Building on Success

Fareham Borough Council has a duty to provide a variety of services to meet the needs of our local community, ensuring that Fareham is a safe, attractive and prosperous place to live, work and visit. As a local authority, we are required to provide some of these services by law, such as planning development control and cleansing services. Others, such as leisure facilities or economic development, we are able to provide at the Council’s discretion but they provide a significant contribution to community well-being. In either case, the majority of the costs of these services have to be met by local taxpayers. We recognise the need to provide good value for public money. We appreciate that in order to achieve this we need to set out clear priorities and adopt efficient methods of working.

Split into seven Corporate Objectives, this eight page pull-out Supplement gives an overview of Fareham Borough Council’s performance in 2003 to 2004. How have we been doing over the last year? How well have we performed? What have we achieved and what things do we need to improve on? Questions are answered that are important to you such as - Are we providing value for money? Are we making a difference? And are we keeping our promises?

The details have been based on evidence from our Comprehensive Performance Assessment results, the Annual Residents’ Survey, Best Value performance indicators and the Government’s Inspectorate, which collectively give a good indication of ‘How we’re doing as a Council’.
Did you know?

- 76% of all new homes have been built on previously developed land
- We are recycling more, but not as much as we could be
- Fareham recently won two Southern England in Bloom awards

Protecting and Enhancing Our Environment

For many of us, the place where we choose to live has to satisfy our needs and requirements. We want an attractive Borough, with pleasant surroundings, good shopping facilities, clean and open spaces. The Council works hard to keep a clean and tidy Borough and our vision for Fareham's future is to preserve all that is good about Fareham, whilst increasing prosperity and making it an even more inclusive and attractive place to live and work.

Have you ever noticed how Fareham’s new housing and development is in keeping with the local area? We aim to develop areas with minimal change and accompany them with suitable transport links, social facilities and services. There is a strong need for appropriate educational, medical and community facilities to be in place at new developments. The annual resident surveys highlighted that residents nearer the coast felt they have a less impressive infrastructure. However, the Council wishes to retain the rural nature of our beaches and does not wish to encourage increased general visitor traffic to these areas.

We want to safeguard and improve the quality of our built surroundings but not by harming the natural environment. We continue to work with our partners in both the private and public sectors to control growth through our planning powers, to make sure that the appearance of developments enhance, rather than damage the appearance of the Borough. This means avoiding high density developments and rejecting applications that detract from the environment. We’ll limit the amount built as far as possible whilst still keeping up with demand and Government requirements. In 2003-04, 93% of major planning applications were determined within 13 weeks and over 84% of all other applications were determined within 8 weeks.

Our trees, hedges, parks and open spaces continue to be well managed and the Council’s Countryside team are regularly offered help by the Probation Service. Locals and visitors alike can enjoy our newly improved cycle paths and see the sponsorship schemes in place that help keep our roundabouts eye-catching and smart. Our services contribute to the quality of life by maintaining the streetscape, open spaces and parks to a high standard.

In 2003-04, the Council successfully collected and recycled over 21% of all household waste and residents were satisfied with the service. Our recycling efforts as a community are creditable; we lead the way amongst other authorities in our commitment to recycle. The Council provides many recycling banks to aid residents to minimise the level of waste going to landfill and meet a Government recycling commitment to recycle. The Council provides many recycling banks to aid residents to minimise the level of waste going to landfill and meet a Government recycling commitment to recycle. The Council was also recognised as having achieved Beacon Status through the county-wide waste management initiative, Project Integra.

Maintaining and Extending Prosperity

We continue to promote the economic wellbeing of the Borough, to maintain the standard and quality of life that Fareham residents enjoy. We sustain employment by providing direct help and encouragement to local employers and entrepreneurs to provide as many jobs within the Borough as possible.

Good transport links, particularly the Borough’s position on the M27 corridor, have meant that Fareham has been able to achieve a high level of economic growth in recent years and significant further growth is anticipated. The unemployment rate is low at 1.7%. The Council wants to make sure there are enough well-paid jobs in the Borough for residents who wish to work here.

