

East Herts Council

Initial Draft Self-Assessment

15/08/06

Note: The purpose of this document is to provide an initial draft self assessment. The final version of the self assessment together with supporting evidence will follow on 18th August. On 2nd August background information and supporting evidence was sent to the Peer Review Team in preparation for the initial planning meeting which took place on 3rd August.

working draft only

Introduction

Local context, constraints, key issues/challenges facing the Council

Council's key strategic objectives (attached in supporting evidence)

Council structures (attached in supporting evidence)

The Attributes:

- Leadership
- Strategy
- Delivery
- Operational Results
- Learning

Areas to be explored during inspection

Introduction

The overall purpose of this review is to ascertain the effectiveness of people management across the organisation and the contribution by HR to this and the transformation of the Council.

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1) The local context, constraints and key issues and challenges facing the Council

1a) Profile of East Herts

The Area

East Herts is the largest of the ten districts in Hertfordshire. It covers 184 square miles, approximately a third of the county, and offers a blend of rural and town living. The benefits of this mixture are greatly appreciated by the 131,000 people who live in the district, 90% of whom are satisfied with the area as a place to live. Although the majority of the district is farmland, five busy market towns (Hertford, Ware, Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford) and more than 100 villages and hamlets are scattered across the area.

East Herts is a beautiful area. It has more than half of Hertfordshire's 70 conservation areas, 4,000 listed buildings, 33 scheduled monuments, 300 sites of archaeological significance and 15 registered historic parks and gardens, out of 43 in Hertfordshire. Areas of nature conservation are equally abundant. Rye Meads and Wormley-Hoddesdon Park Wood are internationally recognised, and there are a further 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 591 Wildlife Sites.

East Herts is regarded as an attractive rural location for those moving out from (and commuting into) London due to its excellent transport links, and East Herts has a large proportion of people who commute to work, which has a knock on effect on house prices, and can make recruitment more difficult due to the lure of high salaries in London. Increasingly the district is finding that development is encroaching closer to its borders and is seeing significant development within its towns.

The district sits within the Government's Eastern Region and is within one of four growth areas named by the Government's Communities Plan. As such, it is part of a nationally recognised development area. Proposals for the expansion of Stansted Airport (within four miles of Bishop's Stortford), regeneration of Harlow and development of the M11 corridor all put at risk the status of East Herts as a "green lung" within the wider area. Metropolitan Green Belt protects the southern third of the district and the northern two-thirds are classified as Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.

The Economy

The people of East Herts are predominantly employed in managerial and professional occupations, and enjoy higher than average earnings (£31,146 for full-time workers). Unemployment is very low (1.0%). Although East Herts has a significant agricultural base, its economy is dominated by the service sector. Almost a quarter of people are employed in financial and business services and a fifth in public services.

The economy consists predominantly of micro businesses (86%) employing no more than ten staff, with a few key multi-nationals such as GlaxoSmithKline and Merck Sharp Dohme which play an important role in the local economy, and also East Herts Council which employs 371 people. Given all these factors it may be assumed that life in East Herts is universally comfortable and privileged but of course the reality is more complex. House prices are among the highest in the country; in 2004 the average property cost £269,373 while the average salary was £31,146. There is a considerable shortage of affordable housing.

The rural nature of the district presents particular difficulties for those who live beyond the main towns (over 40,000 residents) with regard to isolation and poor access to services.

Whilst it is true that East Herts has low levels of deprivation, ranking 346 out of 354 on the Indices of Deprivation 2004, this disguises pockets of relative deprivation.

The People

A fifth of people are under 16 or over 60. The average age in the district is 38. More than half of people (aged 16 and over) are married and a quarter are single. 9% of people are separated or divorced and 7% are widowed. Over 90% of people were born in England. The main religion is Christianity but almost a fifth of people have no religion.

East Herts has a low ethnic minority population of just 2.8%. The largest ethnic minority groups are Indian and Chinese, and there has been a recent high growth in migrant workers from Portugal and Poland. The people of East Herts enjoy very good health. Only 12% of people have a limiting long-term illness and 9% provide unpaid care.

A quarter of people are educated to degree level or higher. But a fifth have no qualifications.

Car ownership is high, with over a third of households owning two or more cars. Two-thirds of people travel to work by car and 10% travel by train. Less than 2% of people travel by bus. 10% of people work from home.

Almost a third of properties in East Herts are detached. East Herts has more detached properties than anywhere else in the county. Three-quarters of properties are owner-occupied, with only 13% of properties classified as social housing (rented from the Council or Housing Associations). A quarter of households are one-person households and 14% are pensioners living alone. Almost a third of households have dependent children.

