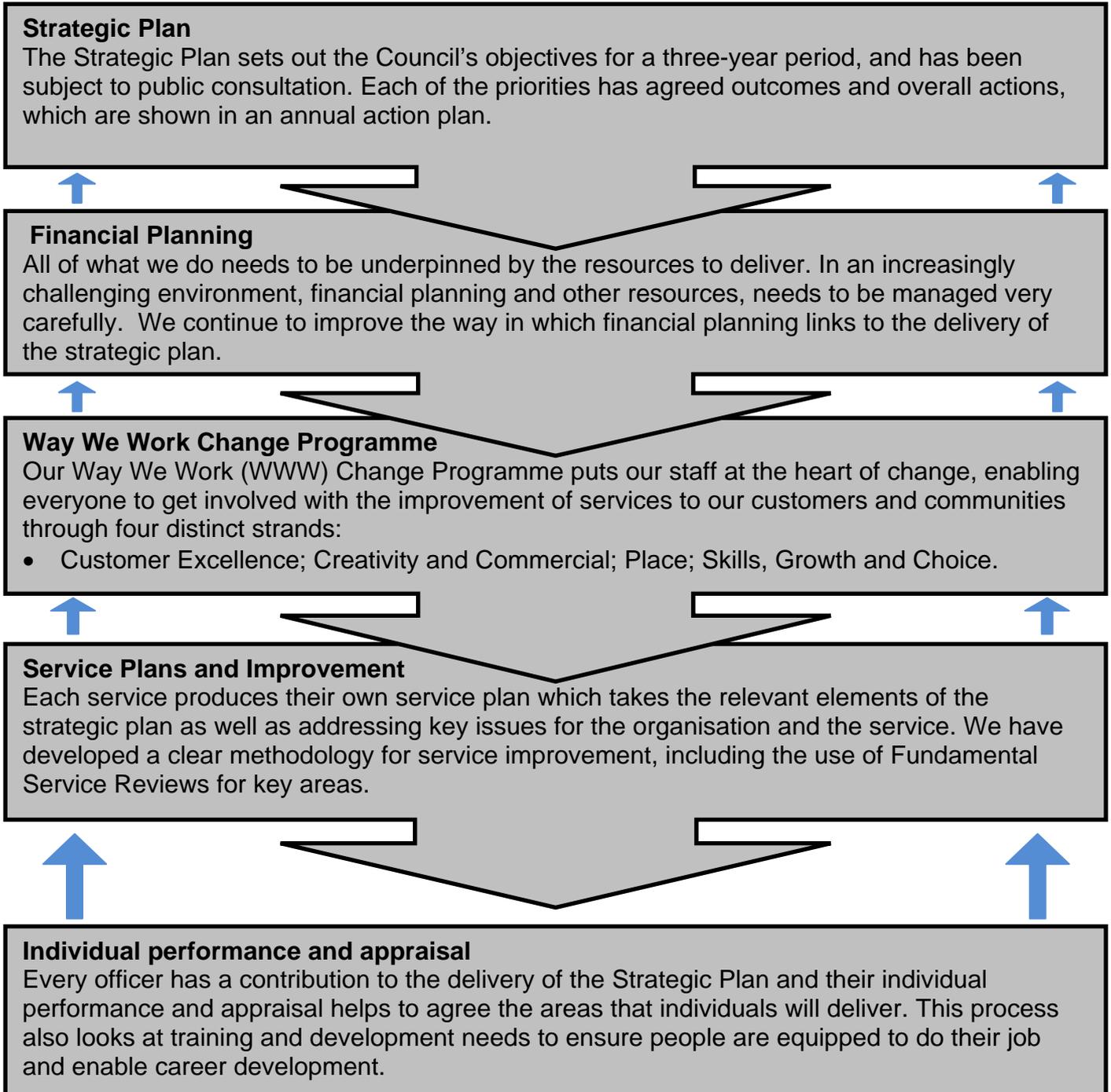|	
Plan	The setting of objectives, priorities and targets for all key service areas and plans (including financial ones). Our customers should be engaged in this process wherever possible.
Do	The regular monitoring and evaluation of performance against these objectives, priorities and targets with a view to achieving an integrated planning and review process across the Council.
Review	Taking appropriate action to address the areas that are highlighted by the monitoring as needing attention
Sustain and Improve	Maintaining good performance, monitoring against objectives and completing the cycle will ensure that continuous improvement is achieved.

2.0 Context

Our performance management has continued to develop as the external context changes, and as we strive to improve our services and help the borough of Colchester to be a great place to live, learn, work and visit.