Dubbed ‘Virtual London’ by the IT industry, Fareham Borough offers low cost accommodation and a readily available choice of support services which continue to attract smart business away from the traditional city locations. Small firms have been attracted by the Solent Enterprise Hub, which has helped promote and encourage local entrepreneurs in Fareham.

The success of Fareham’s Technology Forum, bringing together firms from across the Borough, has created a momentum that serves to benefit the entire local economy, providing funding, skills and marketing opportunities. The contact details of firms from across the Borough have been made more accessible by the development of the Fareham Business Database.

The Fareham Local Development Framework (FLDF), a new planning system, shaped by the views and needs of residents and businesses throughout Fareham, will help increase prosperity. The FLDF is aimed at delivering development which meets the economic, social and environment needs of the Borough in a sustainable way.

The Council has kept a clear focus on Town Centre renewal over a long period. The Council is proactive in seeking to improve retail development in the Borough. The Market Quay scheme is nearing completion, with the majority of new retail and leisure facilities now trading and the official opening of the five screen cinema due in the summer, creating more job opportunities for local people in Town Centre businesses.

Maintaining and extending prosperity also incorporates the successful functioning of the benefits service. The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate judged that the Council was providing a ‘fair’ benefits service in its aim to provide financial support to vulnerable people, but it was weak when compared to the standard of service provided by other local authorities. In 2003, it was taking the Council over 60 days to process benefit claims, significantly longer than the government target of 36 days and the Council’s own target of 40 days. However, real improvements have been made to reduce this delay and we are now processing claims in 30 days on average, which puts our performance amongst the best in the country, lessening the negative effect of delays on claimants.

Did you know?

- Wilkinson’s new shop in Market Quay is already their second best performing in the country
- Apollo Cinemas new complex in Market Quay is one of only 10 new cinemas to be built in their now £50 million development programme
A Safe and Healthy place to live and work

The creation of a safe environment is a key priority. The Council is developing a close working partnership with Fareham Police and other agencies to tackle the problems of crime and disorder.

Fareham is a relatively safe place to live when compared to other local authority areas and the incidence of crime remains low. However, the Council and Fareham Police recognise that the ‘fear of crime’ continues to grow (particularly amongst the older population) and we need to work together to address this. The Council in partnership with Fareham Police and other partners has been successful in securing the Borough’s first Anti-Social Behaviour Order against an individual who had conducted a reign of terror in Fareham Town Centre. The use of CCTV cameras also helps tackle the problem of crime and antisocial behaviour and we have now installed 38 cameras at key locations across the Borough.

We have brought together a Vandalism Task Force to focus efforts on the reduction of vandalism and graffiti. Initiatives include publicity, covert CCTV and a reward scheme leading to successful prosecutions. An Enforcement Team has also been established to address the problem of people dropping litter, fly-tipping, abandoning vehicles and pet owners who fail to clean up after their dogs. This initiative was a direct result of the 2003 Residents’ Survey, where 92% of those responding supported the establishment of a litter Enforcement Team.

The Enforcement Team has now been in operation since November 2004 and operates in hot spots identified by the Clean and Tidy Borough Review. The presence of these officers may in itself be enough to deter people from littering our streets and parks. If that fails we have the authority to issue a fixed penalty notice, which can result in a court summons if payment isn’t made. Early results are encouraging.

The Council meets best practice on environmental health. In 2004, 62% of residents stated that the pest control service was ‘excellent’ and classed it as a first-rate service. We have also introduced risk based food and health and safety inspections and launched a 24-hour telephone service that allows residents to contact the Council to report any concerns they may have regarding issues on environmental health. Also, increasing concern for the safety of youngsters delivering newspapers has lead the Council to provide an information pack to newsagents on ways of protecting the well being of these children.

Working with the Primary Care Trust, we promote projects that successfully support good health and tackle ill-health. Over 16,000 people in Fareham described themselves as having a limiting long term illness in the last Census. A further 7,300 described their general health as ‘not good.’ However, both figures are low compared with national and regional averages. The Council runs a series of successful health improvement initiatives, aimed at encouraging people in the Borough to lead healthy lifestyles. We will continue to run Men’s and Women’s Health Campaigns, Sun Awareness Days and our Walking to Health in Fareham programme.