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1b) Corporate Performance and Key Challenges

The Council scored a 'good' Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) rating in May 2004, and more recently received a positive Direction of Travel Statement and a score of 3 out of 4 for Use of Resources, meaning the Council manages its finances well and provides value for money. East Herts was the only authority in Hertfordshire to achieve a level 3, with others either achieving a level 1 or level 2. The overall summary from the Direction of Travel Statement was that 'the Council has been performing well for several years. Key performance indicators (PIs) have continued to show improvement, even during the recent upheaval at the top of the Council. But there is still scope for clearer focus in defining objectives and increased challenge of performance'.

Therefore, not content with accepting the status quo, and with the Council being keen to demonstrate that as a "good" authority it is always looking for further challenges, in preparation for 2006/07, East Herts took the next step and not only revisited the 2005/06 strategic targets but also the original seven corporate priorities. The outcome has led to the authority adopting a more focused and streamlined set of priorities, with clearer and more measurable objectives for each, (see *Corporate Plan in evidence 2.1*)

The Base Budget Review undertaken during 2005/06, with other efficiencies, produced savings of more than £1,000,000. This has enabled us to redirect investment into areas that are our key priorities and what our residents said they would like more of.

Consultation

East Herts Council has a corporate Community Engagement Strategy, which seeks to ensure that the public and service users' voices are heard and are influential across all areas of policy formulation and service delivery. Consultation is undertaken through MORI resident polls, Citizens' Panel and the Best Value Performance Indicator General Satisfaction Survey. The Council has established public **Community Voice forums** in each of the District's five towns to provide a regular opportunity for the Council to be able to reach out to local communities, and to tap into issues of local concern. Community Voice has helped create a partnership approach between the Council and the local community to strengthen local focus and to give local communities an input into decisions which affect everyone. East Herts Council's latest poll was the MORI Residents Survey carried out in 2005.

With regard to the budget the Council carries out a wide range of varying consultation exercises. In past years the Council has used various agencies to consult with the public, but currently uses Ipsos MORI. Consultation occurs with focus groups through the Councils contact with each town at the community Voice Meetings & a workshop is arranged with selected members of the focus groups to consider budget issues in more detail.

The above is in addition to the statutory consultation with NNDR payers that also takes place.

2. Council's Key Strategic Objectives – Attached in Supporting evidence

3. Council Structures - Attached in Supporting evidence

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4. Position Statement

ATTRIBUTE 1: LEADERSHIP

The Council's leaders constantly reinforce the importance of people management and are effective in this role themselves. They lead by example, are accessible and champion the changes required to modernise. Leaders engage staff and promote the Council's values and a culture of empowerment. Leadership is also provided by the HR function to ensure a consistent approach is adopted across the Council.

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
1.1	<p>The Council's leaders offer a clear Vision and direction promoting the Values and importance of managing people effectively. They are focused and willing to take and stick to tough decisions.</p> <p>There is clarity among members and officers about their respective roles and responsibilities and they have professional and constructive relationships.</p>	<p>➤ The Council actively communicating its vision, ambitions and priorities and providing internal leadership to achieve them;</p> <p>1.1 The Interim Chief Executive, Philip Thomas, held a challenge day on the 8th March 2006 where the Executive and Senior Managers reviewed the current priorities and targets in order to challenge what the Council should be focusing on for the coming year, and ensuring the targets and priorities are challenging, focused and achievable. This resulted in a revised list of Priorities and Targets which were agreed on the 2nd May 2006 by Executive. (see evidence xxxx).</p> <p>1.2 Phillip conducted a series of staff focus groups to ascertain what the key cultural issues were (see evidence xxxx) and also consulted senior managers on how to implement the findings. Philip started the process of having a more open, honest and innovative culture at all levels and the new Chief Executive has continued this approach and wants to make this an intrinsic part of the new culture, which will be achieved through the programmes detailed below.</p> <p>1.3 The new Chief Executive, Anne Fisher started on June 5th 2006. Anne has conducted staff briefings in order to communicate the proposed new structure and also the change management / culture change programme that will be needed to make the Council 'Excellent' (see evidence xxxx). Anne also holds regular open door sessions where anyone can drop in to talk about anything, and is planning to continue this on a permanent basis. Further staff briefings will be taking place in September and information is also available on the intranet to all staff.</p> <p>1.4 The Council has approved new corporate priorities which enable Members to be more informed to make decisions to modernise the Council. The Member/officer protocol provides a clear basis for professional relationships between Members and officers. (see evidence xxxx). There are also new decision making arrangements in place.</p>

