

Labour Group Statement to Cabinet

The Corporate Plan Refresh 2009/10

The Labour Group welcomes much of what is written in the Corporate Plan Refresh document. We particularly welcome the fact that the opportunity has been taken to update the document in light of current economic problems facing the country. We live in very uncertain times, but we are pleased to see that, in spite of this uncertainty, the document seeks to identify the specific impact that recession will have on our local area.

The document is absolutely right to state that this Council has an important role to play as a community leader at this time. We are very pleased to see that, in transport, for example, consideration is being given to bringing forward some capital expenditure with a view to generating local employment and local confidence. We believe that continued investment in our priorities will also help this area to benefit more quickly when the upturn in the economy begins.

The Labour Group has for very many years wanted improvements in the availability of affordable housing. We note that one of the priority actions in this document is to deliver 35% affordable housing from section 106 agreements. This action appears, however, to be something of an irrelevance when the building of new homes has dried up. We are pleased to see that the document does attempt to keep the affordable housing Improvement Priority relevant at a time of recession but we have to say that the possible actions identified, whilst helpful, are unlikely to be enough to help us reach our targets.

We entirely agree that we should be building communities where people feel safe and secure. However, we wonder what impact recession will have on our crime figures and whether the economic downturn has been taken into account when producing targets. We see from this Improvement Priority that one of the priority actions is to increase the targeting of Youth Service support to hotspots. We also read earlier in the document that the recent Voicebox survey found that activities for teenagers was the second highest priority amongst respondents. The Labour Group believes that this gives weight to our budget proposal for increased investment in detached youth work.

Finally, the Labour Group believes that delivering quality services must be at the heart of everything we do. We hope therefore that, in the drive to improve efficiency and productivity we do not lose the focus on customer excellence and service delivery.