



REVIEW OF CORPORATE PLAN

When Antrim Borough Council created the Corporate Plan for the period 2006 to 2010 it was a public statement of the Council's commitment to improve the quality of life for residents and ratepayers of the Borough.

Our vision for the Borough, as outlined in the Plan, is

'An attractive, outward looking place, where people enjoy an enriched quality of life and increasingly want to live, work, visit and invest'.

In pursuing this vision we identified four key themes within which we would work and against which our performance would be measured. Our primary purpose is to serve the people (**Community**), within the boundaries of our Borough (**Environment**) and promote and develop our physical, financial and people resources (**Economy**). The fourth key theme is to ensure that our services and those of other public bodies are delivered in an efficient and effective way, and economical manner (**Excellence**).

In support of these 4 themes we established a range of core values to govern our culture and behaviour with everyone we interact with both externally and internally. These values are:-

- **Achievement Orientated** - where we will work consistently to meet and where possible exceed all our stakeholders' expectations.
- **Needs Led** - where we will listen and respond appropriately and effectively to our stakeholders' needs and expectations.
- **Transparent** - where we will be open, inclusive and transparent in our internal and external workings.
- **Respectful** - where we will treat all people fairly and equitably, respect their privacy and dignity, be helpful and polite and pay particular attention to those with special needs.
- **Involvement** - where we will consult with and involve all stakeholders to continuously improve the service we provide. In addition, we will work to maximise the contribution of all our staff through their development and involvement.
- **Modern** - where in line with our Vision of being a modern, outward looking organisation, we will work to ensure all our practices reflect the latest evidence-based, creative and innovative thinking and practices in all areas of Council activity and service provision.



In the next two years, under the Review of Public Administration, we are entering a period of significant reform in which not only services from central government and other agencies transfer to us but also in which Newtownabbey and Antrim Councils will join.

We therefore want to take this opportunity to give all our residents and ratepayers an update on what we have achieved in the Corporate Plan and to set out priorities which will take us through 2011. As we move towards the establishment of the new Council currently called Antrim and Newtownabbey District Council, we will aim to integrate our activities with the short term vision for the new Council.

The next sections of this review sets out the main areas of our activity within the four themes, what we have achieved in relation to those themes and the priorities we will focus on over the next two years.

ENVIRONMENT

Waste / Litter collection and disposal / Recycling - Each year we collect 37,300 tonnes, approximately 50% of which is recycled rather than sent to landfill. This is 15% in excess of the targets set for Councils in Northern Ireland.

Food control - Every year we inspect over 300 premises that produce food products and retail premises, including restaurants that prepare and sell food to the public. This is in compliance with the standards set down by the Food Standards Agency.

Health and safety - We conducted in excess of 800 health and safety inspections of all manufacturing outlets in the Borough, offered health and safety advice, monitor adherence to the smoke free legislation and facilitated training courses all aimed at making workplaces safe and healthy places to work in.

Consumer protection - Council is continually checking and inspecting products sold in the Borough to ensure they comply with UK and European Safety Regulations. Last year we responded to some 160 requests in the Borough.

Environmental protection - Council staff dealt with 245 Environmental Health requests and over 600 Planning applications from DOE. All of these were scrutinised/inspected to ensure that environmental standards were being adhered to. Council is also involved in educational and information campaigns in schools and with the public to encourage reduction, recycling and re-use of waste. The Council also inspected 19 premises in the Borough permitted under the Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations.



Pollution control - The quality of the air in the Borough is monitored at 9 locations throughout the Borough by Council staff and reported to the Department of the Environment who will institute action where air quality is not as high as it should be. Similarly regular testing of water quality of our leisure facilities, and private water supplies are undertaken regularly to ensure that bacteriological levels are maintained at a safe level for the public. In addition Council staff responded to 400 requests for service in relation to pollution control.

Housing - The Council undertakes fitness inspections of privately rented properties each year to ensure compliance with fitness standards. Last year the Council issued 12 certificates of fitness in relation to privately rented properties. Council is also involved in investigating cases of harassment and illegal eviction of tenants in privately rented accommodation.

Dog control - Education and advice on the control and ownership of dogs is given by Council and legal action taken by Council where there are serious or repeated breaches of the law.

Planning consultations - Your Elected Members play a vital role in working with the Planning service to ensure that planning applications are beneficial to communities and the Borough as a whole. Typically Council will deal with some 5,000 applications per year.

Licensing and Regulatory services - All pubs, clubs, entertainment venues, cinemas, hairdressers, tattoo parlours, fuel suppliers and distributors, gaming establishments and venues where the public gather for leisure activities (participating or spectating) are inspected to ensure they comply with the appropriate legislative requirements for public safety. Council conducted over 400 licensing and regulatory requests.

Building Control - Deals with the safety, accessibility, environmental impact and compliance with The Northern Ireland Building Regulations. The regulations apply to both domestic and commercial, new developments, extensions and alterations, and change of use of existing sites/properties, hence these are assessed by Council.

Council received on average 431 full plans, 279 building notice and 66 regularisation applications per year during the last 3 years. During the same period the Building Control section undertook an average of 5276 inspections annually. Response times for both plan assessments and site inspections place Antrim Building Control section in the top five when compared with the other Building Control sections across Northern Ireland.