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
		<p>1.5 A Transformers Group has been set up with the purpose being for staff to help shape the future of the Council by reviewing the changes we need in order to move us to being an excellent authority, and thus creating an open, empowered and externally focused organisation. This will input directly into the Council's overall Culture/Change/Management Development programme. Two way open communication - giving all staff the opportunity to input - is in the terms of reference and the Trade Union is represented on the group (see evidence xxx). Priorities are cascaded down through the Corporate Plan (see evidence xxx), to service plans (see evidence xxx) through to individual PDRs (see evidence xxx). Team Brief and Team Update is also used to communicate to staff, for example in Team Update, each Corporate Priority has been discussed....details from Lorraine (see evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ Leaders understanding and communicating the context and constraints in which the Council operates; See above.</p> <p>1.6 The Council has from the original days of formal Best Value Reviews (BVRs) delivered Value For Money (VFM) reports. All reports have financial comments with emphasis on VFM and business case parameters. The proposed Financial Strategy for 2007/08 provides for all growth to the budget to be met by compensating efficiency savings.</p> <p>➤ Leaders being supportive of the Council's explicit Values that address the way it treats its people and expects them to treat each other;</p> <p>1.7 A set of 'values' were developed as part of the OD BVR. (see evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ Using leadership and management styles that foster a culture that encourages staff to test out ideas and develop solutions;</p> <p>1.8 The new Chief Executive is keen to move to this type of Culture, and 'innovation, creativity and new ideas' is a theme in the terms of reference of the Transformers Group. The structure will be developed to enable innovation and creativity and will be a key criterion for directors when deciding how they will structure their services. The team briefing process, teamtactic and 1-2-1s are mechanisms that are utilised to encourage staff to give ideas.</p>

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
		<p>➤ Members and officers making difficult decisions and sticking to them, such as using alternative methods of service delivery and associated HR and people management arrangements;</p> <p>1.9 The restructuring, change management programme and resulting action plan from the Idea peer review will address this. One recent high profile example is the issues related to the Leisure contract with Aspire.</p> <p>➤ A sustained focus over time on what matters and not being distracted by operational crises;</p> <p>1.10 This is an area we will be improving upon through the programmes referred to above. Staff have maintained levels of good service performance despite the recent events – (the departure of the two Executive Directors).</p> <p>➤ Promoting equality and diversity and ensuring its importance is recognised throughout the Council;</p> <p>1.11 Equality and Diversity is one of the key areas that the new Chief Executive has already identified for improvement. Although we have had an Equalities Steering Group for some time the focus of this group and it's outcomes have not always been clear. Therefore a new group was formed, called VDAG - Valuing Diversity Action Group. VDAG is targeting specific outcomes and is chaired by the Director of Policy and also has member representation – with the portfolio holder for equality and diversity.</p> <p>1.12 All the service plans produced by each service manager have a table requiring the identification of any major equalities issues related to the actions within their service plans and these have formed the Council's 2006/07 Corporate Equality Plan (see evidence xxxx) . This is on Covalent (the Council's Performance Management System) and progress monitored by VDAG. The Equality and Diversity Policy is on the internet and there is also a bullying and harassment policy which is still being consulted on with UNISON (see evidence xxxx) .</p> <p>➤ Being accessible, actively listening and responding to people;</p> <p>1.13 See 1.1,1.2,1.3 above. Also the team briefing process whereby information is cascaded down from CMT to teams. Additionally managers conduct team meetings (for work round ups and team matters) and hold regular 1-2-1s with their staff. (see evidence xxxx) the intranet, TeamUpdate, teamtactics, intranet and staff briefings are also used.</p>

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
		<p>➤ Encouraging and motivating people to perform and dealing with under-performance; 1.14 Historically the organisation has not managed issues of under performance well. This is due to a number of issues both cultural and framework related, e.g. a lack of robust HR policies (see evidence xxxx)</p> <p>➤ Establishing and using reward and recognition mechanisms to sustain peoples' involvement and empowerment; 1.15 This will be picked up by the Change Management Programme and Transformers Group. Performance related pay was recommended in the Best Value Review of Organisational Development (see evidence xxxx), however implementation was delayed, and a decision will be made on whether this is still to be implemented.</p> <p>➤ Managers understanding their responsibilities in relation to issues associated with managing people; 1.16 The role of managers, from Heads of Service level and below, is not clearly defined within the organisation. It is intended that both the restructure and the Management Development Programme (see evidence xxxx) will address this.</p> <p>➤ Officers and members being clear about what they are and are not responsible for, and operating within a clear scheme of delegated decision-making; 1.17 The new structure will address this, also new decision making arrangements for Members have recently been introduced, following the adoption of a new constitution. (see evidence xxxx). The Council has appointed a Human Resources Committee to approve and review on behalf of the Council:</p>

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
		<p>1.18 Human Resources Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The terms and conditions for officers ● Any matters arising from the application of the human resource policies or the terms and conditions for officers. <p>This will enable the Council to coordinate and review its HR policies and their operation.</p> <p>An Audit Committee has been appointed to review the Council's audit processes, consider its regulatory framework and consider the Council's accounts.</p> <p>The Council will continue to develop Member training with ethics training taking place in October 2006.</p> <p>The HR Committee members will also receive training in key areas.</p> <p>➤ <i>Officers being treated with respect by members, who accept their discretionary decisions and are willing to listen to their advice.</i></p> <p>1.19 The Terms of Reference for the Transformers Group includes looking at staff and member relationships and effective decision making processes. Additionally there is the Member Officer protocol and the new Executive / Director briefings.</p>