Leisure for Health and for Fun

We believe everyone in Fareham should have access to fitness and recreational activities. However, the 2004 Residents’ Survey found that the range of cultural, artistic and sporting opportunities within the Borough was only ‘satisfactory’.

Improving cultural facilities was not seen by many as an important priority. Residents also felt that in terms of parks and open spaces and access to nature, things had got better.

We constantly review the sporting facilities available and we look at innovative ways to manage and improve our recreational grounds and facilities. We aim to enter a partnership arrangement with Sports and Leisure Management Limited (SLM) to manage Fareham Leisure Centre as a charitable trust in 2005. By bringing in SLM’s expertise and investment, both existing and new users of the Centre will benefit from improved leisure facilities and high-quality services well into the future.

In 2003/04, visitor targets were exceeded at Fareham Leisure Centre and Ferneham Hall. The Cinderella panto sold a record breaking 186,000 tickets and sales for Ferneham Hall’s events continue to improve year on year. We are considering future options for the management of the venue to enhance it further.

You have raised questions over the viability of some of our Community Centres, the transfer of sports pitches to local clubs and the provision of neighbourhood facilities for young people.

In response the Council has been working in partnership with local organisations to consider improvements in facilities for young people through public forums running in Stubbington and Locks Heath. The Council works in partnership to provide Youth centres, but these facilities are not being utilised effectively. There are conflicting expectations between partners and consequently, the Genesis Centre is not always open or staffed at times that match young people’s needs.

The Council is aware that some areas of the Borough have more facilities than others and it has, through consultation, identified a number of future investments. These include a swimming pool and fitness centre in the Western Wards and more leisure facilities in Fareham Town Centre.
A Balanced Housing Market

The overall picture of the housing market in Fareham is one of modern, comparatively large houses, in reasonably good condition, with a high level of owner occupation. This market exists within a positive local economy with significant recent growth in employment and a relatively high level of prosperity. However, in terms of realising the vision of a Balanced Housing Market, it is evident that the current profile does not meet the needs of all residents of Fareham.

Many people in the Borough can’t afford to buy their own home; in fact the average house price in Fareham in 2004 was £217,106 which is above average for South East Hampshire but below average for the rest of Hampshire and South East England. We realise how difficult it can be trying to get onto the property ladder and endeavour to provide the best options to you.

Residents view the quality and choice of housing across the Borough as ‘good’ and we aim to provide existing and future residents access to a home which suits their needs and is affordable. Our planning system will help ensure that house builders provide affordable housing within new housing developments. In 2003, we developed 57 new affordable housing units for both rent and ownership and have secured in excess of £4m from the Housing Corporation to provide affordable homes in Fareham to March 2007.

Yet, the Council has faced significant challenges in building sufficient new affordable housing. In 2004, national changes to housing finance and a lack of sites with planning permission has limited the Council’s ability to provide homes and money to invest. As a result the Audit Commission concluded it was not clear how we were planning to achieve a target of 50 affordable homes a year over the next five years. In response, the Council has undertaken a major Review of housing needs and provision in the Borough. Our Housing Strategy 2004-2009 recommends a provisional target of 100 new affordable homes per year, with subsequent work to be undertaken over the next two years with a view to increasing that target to 175 per year by 2007.

We constantly work to maintain and improve the standards of accommodation and the environmental and offer advice and grants where possible. In 2003, over 500 grants were awarded to provide energy efficiency measures and help lower fuel bills, to both energy rich and energy poor households. 2,580 homes have benefited from this scheme in the last three years. The result of these improvements is a sustainable housing stock, which helps to prevent homelessness and ill-health.

The Government target of having no families in bed and breakfast accommodation is still being met and we have introduced a Council run, private sector leasing scheme. This scheme avoids placing families in bed and breakfast or temporary accommodation, by renting accommodation from private landlords for guaranteed periods of time, thus providing stability for vulnerable families.

Did you know?