At the core of this, there remains the need to deliver the Strategic Plan which sets out the Council's key objectives and priorities.

3.0 The core elements of our framework

Strategic Plan
The Strategic Plan sets out the Council's objectives for a three-year period, and has been subject to public consultation. Each of the priorities has agreed outcomes and overall actions, which are shown in an annual action plan.

Financial Planning
All of what we do needs to be underpinned by the resources to deliver. In an increasingly challenging environment, financial planning and other resources, needs to be managed very carefully. We continue to improve the way in which financial planning links to the delivery of the strategic plan.

Way We Work Change Programme
Our Way We Work (WWW) Change Programme puts our staff at the heart of change, enabling everyone to get involved with the improvement of services to our customers and communities through four distinct strands:
- Customer Excellence; Creativity and Commercial; Place; Skills, Growth and Choice.

Service Plans and Improvement
Each service produces their own service plan which takes the relevant elements of the strategic plan as well as addressing key issues for the organisation and the service. We have developed a clear methodology for service improvement, including the use of Fundamental Service Reviews for key areas.

Individual performance and appraisal
Every officer has a contribution to the delivery of the Strategic Plan and their individual performance and appraisal helps to agree the areas that individuals will deliver. This process also looks at training and development needs to ensure people are equipped to do their job and enable career development.

4.0 How we use the core elements to help manage performance

4.1 Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan was updated for 2012-2015, reflecting the outcomes of public consultation. It was adopted by the full Council in February 2012 following a report agreed by the Cabinet. An action plan is used to describe annual milestones.

This document is publicly available and is reviewed every six months. The sequence of meetings that will provide input to this review mechanism is:

- Senior Management Team
- Leadership Team
- Scrutiny Panel
- Cabinet.

4.2 Financial Planning and Control

In order to deliver the Strategic Plan we need to ensure that we allocate the money available in the most effective way, that we track how it is being spent and challenge that we are achieving value for money from the decisions that are made. The budget process is integral to performance management.

Forward planning:
- planning three years ahead to ensure we are proactive
- linking resources to the Strategic Plan
- ensuring that a balanced budget will be delivered
- looking at opportunities for efficiencies and income.

Managing the current budget:
- regular reporting of the budget; monthly to Senior Management Team and quarterly to Scrutiny Panel to look at areas of potential over and under spend and progress on income generation
- checking that we are achieving value for money, for example comparing our costs and looking at procurement practice and opportunities.

4.4   Service Plans

Service Plans are produced by each service and form a key part of the cascade of the priorities in the Strategic Plan through to the actions that are required to deliver them. These plans also include other specific service priorities, risks and monitoring processes. The Head of Service has responsibility for delivery of service priorities and performance against them is managed day-to-day in a number of ways:

- through the management structure and performance appraisal of Heads of Service by the relevant Executive Director
- through service improvement and action planning within teams
- through regular meetings with the Portfolio Holder
- through the monitoring and reporting of indicators throughout the organisation.

In addition, there are a number of more strategic interventions including:

- review of service performance with regard to financial management at both Scrutiny and Cabinet
- performance management of risks as described in the risk management strategy
- assessment at Leadership Team of performance issues.

Some services have more than one plan and use group or team plans. This is largely driven by the diversity within services. We need plans that are meaningful for the people who are responsible for their delivery.

4.5   The 'Way We Work' Programme of Cultural Change (WWW)

The WWW change programme is our unique approach to enabling staff throughout the organisation to participate and support the improvements that we seek to make both for our customers and all the individuals who work for the Council.

The programme has four strands dedicated to Customer Excellence; Creativity and Commercial; Place; Skills, Growth and Choice. Each strand is led by an Executive Director, and has a working group made up of members of the Senior Management Team and other key individuals supporting and leading specific improvement actions.

Success of the four strands is monitored by:
- the Executive Management Team lead member
- review of the key activities and actions plans on a regular basis
- regular updates and input from officers across the whole Council
- a programme of Fundamental Service Reviews.

4.6 Individual Performance Management and Appraisal

We expect every employee to sit down with their manager or team leader at the start of the performance year to agree the main things they will work towards over the following twelve months, along with any developmental needs of the individual.

There is a formal process to enable consistency. This ensures that a review is carried out half-way through the performance year, and also that regular 1-1 meetings take place on an informal basis.

4.7 Improvement

We have an embedded approach to improvement, and indeed all the core elements and tools we use are based on the principle that we are continuously looking at how we do things, and the need to improve or change depending on the needs of our customers and the skills of our staff.