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
1.2	The HR function provides strategic leadership on people management and human resource issues ensuring that there is a consistent approach across the Council.	<p>1.20 A key improvement will be ensuring that HR gives a much clearer direction for the organisation's People Management Process, than has historically been the case. This will be a key facet of the Change Management Programme and a key part of the restructuring – with HR coming under the responsibility of the new Chief Executive, thus ensuring HR is a key player.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Managers across the Council recognising the lead provided by the HR function; <p>1.21 The restructuring and change management programme will include ensuring HR has a genuine influence at senior management level – this strategic lead has not previously been in place, for example with HR not being kept involved in key decision making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A consistent approach to people management in line with the HR strategy; <p>1.22 In the past there have been issues about inconsistency, often linked to under development of the HR team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consistent advice on human resources issues being provided to managers across the Council by the HR function; ➤ Ensuring that the function is responsive to customer needs <p>1.23 In the past HR have at times been too customer led and at other times not been customer focused/responsive enough. For example – good practice and statute requirements have not always been adhered to, a high profile example being the Council's Redundancy Policy. This is now being addressed, the policies are currently being updated, and the new Chief Executive has communicated that the HR policies and processes must be in place before the restructuring can take place. Hard copy of the policies is attached together with details of latest amendments (see evidence xxx).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The HR function is seen as having influence and is engaging with senior managers in key decision-making, ensuring account is taken of the impact on employees; ➤ Being aware of the latest developments and thinking on HR and people management. <p>1.24 See 1.20,1.21,1.22,1.23 above. The new Head of HR has undertaken a mini re-organisation and two away days have taken place. Subject to Members agreement a new Senior HR Officer will be recruited. Taken together both these factors should lead to measurable improvements to the HR service.</p>

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
1.3	<p>The Council's leaders are involved in developing the strategies for managing change, based on an understanding of the key national and local drivers.</p> <p>The resistance to change is being minimised by fully engaging employees through the use of effective people and change management arrangements. – <i>this will be addressed through the Transformers Group and Change Management Programme</i></p>	<p>➤ Leaders understanding the internal and external drivers for change and having a track record of overcoming the barriers/resistance to change;</p> <p>1.25 The organisation has a history of continuously adapting and changing (add in text historical picture about previous restructuring, job evaluation etc). The processes used have varied, as have the outcomes. There has not been a managing change strategy to date, although we are currently developing a policy and procedure for achieving organisational change, which is being published by week ending 18th August 2006. HR's role has been one of administration rather than change agent. The afore mentioned BVR of Organisational Development was intended to deliver key improvements but not all of the key ones have been implemented, and the recommendations need revisiting for their relevance now.</p> <p>1.26 In terms of Performance Management, in terms of areas such as CPA, Performance Indicators, Use of Resources, Service Planning etc, the Council has continuously performed well over recent years and there is a good performance management culture which staff buy into. A fully integrated budget and service planning process is currently underway for 2007/08 – which will enable greater focus on value for money, identifying the budgetary cost of service plan actions and identifying savings and ensuring the process is used to effectively challenge where we allocate resources.</p> <p>Examples of the Council managing major changes well include the Stock Transfer and bring the Housing Options team in-house.</p> <p>The Councils CPA action plan is attached (See evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ Clear strategies and change management plans linked to an assessment of the staffing implications;</p> <p>1.27 This has not previously been in place. The BVR OD action plan was ambitious but the resources and structure have not been in place to deliver.</p> <p>➤ The HR function taking a lead role in 'championing' organisational change;</p> <p>1.28 This has not historically been the case. The BVR of Organisational Development (See evidence xxx) resulted in structural changes – moving HR into the Organisational Development Directorate. This will be improved through the restructuring and change management programme. HR and managing the development of the organisation are being brought together as part of the new structure.</p>

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
		<p>➤ Changes and the need for them being effectively communicated to employees at all levels; See 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 above 1.29 The key mechanisms are the Teambriefing process, 1-2-1s, TeamUpdate, the Intranet and staff briefings</p> <p>➤ Effective project management techniques being used to pilot and manage the implementation of changes; 1.30 This will happen through the Change Management Programme, including the Transformers group. The Council also has a Project Management Toolkit (See evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ A good track record of implementing and managing change as part of the modernisation agenda; ➤ Evaluating the impact and benefits of change and how it was managed; ➤ Communicating the success and benefits associated internally and externally, as appropriate. See 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 above</p>

ATTRIBUTE 2: STRATEGY

A strategic approach to HR and people management, which focuses on outcomes, not processes and positions HR at the core of the organisation. The overall strategy and ancillary policies are improved based on learning and results