• 96% of requests for repairs to Council homes are responded to effectively within Government targets. An improvement on 2002/03
• We have implemented an integrated Strategy to support Rough Sleepers; the first step being the development of a Direct Access Hostel

Strong and Inclusive Communities

The Council is committed to equality in its’ service planning and delivery. We also contribute towards the achievement of Best Value Performance Indicators relating to the standards set by the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Council has a good Equalities Plan; it provides a language line and hearing loop, produces summary material in different languages, and has access to a translation service. We have improved access to our buildings in response to the Disability Discrimination Act, although people with disabilities want to see further improvements to the main reception area in the Civic Offices, which will be addressed by the introduction of the Customer Service Centre.

We are continuing to work with a number of partners to develop our Community Strategy. This means establishing a “shared vision for the area” - setting out the sort of communities that people want to live in and identifying the priorities for action that will help realise this vision. In November 2004, a project timetable was adopted, aimed at securing the commitment of the various partners to specific actions to help meet these priorities. Actions flowing from it can then be included in the service plans of relevant agencies for 2005-06 and beyond.

Working closely with organisations, agencies and businesses across Hampshire and England, the Council can deliver more outcomes that are beneficial to the residents of Fareham. This “leading and achieving” approach recognises that the Council does not have the resources or necessarily the responsibility to fully deliver our vision to our communities. We will therefore provide practical community leadership to organisations that can help contribute to this vision.

In an effort to expand upon the multi-agency response to vulnerable victims across the Borough, Fareham’s Community Safety Partnership has been successful in obtaining multi-agency funding and appointed a civilian Domestic Violence Co-ordinator, based at Fareham Police Station. The role is dedicated to ensuring that the Partnership meets its targets in respect of domestic abuse, forging links with important partners and most importantly, meeting the needs of the victim.

The Council welcomes diversity in the population. We recognise that people from socially excluded groups may experience discrimination because of race, age, gender, gender reassignment, marital/family status, sexual orientation, disability, low income and many other factors. We are committed to working to achieve equality of opportunity for all our communities and service users.
A Dynamic, Prudent, Progressive and Best Practice Council

The way the Council is run and the delivery of its services was assessed as ‘good’ in our Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in January 2004. The CPA result for the Council scored 46 points out of 60, which ranked Fareham Borough Council amongst the top 20% of District Councils in the country.

In the opinion of our external auditors, we are putting in place the requirements to improve services in the future, particularly by developing the use of information technology, and being more responsive and customer focused. Over the last two years, electronic access to services has improved from 19% to 60%. The Council’s website, www.fareham.gov.uk is user-friendly and provides easy access to Council documents. An online payment facility improves the efficiency of our payment collection.

Overall, tax collection rates are very good for the Borough. The Council’s performance in 2002/03 was comparable with the best performing Councils nationally, and the Council has met its collection targets in 2003/04, with 99.1% of business rates and 98.8% of Council Tax collected.

In 2003/04, the Council paid 91% of invoices on time, which is below the national average. Consequently, the Council has introduced new systems to improve its performance, to help meet its own target of 100%.

Overall customer satisfaction remains high. There has been a small improvement in the way the Council responds to complaints; with 4 out of 10 people saying they were satisfied with our handling of their complaint. We intend to improve these figures through the introduction of a ‘Customer Service Centre’ in 2005, dealing with website enquiries via our website, telephone or face-to-face. Our aim will be to deal with 90% of enquiries at the first point of contact, and avoid the need for referral between different Departments within the Council.

The Council has received positive external auditor judgements, particularly regarding the management of the Council’s finances, which they considered one of our major strengths. The Council continues to maintain strong financial control and our financial position remains relatively healthy. The Council has a track record of successfully moving resources to better match changing priorities.

Over the last five years, the Council has reduced certain revenue budgets, such as arts, parks, tourism and ‘civic ceremonial’, by about £750,000. We have re-invested this money in higher priority areas such as crime prevention and recycling. The Council has also revised our Capital programme following the development of our Corporate Objectives and have moved over £1million from uncommitted schemes to higher priority projects.

Did you know?

• We are rated “Good” as a Council according to Government inspectors
• We are one of the best Councils for collecting local taxes