



ASSOCIATION OF
NORTH EAST COUNCILS

YOUR LEADERSHIP, YOUR VOICE, YOUR INFLUENCE

CORPORATE PLAN
2012 - 14

FOREWORD

Our Corporate Plan 2012 -14: 'Your Leadership, Your Voice, Your Influence', is published at a time of unprecedented change. The impact of the global economy and of decisions aimed at reducing the national deficit present challenges and opportunities for the whole of the public sector, not least local government and the communities it serves.

This forms the backdrop to the Corporate Plan, and is reflected both in what we are planning to do and how we do it.

We will focus on supporting authorities to tackle some of the most pressing challenges facing people and communities in the North East, and to assist in enabling them to fulfil their ambitions. We will represent their views and ensure we are driven by knowledge, new thinking and bringing together the considerable experience and expertise that exists in the area, in an atmosphere of mutual support and co-operation.

ANEC's role in influencing and advocating together will be critical as local government makes the case for adequate resources to meet the needs of citizens now and into the future and looks to maximise opportunities for increased devolution, greater freedoms and flexibilities so that the sector can deal with the challenges it faces and make the most of the economic, social and environmental opportunities as they arise. In working together where appropriate on the priorities set out in this document Leaders and Elected Mayors have agreed that the sector is stronger and can make a clear difference to people and businesses.

Councils can be justly proud in promoting the positive role that they play in improving people's lives. All make a significant contribution to quality of life and well being in local communities and it will be increasingly important as councils face budgetary pressures, to ensure that we articulate this and do what we can to secure a prosperous future for all.

In addition to the implementation of the current Comprehensive Spending Review, the public service reform agenda and the reshaping of boundaries, institutions, organisations and accountability are changing the landscape. The creation of the Local Enterprise Partnerships, the impact of welfare reform, the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners and the roll out of the Government's intensive legislative programme covering a wide range of areas of public policy are all factors influencing how and on what councils work together.

And whilst our approach has never been constrained by boundaries, the abolition of the Government's regional architecture means that boundaries are now more fluid. Forging alliances and relationships with others in pursuit of the interests of councils and the communities they serve will therefore continue to be very important.

Looking further to the future, we are now approaching another Comprehensive Spending Review. We will need to consider what we think might be the outcome and what we should be pressing for, so that councils are able to continue to deliver ambition, vision and leadership in driving economic recovery, in creating the right conditions for business to invest and grow and in supporting people and communities – the issues that are at the heart of every council in the area.

'Your Leadership, Your Voice, Your Influence' outlines the themes and priorities that councils have collectively identified as being important for them, their communities, and for this area of the country in the current context. We underline the commitment of ANEC as a member-led organisation to take forward these priorities together and set out ways of working that aim to be inclusive and effective, that will make a difference and add value.

Cllr Paul Watson
Chair
Association of North East Councils

WE WILL:

- Be an influential advocate for councils, promoting their leadership role across all spheres of public life.
- Support councils in maximising opportunities and meeting challenges presented by the current climate.
- Encourage collaboration and sharing of knowledge, ideas and good practice between councils.

OUR COMMITMENT:

- To influence national policy decisions and outcomes in the interests of the people of the North East.
- To present a coherent voice and consistent messages for the local government sector.
- To ensure that North East local government maximises its leadership role, both in this area and nationally.
- To advocate for resources, powers and freedoms to come to councils, including maximising opportunities for greater devolution to local government.
- To support member authorities during a period of unprecedented challenge, constrained resources and organisational change.
- To raise the profile of the role of councils, their positive impact on people and in communities, and to set out how they are responding to the changes that are happening in the sector.
- To add value to the work of member authorities by identifying areas and opportunities for collaboration and joint working in groups of councils to achieve efficiencies and economies of scale, and, where appropriate, to support their development.
- To support the sector in improvement, efficiency and productivity.
- To harness the power that comes from the practice and people of our member authorities.

- To work closely with partners, including the Local Government Association, to secure our aims.
- As an organisation, to continuously improve our effectiveness against a backdrop of tightening resources.