No.	Key Indicators	Typically, this may include evidence of:
2.1	The Council has a well developed and up to date HR Strategy , linked to corporate aims and objectives	<p>➤ A clear corporate HR Strategy, focused on outcomes, that sets out the Council's priorities in relation to human resource and people management, in support of corporate aims and objectives;</p> <p>2.1 A HR Strategy has been written and agreed, as part of the OD BVR, however the key parts have not been implemented. The recently appointed Head of HR has been unable to focus her work sufficiently at a strategic level due to having to spend the majority of her time dealing with operational issues, however she is fully involved in the restructuring and change management process. The new Senior HR post (to be agreed by Members) will also help.</p> <p>➤ A framework of ancillary policies, such as diversity, remuneration, training & development and sickness absence;</p> <p>2.2 There are many HR policies, many of which are out of date (See evidence xxx). The BVR of Organisational Development led to the withdrawal of the HR Handbook. New policies are being developed and a Workforce Plan is being initiated a draft (currently being consulted on) of which is attached (See evidence xxx) HR are working on a programme of policy reviews which will be shared with the Local Joint Panel and HR Committee.</p> <p>➤ Employee involvement, risk assessment and equality impact assessments informing the development of the HR Strategy and policies;</p> <p>➤ National drivers, such as Gershon efficiencies, Pay & Workforce Strategy and CPA, being taken into account;</p> <p>➤ Action plans containing SMART targets and clear milestones for the implementation of HR Strategy and policy framework;</p> <p>➤ Sufficient resources being identified to deliver the agreed HR Strategy and policies;</p> <p>➤ People-related issues are taken account of in service/business plans;</p> <p>2.3 The HR service plan is attached (See evidence xxx). The scope of the Transformers Group includes 'Developing a Staff and Management Development Programme for East Herts' which includes amongst other areas -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How do we ensure the Council effectively taps into 'talent'? ➤ How do we ensure opportunities are given to staff (that want to) to develop, e.g. through job shadowing, mentoring, projects and secondments (including reciprocal arrangements), and generally encouraging people

No.	Key Indicators	Typically, this may include evidence of:
		<p>to get 'out and about' and see what other sections do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What needs to be done to empower staff and also enable managers to delegate more? How do we ensure there is a fair balance of workloads across the organisation? ➤ Effective communication of the HR Strategy and policies; 2.4 This will need to be a focus for improvement in the future. There are a number of HR policies being agreed at HR Committee in August, these will be supported by briefing sessions for staff and training days for managers. HR are also working on an increased Intranet profile. ➤ Regularly monitoring and reviewing the impact of the HR Strategy and policy framework and using this information to develop realistic and robust future plans. 2.5 This will need to be a focus for improvement in the future
2.2	<p>The Council has strategies, plans and approaches in place to build and release the capacity of its employees and elected members</p> <p><i>Again this is a key facet of the Change Management Programme and Transformers Group and developing a more innovative and creative culture which will be intrinsic to the new structure.</i></p>	<p>2.6 There are pockets of good practice across the organisation, e.g. shared working, but overall developments need to be extended further. Several ongoing initiatives have been introduced to improve performance in this are e.g. flexible working, Worforce Plan and the Management Development Programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An understanding of current capacity issues and strategies in place/being developed to address them; Restructuring (see 1.3 above) ➤ A corporate workforce development plan, incorporating recruitment, induction, retention and succession planning; Draft attached see 2.2 above. ➤ A clearly defined corporate approach to identify and develop officer and member capacity, such as induction and a leadership and management development programme; 2.7 Details of management development programme attached (See evidence xxx) ➤ An approach to managing and using information and knowledge; 2.8 Performance Management is good including the quality of external reports prepared for Auditors/Inspectors. However internally this is an area for improvement. ➤ Innovative recruitment campaigns, reward packages, attendance management and approaches to employee health and well-being, to attract, retain, value and get the best from staff;

No.	Key Indicators	Typically, this may include evidence of:
		<p>2.9 Current staff turnover figures are....(See evidence xxx). A decision on whether PRP is to be introduced as recommended in the OD BVR will be made. Heads of Service and Directors enjoy an attractive benefits package. General initiatives will be identified as part of the Transformers Group, and changing the culture will result in addressing these points. Initiatives in regard to health and well being have been introduced including EAP – text to follow from Leisure Development Officer (See evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ Managing the work-life balance of all employees;</p> <p>2.10 Flexible working pilots have been introduced.</p> <p>➤ Developing people through work experience, team working, mentoring and secondments; See 2.3 above</p> <p>➤ Mechanisms for increasing capacity, such as joint working with other councils/organisations;</p> <p>➤ Responding to the modernisation agenda, such as e-government and strategic procurement;</p> <p>2.11 Maximum use has been made of the Government IEG capital money with a roll out of a corporate Customer Relationship Management System. This is having a significant improvement on the delivery of front line service. The Council is introducing the e-marketplace as part of a County-wide initiative which will be piloted in November 2006 for roll-out in 2007. The Council approved a new procurement strategy in November 2005 and is in the process of implementing the action plan. The Council had a procurement health check in February 2006 which involved Members of the Executive and Scrutiny Committees. The action plan is now being implemented.</p> <p>2.12 The organisation is responding to the e-govt agenda and there is a corporate working group delivering on strategic procurement (See evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ Investing in the appropriate building blocks to address weaknesses in capacity, people management arrangements and services.</p> <p>2.13 Undertaking the Idea Peer Review shows our commitment to getting this right – change management programme and restructuring will address this.</p>