In addition to this, we have developed a comprehensive and consistent approach to improvement which ensures that customers and their needs are the core of what we do and the way we deliver.

This includes our own methodology for completing Fundamental Service Reviews, and a team-based approach to support services and managers through this process.

5.0 Performance management tools

There are a number of key tools used across the Council that support good performance management:

5.1   Performance Monitoring Arrangements
A key part of any performance management framework is the need for effective monitoring of progress. The Council has a number of monitoring processes in place, including:

5.1.1 Organisational Performance Report
Our organisational report includes a number of key performance measures related to service provision and the Council as a whole. It is monitored quarterly by the Senior Management Team and Leadership Team, and reported twice a year formally to Cabinet.

5.1.2 Customer Excellence Performance Report
Our customer excellence report includes a number of key performance measures related specifically to our customer service priorities. This is monitored by the WWW Customer Excellence group on a quarterly basis.

5.1.3 People Performance Report
Our people report includes a number of key performance measures that relate to the internal health of the organisation. This is monitored by the WWW Skills, Growth and Choice group on a quarterly basis.

5.1.4 Single Data List
The Government established its first 'single data list' in 2011, to set out the full list of data requirements from councils. A number of these are key indicators which are included in the above reports, with others being returned directly to the Government office concerned as required.

5.1.5 Customer Feedback
This is a hugely important area for us and as such customer feedback mechanisms have developed significantly in recent years. We have a number of processes in place including GovMetric, formal consultations and surveys.

5.1.6 Policy Framework
Our policy framework sets out the main strategies and plans that we have in place. All of the plans within the framework are reviewed on a regular basis.

5.1.7 Risk management
A risk management strategy is in place, and is supported by a strategic and operational risk registers to allow us to track significant risks for the Council. The process is integral to 'how we do things' and is reviewed annually.

5.1.8 Project management:
Effective performance management goes hand in hand with robust project management. For all our projects a project management approach is adopted to ensure that we are tracking progress and taking appropriate action. Staff can access a number of resources and tools online on the Council's intranet.

5.1.9 Service reviews
We continue to undertake Fundamental Service Reviews as appropriate, and have developed a new model that uses customer journeys as a key to defining how services should be delivered, within resource constraints.

5.1.10 Data quality
We need to ensure that the quality of the information we gather is of the highest standard. Our data quality strategy sets out how we do this and together with our data protection policy they ensure that the data we gather is both accurate and used correctly.

5.1.11 Customer Insight and Profiling:
We have a small Research and Engagement Team who analyse data regarding the area and the people who live in it. This ensures that we can tailor services more appropriately, and provides us with a starting point for many improvement initiatives for customers, places and communities. Our consultations, research and statistics pages on the Council's website include more information.

Customer Insight is having effective understanding of and communication with our customers, taking in their changing needs and behaviours. We use Customer Insight to gain a better understanding of our customers' needs, and we are then able to use this insight to inform decision-making and design of the delivery of services. Finding out how our customers' needs and behaviours are changing gives us a way of measuring our performance through various consultation methods.

5.1.12 Complaints and compliments
These are a key component in judging organisational health and we undertake regular reviews to track trends.

5.1.13 Benchmarking
This is where we use performance information to measure progress of our improvement initiatives, by looking at performance before we make any changes and then looking at it again during and after the change to see what improvement has been made. In some cases we also use benchmarking to look at how well we perform in comparison to other local authorities or industries providing services similar to our own.

5.1.14 Strategic Plan Action Plan
The Strategic Plan Action Plan sets out and monitors progress of the actions that we have agreed to ensure we meet our improvement priorities.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone in the organisation has some role to play in performance management. It is the individuals who deliver frontline services on a day-to-day basis who actually make the change happen, see what works and can implement improvement.

There are also some key groups who take an overall view to monitor performance and provide feedback on areas where improvement is needed:

6.1   Cabinet
The Cabinet has the overall responsibility to manage the performance of the Council. Performance information goes to Cabinet on a regular basis. The strategic plan action plan will be reported to Cabinet twice a year.

Leadership Team is an informal group, including Cabinet members and officers, set up and used as a mechanism for progressing issues. This is not a decision-making group but offers the Cabinet and Executive Management Team an opportunity to consider and challenge key issues. This is a forum that looks at performance management information and to identify where performance is not satisfactory.

6.2   Panels
Each panel has a key role:

- **Scrutiny Panel**: This panel has a key role in performance management. It will review the Strategic Plan action plan, progress against key indicators and an overview of financial issues including the budget, before they go to Cabinet, and will make recommendations around improvement. The panel also scrutinises the performance of portfolio holders once a year. Another key area that this panel has a role in is partnership; and it will scrutinise major partnerships on a regular basis.