Council through their Building Control section has issued 357 postal numbers, 22 new developments were named and 2590 property certificates were researched and issued during the preceding 3 years.



A data collection and data sharing project between Land and Property Services and Building Control has been developed and is ongoing currently within the Building Control section, to ensure that timely and accurate information is being provided for valuation lists hence for the Estimated Penny Product calculations, to assist in accurate estimating and budgeting. We are currently the only Council outside of Belfast City Council who are involved in the data collection project with Land and Property Services.

An innovative project has also been developed where a mobile working initiative has been extended through the Building Control section. The section now has the capability, equipment and IT system to facilitate mobile working, which increases the service offered to our customers.

Community Safety - Elected Members and council staff have worked in partnership with the local community, other government bodies and voluntary agencies to improve community safety, road safety, reduce the fear of crime and reduce the level of crime across the Borough by over 3% in the past year.

Built and Natural Environment - Council takes its responsibilities in energy conservation seriously and has installed a wind and solar power plant at the new Operational Services Depot at Orchard Way, purchases green energy above the 12% government target and is installing a new energy efficiency plant facility at the Antrim Forum which will cut CO₂ emissions.

Biodiversity - Council published a Local Biodiversity Action Plan in 2007 and since then 53 of the 121 actions to protect and enhance local priority habitats and species have been commenced. Council has also been instrumental in the formation of a number of environmental groups including Antrim Borough Biodiversity Advisory (ABBA) Group and the Sixmilewater Trust.

ECONOMY

Antrim Borough Council has been actively engaged in developing the local economy in the following ways:-

REAP (South Antrim) Limited - Through its support to REAP (South Antrim) 35 rural small business owners have been assisted in the Borough with direct grant aid totalling £686,950 which is expected to enable the assisted companies invest a further £800,000 from their own resources. In terms of actual outputs to date -

- 9 new businesses have been, or will soon be, established.
- 26 businesses will be assisted to expand.
- 4 farming families have been assisted to set up new diversification projects.
- 84 business owners have undertaken training in management and ICT skills.



To date 90 (full time equivalent) jobs have been created by the 39 completed projects in Antrim Borough.

Implementation of the Antrim Master Plan -

- Successful application to NI Housing Executive for a Town Centre Living Initiative with 31 Antrim town properties identified as eligible for grant aid to create residential accommodation.
- Council's Master Plan has been instrumental in securing DSD's prioritisation of Antrim Town for regeneration. A proposed programme of investment in environmental improvements and public realm works for Antrim town centre is currently being developed.

To date through Council's Master Plan the following has been achieved:

- Successful reconfiguration works in Market Square to promote improved access for pedestrians and public transport.
- Eight properties restored and brought back into commercial use through the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) in partnership with Antrim Towns Development Company and Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Annual 'Shop Local' schemes introduced for Antrim, Crumlin and Randalstown.

In addition:

- Master Plans have been completed for Crumlin and Randalstown resulting in £250,000 of investment in public realm improvements in Randalstown; Council is seeking similar grant aid in support of Crumlin's Master Plan.
- An Investment Prospectus for the Borough has been produced on DVD and circulated to commercial estate agents and property developers.
- A successful application has been made to the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development for the setting up of a Local Action Group in partnership with Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey Borough Councils to access up to £10million for Rural Development projects (2007-13).
- Completion of the EU Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme which has enabled Council to access £656,000 of EU grant aid for local economic development activities.



- The development and success of Council's Six Mile Water Caravan Park has resulted in a record number of tourists and income (1,485 campers, £56,050 income received in 2009). In addition, around 147,400 visitors have been recorded at the Lough Shore Park during 2008 with significant benefits to the Borough's tourism economy.
- The establishment of successful annual seasonal events programme includes Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter activities at Lough Shore Park, Antrim town centre.

COMMUNITY

Council is committed to improving the health and well-being of the residents and ratepayers of the Borough through the provision of a range of sport, leisure and community based facilities.

Health and Well-Being - To improve health and well-being across the Borough, Council has been working in partnership with other government agencies to tackle issues such as fuel poverty, home safety, improving energy efficiency in private and socially rented homes, encouraging the creation of healthy workplaces by supporting employers, training young mothers on healthy lifestyles and have commenced work to improve nutrition in the Borough.

To date we have achieved the following: -

- Established and supported 3 multi-agency partnerships addressing home safety, creating warmer homes and children and young people.
- Secured £52,755 to develop home safety and in particular a home safety check scheme for elderly residents including the supply of useful equipment. 161 homes have had a home safety visit following referral from the Northern Trust Elder Care Team.
- 343 referrals have been made to the NIE Levy Scheme (Warmer Ways to Better Health) with 127 of these referrals made for new or replacement boilers and 216 for improved home insulation measures. This has brought an estimated £593,000 of potential investment to the Borough.
- Identified and referred 447 residents for home energy improvements under the DSD Fuel Poverty Scheme. 146 of these referrals were to the Warm Homes Plus Scheme for a new or replacement heating system and 331 of the referrals were to the Warm Homes Scheme for improved home insulation measures. This has brought an estimated £730,000 of potential investment to the Borough.