No.	Key Indicators	Typically, this may include evidence of:
2.3	<p>The Council is committed to a diverse workforce, providing equal opportunities to all in order to build an inclusive organisation</p> <p>See 1.6 above</p>	<p>VDAG is leading on diversity training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clear policies covering equalities and diversity in place, such as race, gender, disability and religion, to ensure that the Council is representative of the local community, including at senior levels; <p>2.14 Some policies are in place (See evidence xxx), with others in development e.g. employing people with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consultation with black, minority and ethnic groups and taking appropriate action based on the findings; ➤ Effective 'mainstreaming' of diversity and equalities issues; <p>2.15 As detailed above the organisation has started focusing on Diversity however there is still significant work needed in order to mainstream diversity issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Effectively monitoring the implementation and compliance with equalities and diversity policies. <p>2.16 Monitoring and management information is at a reasonable level, although it is not always clear how this data is used to influence service delivery, for example the corporate equality plan is on Covalent and progress will be monitored, the challenge will be evaluating the resulting outcomes from the actions to ensure it is a meaningful exercise.</p>

ATTRIBUTE 3: DELIVERY

Employees are effectively managed through clearly defined processes and structures. The management arrangements are aligned with the Council's corporate strategy. The HR function is fit for purpose and is resourced to reflect the HR Strategy and the needs of the Council.

No.	Key Indicators	Typically, this may include evidence of:
3.1	The Council has identified its key processes in relation to the management of people and is implementing and measuring them effectively.	<p>➤ Key HR processes being developed and consistently implemented across the Council;</p> <p>3.1 Basic HR Processes are in place, and a computerised HR system is in place</p> <p>➤ Employees influencing the development of key processes;</p> <p>➤ Effectively managing, reviewing and implementing appropriate changes to people management processes;</p> <p>➤ Identifying and using process measures to understand the performance of people management arrangements;</p> <p>3.2 Above points will be addressed through Change Management Programme, the Transformers Group and Corporate Management Team</p> <p>➤ A systematic approach to project and risk management;</p> <p>3.3 There is a Project Management Toolkit and Risk is part of all service plans, monitored on Covalent and reported to CMT and Audit Committee (See evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ Flexibility of the delivery framework to cope with new demands and/or initiatives;</p> <p>3.4 The Council has recently signed a single contract with 'Reed' for the recruitment of permanent and temporary administration staff.</p> <p>➤ A systematic approach to identifying and improving skills and competencies;</p> <p>See above in...</p> <p>➤ Training and development being delivered in accordance with the needs of individuals and the capacity requirements of the Council.</p> <p>3.5 The PDRS system includes a set of competencies – these were revised for 2006/07. (See evidence xxx) Training needs are identified through the PDRS. There was a reduction in the training budget as part of last years budget process. A Management Development Programme is being implemented (See evidence xxx). A training course brochure linked to organisational need is planned by the end of this year.</p>

No.	Key Indicators	Typically, this may include evidence of:
3.2	The HR Function is appropriate to the needs of the Council and its approach to people management.	<p>➤ <i>The HR Function being appropriately resourced to provide strategic direction and influence as well as meeting the demands placed on it for HR advice and guidance;</i></p> <p>3.6 Work is in progress to increase the HR resource, the current structure is detailed together with a report to Executive on 12th September 2006. (See evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ <i>Maximisation of e-government mechanisms for providing HR services on-line;</i></p> <p>3.7 The HR website page has been improved and the Council has on-line recruitment. Current work is taking place on changing on-line forms from PDF to Word</p> <p>➤ <i>Recognising opportunities for partnership working to deliver value for money;</i></p> <p>3.8 In the area of HR work has only recently been undertaken on these. One example is sharing training with Broxbourne. We are exploring via PDG (Personnel Officers Group) how we can work with other districts to improve efficiency.</p> <p>➤ <i>Promoting continuous professional development for HR employees;</i></p> <p>3.9 Historically staff in HR have not had enough development/training. In the last year one HR officer has become CIPD qualified and the Health and Safety Officer has improved his qualifications base. Two more staff will go through the CIPD route this year.</p> <p>➤ <i>Managing resources to ensure that priorities are delivered in line with the HR Strategy.</i></p> <p>3.10 Resources are being aligned in order to deliver the HR service plan (See evidence xxx)</p>