WAYS OF WORKING:

- Members are at the heart of decision making and policy development.
- We strive to reach consensus wherever possible, and are a cross-party organisation.
- We will listen and respond to a wide range of viewpoints and perspectives in shaping and informing policy positions.
- We will harness the expertise, experience and resources of member authorities.
- We recognise and embrace the different spatial levels that authorities operate at, individually, at LEP level, regionally and pan-regionally, for different objectives and purposes.
- We seek new opportunities for extending and strengthening the influence of authorities.
- We will be responsive to the current economic climate, the budgetary pressures facing member authorities and the need to achieve ongoing efficiencies.
- We will focus on the delivery of a range of activities that offer good value for money and are effective.
- We will seek continuous improvement in the effectiveness of the organisation.

PRIORITIES

For 2012/13, we will focus on three priority areas: Resources; Welfare Reform; Role of Councils in Economic Development. In each area the outcome will be that the position of the North East and North East Councils will be recognised and we will be influencing the debate nationally.

DELIVERY THEMES

In order to fulfil our objectives over the two year period of the plan, including the priorities for 2012/13, we will focus on two themes, delivered through a series of activities as follows:

PEOPLE AND PROSPERITY:

- Securing the maximum possible resources for North East councils.
- Enhancing the economy.
- Shaping strategic infrastructure, transport and connectivity.
- Improving health and well being.
- Promoting cultural development.

THE FUTURE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

- Promoting the positive role of councils in the North East.
- Influencing the future for the sector.
- Contributing to sector-led improvement.
- Being an efficient, effective and representative Association.

DELIVERY

We will undertake the following actions aimed at delivering these objectives.

PEOPLE AND PROSPERITY

Securing the maximum possible resources for local government:

- Consider and influence the next Comprehensive Spending Review.
- Explore ways to mitigate the impact of financial reductions on councils.

- Make the case for support in key areas where cost and other pressures are acute.
- Position North East councils to influence future financing regimes, including through the Local Government Finance Bill.
- Press the case for resource equalisation and fairness.
- Ensure North East local government receives its fair share of central Government grant from funding formulae.
- Support and influence the debate around future funding for social care services, both children and adults.
- Assess the implications of proposals for the localisation of Council Tax Benefit and make representation to Government on how North East councils are affected.
- Highlight the impacts of the transition, from April 2013 to, a funding system based on localisation of Business Rates and ensure that Government knows the implications of these in a North East context.
- Continue to review the position regarding re-set for the new local government funding system.
- Secure additional funding and support from external partners for local government's activities.

Enhancing the economy:

- Support and promote councils' role in the economy and society.
- Work with Members through the Economic Development Task and Finish Group to identify issues and opportunities for North East local government to maximise its leadership role and take forward actions that will make a difference to businesses and people.
- Work with both Local Enterprise Partnerships in the North East.
- Maintain effective dialogue with a range of research organisations such as ILG and think tanks, such as IPPR North, Centre for Cities, New Local Government Network, Smith Institute and others to ensure that we both influence their thinking and inform their findings and recommendations.
- Maintain and develop effective working relationships with Europe, MEPs, Committee of the Regions Members, providing advice and briefings as appropriate, and identifying funding opportunities, where appropriate.
- Maintain and develop effective working relationships with the private sector, universities and the VCS
- Support efforts to promote skills, training and apprenticeships and initiatives aimed at tackling unemployment and promoting job opportunities – particularly amongst young people.
- Maintain regular dialogue with key players in housing and in other issues that have a regional dimension, such as the environment, strategic migration and ensure that planning policies and processes are responsive to business needs and support investment and jobs.
- Where appropriate, offer collective, cross party support in response to economic crisis or shocks.
- Play an active role in understanding and assessing the opportunities and challenges to the North East arising from the debate on Scottish devolution.

Shaping strategic infrastructure, transport and connectivity:

- Implement the agreement for collaborative working on strategic transport and infrastructure issues.
- Advocate for infrastructure improvements that will maximise the North East's opportunities to attract investment and grow its economy.
- Press the case for national policy decisions on transport and connectivity to reflect the needs of this area of the country and make better use of existing capacity in our ports and airports.
- Reinforce the arguments for why the North East should benefit from improvements to conventional rail and a future high speed rail network, in the interests of ensuring a balanced approach to economic opportunities across the country.
- Work with the Department for Transport, Network Rail, Highways Agency and other partners to ensure that the aspirations of North East councils are understood in the context of future investment and infrastructure decisions.
- Continue to contribute to the promotion of the North East's strengths in low carbon energy technologies and industries and focus our efforts on sustainable energy solutions.
- Promote the case for the North East to benefit from investment in superfast broadband across the 12 local authority areas, including rural communities that are reliant on effective communication links.