- Secured £150,000 for an innovative workplace health initiative resulting in 14 local businesses committing to make their workplace a healthy workplace impacting upon 800 employees.
- Secured £15,000 to fund healthy life skills training with 61 young mothers completing course to date.
- Completed baseline reports on the “Health of Our Borough” and “Behaviours and Attitudes of Young People” which has enabled local groups to demonstrate need while seeking additional funding.
- Secured £13,000 to fund a series of Parenting Support Programmes through the Antrim Locality Children and Young Persons Group. To date this has involved the delivery of 3 ‘Promoting Positive Parenting’ courses, 1 Life Skills Health and Well-Being course for mothers, 2 Parent and Teenager Cook-it courses and a self esteem course for local mothers.
- Supported 13 local catering businesses as well as Antrim Hospital’s staff restaurant to introduce healthier options to their existing menus and adopt ‘healthier’ cooking practices.

Council provides a full range of indoor health and fitness facilities at Antrim Forum including swimming, a fitness suite, aerobics and relaxation classes, indoor football, basketball and 10 pin bowling.

In the past year some 750,000 customers used the facilities at the Forum. This included many schools, clubs and community organisations.

The Forum is also the home to outdoor sports in the Borough where many athletics events and coaching classes for track and field events are held. Some 50,000 people of all ages made use of the outdoor facilities and many local amateur football matches were played in the extensive grounds.

Allen Park is the Borough’s municipal golf course and provides access to golf for many people who do are not members of a private club. Allen Park also offers practice facilities and one of the finest bowling green complexes in Northern Ireland. 20,000 clients made use of the golf and bowling facility in the past year.

The Council also makes provision for all age ranges and interests through walking programmes, orienteering, canoeing on the Lower Bann, environmental campaigns at Crumlin Glenn, the Sixmilewater and the Mill Race Trail. These programmes are becoming increasingly popular with an increase of some 60% in participation rates in the past year.



Council provides 7 Community Centres across the Borough where many community based activities such as mother and toddler clubs, health and well-being projects, employment skills, sports and leisure activities and community social events take place.

There are some 3000 registered members associated with the community centre.

Facilities will be further enhanced during the coming year with the development and commissioning of three new play areas at John Street, Randalstown; Muckamore and Stiles Way/Steeple, Antrim.

An extensive range of arts and culture programmes has been provided at Clotworthy Arts Centre (*Courthouse in the future*) where local and well known artists display their works and members of the public, young and not so young can develop their talents in art, drama and music.

Good Relations, community development and single identity work has been a feature of Council work in the past 15 years. Council has increased the number of programmes in estates across the Borough and is actively encouraging all sections of the community to develop good relations and participate in a shared future together.

In order to recognise the commitment of people in the Borough to their communities and individuals and also to mark significant achievements by individuals and groups Council hosts the Community Excellence Awards ceremony every year.

EXCELLENCE

Council strives to improve its service to customers, its internal processes, and communication both internally and with residents and ratepayers, its income, and the expertise of its staff.

In the past year Council has reduced the level of debt owed to it, improved the income from the hire of rooms and conference facilities by 34% and reduced its insurance bill by £100,000.

We believe customer satisfaction is one of our greatest assets and so we conduct regular customer surveys to check on how we are meeting your needs, we have developed a customer focused approach in everything we do and have received a Best Practice award for this work.



Two times a year we publish and deliver the Council Eye magazine to every household in the Borough and this coupled with a modern up to date web site is our way of keeping our residents and ratepayers informed of the various initiatives and events council is involved in. It also allows you to advise Council of any concerns or service needs so that we can respond accordingly.

Council is fully committed to the development and well-being of its staff in order to ensure the provision of high quality, value for money services. Such investment has enabled Council to become an accredited Employer of Choice, resulting in significant reductions in both absenteeism and turnover along with a direct reduction in the associated costs.

Council is at the forefront in embracing new technology to improve efficiency, effectiveness and quality of service. Internally we embarked on a programme of integrating our financial systems to improve control and reduce the administration associated with managing a complex budget of some £19m.

Efficiency gains have also been achieved through operating pilot mobile working schemes where staff can input and receive information whilst on site without the need to return to base.

Council has also gained external recognition both from the residents and ratepayers and other organisations for its work on Customer Relationship Management. Of the 96,000 telephone calls answered on average per year by the Customer Service Team, 75% of requests for service or a complaint can be handled by the member of staff receiving the initial request.

We go to great lengths to ensure we are open and transparent in everything we do and fully embrace the spirit and letter of the Freedom of Information Act and publish as much information about Council, its operations and policies and procedure through our publication scheme on the Council web site

Council is charged with protecting the natural and built environment in the Borough, ensuring value for money in the use of the physical and financial resources entrusted to it by the residents and ratepayers of the Borough and providing civic leadership to build a better future for everyone in the Borough.

We trust this review of our activities and achievements describes how we have met these obligations.

David McCammick
Chief Executive

Adrian Cochrane-Watson
Mayor

November 2009