No.	Key Indicators	Typically, this may include evidence of:
3.3	The Council has developed and maintained a culture of positive and constructive Employee relations .	<p>➤ Transparent consultative arrangements with trades unions and other employee representatives; 3.11 There are regular informal meetings between HR and the Trade Union as well as a Local Joint Panel.</p> <p>➤ Success in addressing job evaluation to achieve Single Status; 3.12 The Haye Job Evaluation scheme is in place and there are no issues with this.</p> <p>➤ Using staff surveys to measure satisfaction levels and other staffing related issues; 3.13 A staff survey was not carried out last year, there is one planned for this Autumn, attached is the last survey (See evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ Identifying employee communication needs and developing and using appropriate mechanisms to foster an open, honest and transparent culture; 3.14 This is in the Terms of Reference of the Transformers Group under the theme of ‘Communication’, specifically looking at: How do we ensure that we have two-way communication? ➤ Knowing our organisation – who works where and what do they do? ➤ How do we ensure that internal Communications e.g. branding/promotion are appropriate and effective? How do we communicate changes to colleagues? ➤ How do we communicate the work of this group to colleagues and encourage all staff to feel comfortable contributing their ideas?</p> <p>3.15 A Culture Change Programme is also commencing (See evidence xxx)</p> <p>➤ Acting on the results of consultation, surveys and two-way communication; 3.16 See 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 above. The Council has a ‘teamtactic’ scheme whereby staff can feedback any ideas which are then considered by CMT and the best one given a prize. (See evidence xxx). The Teambriefing process also provides a two-way communication opportunity.</p> <p>➤ Constructive and respectful relationships between officers and members and senior and junior employees, which engenders a culture of trust. See 1.4 and 1.17 above.</p>

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
3.4	The Council recognises the need for effective performance management and is successful in managing the performance of employees and developing them to give their best to achieve the Council's objectives	<p>➤ Effective corporate performance management arrangements that are implemented across the Council;</p> <p>3.17 Corporate Performance Management is good e.g. PIs and Use of Resources etc (see above in point 1.23). However in relation to performance regarding people management performance has been variable across the organisation.</p> <p>➤ Systems that enable officers and members to understand and use HR performance information to improve services;</p> <p>3.18 Performance management monitoring is undertaken using Covalent – the Council's performance management software system. All monitoring reports on performance indicators have been collated and analysed through Covalent since 2004/05 as well as providing benchmarking information for all national performance indicators. During 2005/06 the system was expanded to allow further monitoring of progress against: Strategic and Service Plans, Community Strategy Action Plans, Community Safety Strategy Action Plan, Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, Housing Strategy Action Plan, Local Development Framework, Local Plan Second Review, Best Value Reviews and Risk Management. Monthly reports on performance are submitted to the Corporate Management Team on an exception basis where corrective action is agreed as necessary, with quarterly monitoring reports to Performance Scrutiny Committee. Progress against Service plans is monitored, with six monthly reports to Corporate Management Team, (and now there are no longer strategic plans), also to Performance Scrutiny.</p> <p>3.19 There are also 'Service Performance Indicators' which are not reported but used by services for their own benefit – these are on Covalent. (See evidence xxx).</p> <p>3.20 HR has not had good performance management in the past and this is an area that is starting to be addressed- and an area of key focus for improvement. A HR Committee has been set up... (See evidence xxx).</p> <p>➤ An appraisal system for officers and members that links their performance and targets with those in the service/business plan;</p> <p>3.21 An appraisal system is in place see above point..., but in terms of clear linkages from service plans to individual PDRs – further clarity is needed on the level of these linkages across the organisation. In terms of Members – need some text here to follow from the Leader/Chief Executive.</p>

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
		<p>➤ <i>Mechanisms in place for celebrating success and recognising achievement of individuals, teams, services and the Council as a whole;</i></p> <p>3.22 There is the teamtactics scheme see.... Above, a staff awards scheme is being developed as detailed in the Communications Service plan - 'to set up an "Extra Mile" awards ceremony for staff recognition and achievement by February 2007', also being discussed is a Chief Executive's award and also a Chairman's award. 1-2-1s and PDRS are also key methods for recognising achievement.</p> <p>➤ <i>Evidence of effectively managing under-performance of both officers and members.</i></p> <p>3.23 This is an area that HR have not been strong on in the past, although corporately overall services performance has been good as reflected by CPA and auditor judgements as detailed inabove. The new structure/Change Management Programme and Transformers Group will result in improvements in this area.</p> <p>3.24 All directors have structured 1-2-1s with the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive has regular meetings with the Leader where member/officer performance is discussed.</p> <p>3.25 Democratic services co-ordinate an integrated programme of training for Members concentrating on areas where Members require detailed knowledge including licensing, planning and new legislation. A training plan for the new the Audit Committee is in place. Ethics and standards training is being provided.</p>

ATTRIBUTE 4: OPERATIONAL RESULTS

The Council is achieving high levels of staff satisfaction and is improving its performance against a balanced range of HR performance indicators. Trends over three years indicate a positive direction of travel, in line with HR Strategy. Targets are set, achieved and benchmarked with 'best in class' organisations. Its achievements reflect the needs and expectations of its customers, staff and relevant stakeholders and are in line with national expectations and requirements