Improving health and wellbeing:

- Consider the impact of welfare reform and any actions that need to be taken.
- Work through the Family Poverty Task and Finish Group on how we can take action to reduce the gap between rich and poor.
- Ensure an effective transition of public health responsibilities to local government.
- Ensure that local government members, officers and health professionals are supported in taking up their new roles.
- Continue to exercise a strong local government leadership role in tackling health inequalities.
- Continue to campaign on issues associated with, for example, alcohol and tobacco and press for legislative changes that will help minimise or eliminate harmful impacts, such as through minimum unit pricing for alcohol and plain packaging for cigarettes.
- Implement the recommendations of the member-led Task and Finish Group on Improving Health.
- Work with other partners, such as NOMS, on improving outcomes for communities.

Promoting cultural development:

- Implement the findings of the Culture Task and Finish Group, as agreed by partners.
- Give energy and focus to ensuring that the North East continues to benefit from the legacy of cultural-led regeneration over recent years during a period of reduced resources for arts and cultural activity.
- Protect and enhance the cultural offer in the North East through the establishment of a cultural partnership.
- Build links between culture, branding and tourism and ensure that a strong voice in championing culture with media partners and with others who are interested in investing in the North East.
- Extend the relationship and connections between the core cultural sector and other areas of economic and social activity.
- Deliver a successful offer for the Olympics and Paralympic Games, including a Paralympic Torch event.
- Contribute to the delivery of a successful display of the Lindisfarne Gospels in 2013.

THE FUTURE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Promoting the positive role of councils in the North East:

- Through the implementation of the communications and advocacy strategy, use all opportunities to promote the work of councils and to collectively demonstrate councils' leadership role and new ways of working in key areas including transport, health, culture and tourism and Europe.
- Articulate the pressures councils are facing and the opportunities they are taking to support communities and businesses.
- Work with other councils, council groupings and external partners to ensure there is an understanding of the activities of North East Councils, a sharing of good practice and mutual learning and influence.

Influencing the future for the sector:

- Engage in national thinking around codifying the relationship between central and local government.
- Conduct scenario planning looking forward to 2020-25 and consider actions.
- Consider and agree the interface with new forms of democratic accountability, including Police and Crime Commissioners.
- Consider CSR preparations and input into discussions.

Contributing to sector led improvement:

- Develop and deliver a strong offer for North East councils to support their sector-led improvement activity.
- Work with - and within - the framework established by the Local Government Association around this agenda.
- Ensure that there is a joined up approach to improvement in the North East – including children’s and adults’ services.
- Engage with and learn from others – including other partners outside of local government.
- Ensure that Leaders and Elected Mayors’ role in relation to the accountability of sector-led improvement and the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) is delivered.
- Promote sharing of knowledge and good practice between authorities.
- Consider innovative approaches to service delivery and their possible application in the North East.
- Work with members to identify and deliver member development and other member requirements.

Being an efficient, effective and representative Association:

- Provide a range of services such as policy analysis, advocacy and facilitation for member authorities, where agreed.
- Facilitate opportunities for member authorities to engage in and benefit from a programme of events, seminars and conferences linked to Corporate Plan priorities.
- Ensure strong professional and financial management.
- Robust performance review through regular appraisal and continuous professional development.
- Complete the delivery of financial savings for authorities as agreed in 2010 and undergo continuous review to ensure further efficiencies and savings.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

The Corporate Plan will be underpinned by a strong communications, influencing and advocacy strategy. This will assist us to:

- Be a strong and effective advocate for member authorities on issues of interest and concern to them and their communities.
- Maintain the reputation that ANEC has established with representatives of Government who recognise the value of the 12 North East councils coming together on a cross party basis.
- Continue to build convincing and effective relationship with Ministers, MPs, MEPs and Civil Servants to ensure that the voice of North East local government is heard.

- Continue to work with the Local Government Association and collaborate on issues led campaigns and lobbying activity to strengthen the voice of local government.
- Engage in, and influence, debates at a North East, pan-regional and national level.

The Corporate Plan, 'Your Leadership, Your Voice, Your Influence' will be supported by a detailed Delivery Plan outlining intended outcomes, actions, responsibilities, timescales and resources, providing a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress against key priorities and objectives.