

Strategic Direction and Leadership

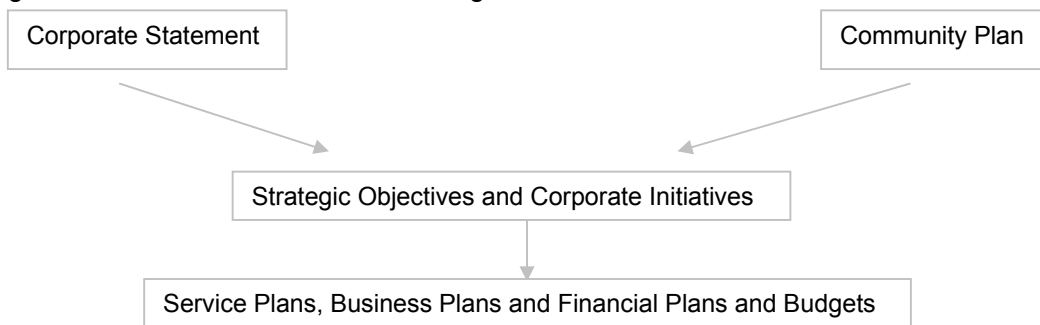
Our **strategic direction** focuses on our vision for customer focused service development and continuous improvement and is set and maintained by members at Board meetings and the Chief Executive and senior officers at the **Corporate Management Team**. Our Chief Executive launches all major management initiatives personally, setting out the vision and objectives in presentations to senior managers across the authority, who then cascade it down reinforced by Team Talk and Staff Matters. This approach has been used successfully to launch our Customer Service Strategy, our Management Development and employee performance development strategies, our Corporate Statement as well as other key initiatives.

Our Members moved from a service led committee structure to a **Policy Board structure** following the introduction of our Community Plan and the Boards now reflect the key themes of our Community Plan. Our **Leadership Board** ensures the consistency of our policy objectives and oversees overarching themes in relation to community planning, partnership working and strategic policy development.

We have a **strong planning framework** supported by regular and effective service and performance monitoring. Our 10 year **Community Plan** focuses on community objectives and partnership working and is our principal strategic plan. Our vision and values are set out in our **Corporate Statement**. Both documents influence our 10 strategic objectives and 20 corporate initiatives.

Our three year **Service Plans and Business Plans** are closely linked with our three year financial management and budget setting process and are regularly reviewed and monitored at both senior management and member levels to ensure a balance of cost, quality, efficiency, effectiveness and economy is achieved.

Our top **20 Corporate Initiatives** are our current key projects and these are linked to Service Plans. Each initiative is led by a member of the Corporate Management Team. They are monitored six monthly by the Corporate Management Team and more regularly by relevant senior management teams. A booklet summarising each initiative has been issued to all our managers.



In addition to our core planning and management processes, we have a wide range of **specific strategies and policies** that are agreed and often championed by specific elected members to respond to particular issues facing the Council and the Renfrewshire community. Recent additions include: our Adult Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan, Anti Social Behaviour Strategy, Integrated Children's Services Plan, Building a Learning Renfrewshire Policy, School Estate Strategy, Criminal Justice Strategic Plan, Litter, Graffiti and Vandalism Strategy, Human Resource Strategy, Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Local Housing Strategy, Local Transport Strategy, Managing Team and Management Development schemes, Race Equality scheme and Working and Learning Together. While this list is not exhaustive it does illustrate the wide range of policies and strategies being developed and in place to ensure co-ordinated and focused attention on the key issues facing the Council.

Our strong strategic direction and effective leadership have allowed the Council to build on a solid base of improving Council services and establish a **track record of innovation**, grasping new opportunities to further improve services and facilities and responding quickly and effectively to changes in customers' needs and expectations. We have piloted, or been at the forefront, in developing various initiatives, that have since been taken forward on a wider or national level.

This includes: Neighbourhood Wardens, Digital Inclusion, Customer Relationship Management, Text Messaging Services, Community Portal Development, co-location of our Business Support Team alongside the local Enterprise Company to provide a one stop shop for local businesses and development of our Integrated Roads Management System which allows road faults to be reported on-line. We are responsive and willing to adopt new ways of delivering services – the £263 million investment in the School Estate which includes a PPP project and significant refurbishment, Renfrewshire Leisure Trust and Housing Stock Transfer. This has led to a culture of continuous improvement driven from the top of the organisation using challenging service reviews, seeking external accreditation, setting demanding targets through balanced scorecards and enabling business change through a dedicated unit. Our approach to Charter Mark reflects this with many of our services being the first in Scotland to achieve the award. For example, we were the first Council in Scotland to achieve Charter Mark for a District Court, Primary School, Nursery School, Economic Development, Revenues service, Children’s Home, Day Centre for older people, Estates, Housing Regeneration, ASIST and Mediation service, Administration and were joint first for our Registration service.