- **Policy Review and Development Panel**: This panel has a role in overseeing policy development and review and supports Cabinet in considering how to make sure our policies reflect improvements needed.

6.3   Portfolio Holders
Portfolio Holders are accountable for the performance of services and projects within their area. Their role in performance management will include review of actions in the Strategic Plan, service plans, performance reports and financial management.

6.5   Executive Management Team
Each member of this team has specific responsibility for development and performance around the various parts of the Council's business. These responsibilities are shown here, alongside the names and contact details.

One of the team has the lead responsibility to identify and support emerging performance management issues, working closely with services.

6.6 Senior Management Team

This is the most senior group of officers manage the performance of the Council at an officer level. It consists of the Executive Management Team and the Heads of Service, and their role is to challenge performance and to offer solutions. Key information considered includes performance reports, financial information, and updates on strategic plan actions. A Performance Management Board meeting is held monthly to consider performance issues.

6.7 Heads of Service

On a day-to-day basis Heads of Service are given the autonomy and authority to manage their services. They would not be able to do this without a performance management framework. The cornerstones for this framework are as outlined in this document. However, given the diversity of our services, each Head of Service will develop additional, complementary methods for managing and improving performance in their remit.

6.8 Others

Every officer within the organisation has a part to play in making sure that the Council delivers its objectives and priorities and continues to serve the people of Colchester borough. This ranges from ensuring that individual objectives are met, to supporting the team and the service, through to delivering projects and being ever more careful about how much money is spent.

Some officers have key roles in providing performance data, but everyone working for the Council has a part to play and responsibilities in relation to Performance Management.

7.0 Ways in which we are measured/assessed externally

The way in which we are measured externally is changing and now has a very different emphasis. These assessments are also part of performance management as they offer feedback on our overall progress.

7.1   Internal audit
The Council's internal audit work is carried out by Deloitte. The current programme was agreed by the Scrutiny Panel.

7.2   Audit Commission Annual Letter
The Audit Commission carries out an annual assessment of financial, value for money and governance issues, against nationally set criteria. These "annual letters" report their findings, and are published on the Council's website here following consideration of the report by councillors.

7.3   Future arrangements - Draft Local Audit Bill
In 2011, the Government consulted on its proposals for a new local public audit framework, following its announcement that the Audit Commission was to be disbanded.

In July 2012, the draft Local Audit Bill was published for consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny. The draft Bill sets out the proposed new audit framework for local public bodies, the process for the appointment of auditors, and the regulatory framework for local public audit. The draft Bill is currently with the House of Commons for its consideration, and the Council will need to review its audit arrangements once the legislative process is over and its requirements are known.

7.2   Other external assessments
There are a number of other assessments carried out which provide us with performance management information and enable us to make improvements and consider the areas where we perform well. Included in these are Peer Challenges, awards and accreditations.

The Council is proud of the external recognition it has received for the quality of the services it provides for residents, businesses and visitors. These are both for specific services and for the entire organisation, including external accreditations such as the Government's Customer Service Excellence Standard, the Investors in People Standard for businesses, and CIPFA's Accredited Employer Standard.

These external awards and accreditations are summarised on the Council's website here.

8.0 Performance Management of Partnerships

We work increasingly in partnership with other organisations from both the public and private sector. These partnerships take various forms and have a range of functions. They can be about direct delivery of service on our behalf such as with Colchester Borough Homes who undertake our housing management, to co-operation between organisations recognising the benefits of sharing skills and resources such as Haven Gateway Partnership.

A Partnership Strategy was agreed in January 2009 by the Cabinet to formalise our approach to partnerships.

It is important that we manage the performance of our partnerships as they will impact on our resources, either because we directly pay them to deliver a service, or we allocate officer resource to work in the partnerships. We also need to recognise that many of the outcomes of partnerships will take a long time to deliver. This means we need to use milestones to keep focus and to ensure resources, capacity and budget match our aspirations.

We are continually strengthening our approach to performance management in regard to our partnerships as this becomes an increasingly important and complex area of delivery.

Scrutiny plays a major role in the performance management. Regular reports are received by Panels (as shown at 6.2 above) to challenge performance and to put forward areas where improvement needs to be made:

Governance of each partnership needs to be considered and these arrangements are monitored regularly. We need to be confident that we are receiving accurate and timely information to enable us to manage performance.

The style of governance will depend on the style of partnership. Our approach to corporate governance is summarised on the Council's website here.