No.	Key Indicators	Typically, this may include evidence of:
4.1	The Council routinely measures and manages Staff satisfaction levels . This information is used to inform change and improvement in the way that the Council values and manages its people	<p>4.1 The new Chief Executive, Interim Director of Organisational Development and the new Head of HR are aware of the current strengths and weaknesses of the current HR function and are putting in place various initiatives (as detailed above) to improve performance in this function.</p> <p>➤ Good and improving staff satisfaction results, such as satisfaction with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Opportunities for career development; ➤ Communications; ➤ Empowerment; ➤ Equal opportunities & diversity; ➤ Leadership; ➤ Management of change; ➤ Policies for dealing with 'dignity at work'; ➤ Opportunities for involvement; ➤ Training and development; ➤ Working environment; ➤ Flexible working arrangements and other work/life balance policies; ➤ Employee support and well-being; ➤ Stress management.

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
4.2	The Council has in place a balanced set of people related performance indicators (national and local) in order to monitor, understand and improve the performance of its people in delivering services.	<p>➤ Good and improving performance against key people related indicators, such as:</p> <p>4.2 The BVPIs, LPIs and Service PIs are attached (See evidence xxx), although this is an area that will need to be looked at to ensure we have effective people related indicators delivering meaningful data which can be acted upon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Levels of training and development; ➤ Training evaluation; ➤ Competency requirements versus competencies available; ➤ Involvement of individuals in team and other improvement activities; ➤ Process improvement; ➤ Value for money; ➤ Vacancy rates (short and long term); ➤ Turnover rates; ➤ Sickness absence; ➤ Grievance; ➤ Disciplinary; ➤ Accident levels; ➤ Equality and diversity, including the Equality Standard; ➤ Response rates to staff surveys; ➤ Improvements as a result of external and internal audits/inspections; ➤ Return on investment(s).
4.3	The Council gathers relevant customer and stakeholder perceptions and these are used to inform decisions about service delivery and improving performance	<p>➤ Good and improving stakeholder perceptions, in relation to the Council's people such as:</p> <p>4.3 See above.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Comments, compliments and complaints; ➤ External audit/inspection and assessment, including peer review; ➤ Community surveys; ➤ External awards and recognition, e.g. Charter Mark, Investors in People; ➤ Press & media coverage; ➤ Citizens Panel.

ATTRIBUTE 5: LEARNING

Learning is a way of life and is routinely used to improve strategic approaches to people management. The Council and its HR function are willing to learn from experience, its people, other organisations and external 'challenge' in order to improve

No.	Key Indicators:	Typically, this may include evidence of:
5.1	The Council and HR function are self-aware in relation to the effectiveness of people management arrangements and the contribution made by the HR function.	<p>See 4.1 above</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Awareness of the environment within which the Council and the HR function is working; ➤ Awareness of current strengths and what has been achieved; ➤ Awareness of current weaknesses, what needs to be done and the potential solutions; ➤ Staff being encouraged to test out new ideas and empowered to take action; ➤ Encouraging individual involvement in improvement activity; ➤ Being receptive to doing things differently as a result of learning; ➤ Being open to, and responding positively to, internal and external challenge, such as peer assessments, Best Value Reviews and external inspections.
5.2	The HR function plays a key role in promoting the need to share information, enabling the Council to become a learning organisation .	<p>East Herts has lacked a strategic approach to learning, however the aforementioned measures will address this and there will be priority and focus on learning and development. There has been an ad-hoc approach with individual courses being funded and run. A Graduate Trainee scheme is in place and has worked well, the last trainee being appointed to the post of Community Projects Team Leader. An in-house admin trainee scheme is also in place although this is only funded for 6 months this year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The HR function encouraging and/or leading on a strategic approach to learning;</i> ➤ <i>Learning being shared systematically across the Council;</i> ➤ <i>A track record of learning from experience and from mistakes and making changes in the light of this;</i> ➤ <i>Seeking learning from partners, customers, other councils and organisations and using this learning effectively;</i> ➤ <i>Regularly and systematically reviewing HR priorities in the context of the Council's priorities;</i> ➤ <i>Ensuring learning is fed back into improving the overall strategic direction of the Council, including the HR Strategy and associated people management arrangements, so as to improve service delivery.</i>

5. Specific Areas for Peer Review to focus on

The overall purpose of this review is to ascertain the effectiveness of people management across the organisation and the contribution by HR to this and the transformation of the Council.

Internal to HR	External but within Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure • Admin processes – are current systems most efficient way to deliver? • Capacity (team hands) • Computerised personnel information system (link to payroll) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blockers • Process for getting changes to policies and procedures agreed • Role of HR as change agents • Validating competency framework • Requirements/perceptions of HR • Benchmarking pay and benefits • Grading & Reward systems – are they fit for purpose • Consultation & negotiation framework • Organisational structure – are we too top heavy? • Management of people to improve the Council