Key Strengths

- Political leadership and Scrutiny Board.
- Elected member “champions” for key issues.
- Very clear and consistent vision, values, objectives and strategic management approach.
- Strong and effective Corporate Management Team and senior management structure.
- Clear and consistent decision making.
- Strong direction from the political leadership with a track record of elected members accepting officers recommendations.
- Capacity to take, and effectively implement, difficult decisions – PPP, Housing Stock Transfer, Leisure Trust, school rationalisation.
- Strong relationship between budget management and service and business planning.
- Record of continuous improvement and innovation, modernisation and change.

Core Evidence

- Community Plan.
- Corporate Statement.
- Customer Service Strategy, Customers Matter and Planning for Change.
- Charter Mark programme.
- Financial management, budget setting process, performance management and scrutiny.
- Scrutiny Board reviews and Service Review process.
- Service Plans and Business Plans.
- Service Plan monitoring reports, Service Performance and Future Targets reports.
- Delivering the Key Corporate Initiatives.
- Other key Corporate Strategies.

Scrutiny

We are committed to delivering better public services year on year and have robust mechanisms in place for **internal scrutiny** by members and senior officers of performance and service outcomes. To assist us achieve this aim our objectives and strategies are explicitly translated into clear SMART implementation plans. Service Plan action plans are cross referenced with other plans, objectives and strategies and the effectiveness of this approach has been confirmed by positive feedback from a range of external auditors including HMIE and Audit Scotland. We integrate opportunities for scrutiny and monitoring into our service planning and board approval procedures.

Our **Service Review** guidance contains clear a mechanism for internal scrutiny and this has been used across all key service areas to scrutinise, challenge and review service delivery.

At a **member level** we have a strong opposition generating robust, detailed and effective scrutiny of all decisions and vigorously challenging policies and strategies. All Board reports contain information on their implications for progressing or implementing our Community Plan objectives.

Individual members also have specific responsibility for key Community Plan objectives and equalities groups – modernising government, equal opportunities, sustainability, older people - and the **Community Plan Management Group**, which oversees the implementation of the Community Plan, includes elected members.

Service Plans and Business Plans relate to the Community Plan and are updated annually with Service Plans monitored every six months by relevant Policy Boards. The three Community Plan guiding principles are reported to the Leadership Board every six months. Relevant Policy Boards monitor performance and service outcomes on an annual basis through the **Service Performance and Future Targets reports**. Any Audit Scotland reports that review council wide issues, including the Annual Council Profile report, are considered at the Scrutiny Board.

Our **Scrutiny Board** undertakes a comprehensive programme of member led service and policy reviews and allows members to agree areas to be reviewed, identify the scope for improvement based on best practice and agree actions for improvement. These reviews are sometimes wide ranging and strategic: the role of the Council in Tourism or the Effect of Climate Change on Council Services. In other cases they are service specific: How Secondary Schools Apply the Council's Policy on Exclusions; Maximising Employee Attendance; Controlling Smoking at Work; Private Sector Housing and Council Tax Benefit Administration. The Scrutiny Board calls witnesses from a range of other organisations and specialists so that we can compare best practice and learn from others.

The Corporate Management Team scrutinise performance on a regular and structured basis. The Chief Executive holds regular service planning and review meetings, including detailed performance scrutiny meetings, with each Director on an annual basis, examining performance indicators and targets, consultation, service pledges and performance on their balanced scorecard. This scrutiny process also includes **peer review** of Service Plans by other Directors prior to approval. We have introduced a comprehensive **computerised performance management** system and the Corporate Management Team monitors a **balanced scorecard** of core strategic indicators on a quarterly basis receiving detailed analysis of indicators that are not on target.

We encourage all our **employees and the public** to scrutinise and comment on our performance. Performance reports are available on the internet and intranet. We publish our **Annual Report** and a **quarterly performance report**, in Plain English, in our Renfrewshire Magazine and deliver this to every household in Renfrewshire. We also have a wide range of **service level public performance reports** and **Customer Service Pledges** are in place at both corporate level and for all frontline services to encourage accountability and transparency.

Key Strengths

- Scrutiny Board.
- Rigorous and effective performance management and performance scrutiny process.
- Regular and comprehensive performance scrutiny by the Chief Executive and senior managers.
- Regular reporting and monitoring of, performance by elected members.
- Good track record of challenging service reviews providing demonstrable efficiency and service improvements across all core service areas.
- Introduction of computerised performance management system.
- Quarterly performance reports in Plain English published on the Internet and delivered to all households.

Core Evidence

- Annual Performance Scrutiny process.
- Service Performance and Future Targets Reports.
- Scrutiny Board reports and programme of reviews.
- Service Review process and review reports.
- Covalent Performance Management system.
- Portal, Annual Report, How Are We Doing? and the Renfrewshire Magazine.
- Service Level Public Performance Reports and Customer Service Pledges.

Conduct

Members and officers are committed to high standards of conduct. The Council promotes observance of **The Code of Conduct for Councillors** as approved by the Scottish Parliament and the associated guidance issued by the Standards Commission for Scotland. The Code of Conduct is provided to all members and Standards Commission guidance is reported to members as it is issued. Members are provided with training and guidance on Code of Conduct issues and are provided with regular reminders to keep up to date their entries in the Register of Councillors' Interests, which is kept available for inspection by members of the public. Senior officers ensure that employees comply with our **Code of Conduct for Employees**, which includes our policy on "whistle blowing". Information on the code and the whistle blowing policy is provided in a booklet and guidance note issued to all employees and in a leaflet entitled Guidance Notes on Whistle Blowing both of which are available on the intranet. The Council adopted a **Protocol for Member / Officer Relations** in October 1997. This is kept under review and was revised in December 2004 and August 2005.

The **Corporate Code of Governance** was approved by Council and an update reported to the Scrutiny Board in 2004. Since 1996 the Council has had in place a comprehensive scheme of administration, comprising a **scheme of delegated functions** which sets out the powers delegated to our policy boards and to officers and specifies the powers reserved to Council; **procedural standing orders; standing orders relating to contracts and financial regulations**. These are kept under review and have been revised as required. The scheme now incorporates the remits for our Provost, Depute Provost, conveners, depute conveners and members with portfolios.

The Corporate Management Team approved a policy on **Following the Public Pound** on 22 October 2002 which deals with the use of public money in relation to arms length trusts and public private partnerships and has been written into the Corporate Code of Governance.

The Council has a **Strategy for Prevention and Detection of Fraud and Corruption**, and policies on fraud prevention, investigation and "whistle blowing" are circulated to all new employees. The Council's **Defalcation Procedures** clearly set out the investigative process and are subject to regular review. All of these policies are readily accessible to staff on the intranet.

Key Strengths

- Protocol for Member/Officer relations.
- Code of Conduct for employees (including whistle blowing procedures).
- Training for Members and employees.
- Following the Public Pound procedures and guidance.

Core Evidence

- Corporate Code of Governance
- Code of Conduct for Employees (including whistle blowing procedures)
- Protocol for Member / Officer Relations
- Scheme of Administration including:
 - ◆ Scheme of Delegated Functions
 - ◆ Procedural Standing Orders
 - ◆ Standing Orders relating to Contracts
 - ◆ Financial Regulations
- Defalcation Procedures
- Strategy for Prevention and Detection of Fraud and Corruption
- Guidance notes and training on codes of conduct

Openness

Council business is managed in a manner which supports accountability and where the reasoning that underpins decisions is clearly documented and traceable. Decision making, the setting of priorities and assessment of performance against relevant targets, is undertaken in a manner that is open and transparent. The majority of business at Board meetings is dealt with in public.

Our **core values** include “Involving and Empowering” and “Listening and Communicating”. Our Community Plan themes, targets and objectives were subject to a full consultation process involving community groups, the public and partners. Our **Reaching Renfrewshire Strategy** responds to various needs identified through consultation and involvement of the community and seeks to improve our accessibility through modernising our services. Our **Customers Matter Strategy** and **Charter Mark** programme both focus on customer service and seek to ensure our employees are trained and equipped to respond openly and transparently to the community. We have service pledges in place for all our frontline services.

We are investing heavily in **modern and effective** ways to ensure we provide a service that meets the diverse needs and preferences of our community. In particular our **Customer Service Centre** which is currently under construction, will provide straightforward one stop access to all HQ services and facilities, our **Customer Contact Centre** provides integrated telephone access to key services, our **Portal**, provides online access 24 hours a day to our own services and those of our partners and **Rentext**, our text messaging service, makes information available that particularly meets the needs of young people, deaf people or people on the move. Our pilot Customer Service Centre was successfully launched on 31 October 2005. We use **Plain English** for all key public documents to ensure clarity and ease of understanding and we make documents available in Braille, in large print or in minority languages to meet the particular needs of individual customers. Over 100 of our documents have been Crystal marked.

All relevant **Board reports** are publicly available and Council and Board meetings are held in public and are notified in accordance with access to information legislation. We have a service pledge detailing the public right of access to information relating to Council and Board meetings.

All **Board agendas, reports and minutes** are retained for six years with background documentation retained for four years and these can be accessed by the public. Libraries hold a hard copy of current Board papers as well as access to our electronically held information.

Key Strengths

- Quarterly public performance reports in Plain English sent to all households.
- Investment in modern and effective ways to improve access and open channels of communication.
- Scrutiny Board process.

Core Evidence

- Corporate Statement.
- Community Plan.
- Charter Mark Programme.
- Reaching Renfrewshire Strategy.
- Customers Matter Strategy and Training.
- Board Minutes and Agendas database (Internet).

Best Practice

Leadership of Elected Members and Senior Officers
(CS BP 16)

Our Scrutiny Board undertakes member led reviews of services and policies.

Members and the Chief Executive launch key initiatives such as the Corporate Statement, Community Plan and the Management Development Training programmes to employees at corporate events to ensure a clear expression of our vision and values, aims and objectives comes from the top.

Elected members act as “champions” for key issues including sustainability, older people and equalities.

Members, the Chief Executive and Directors host receptions to recognise the achievements of employees who have played a significant role in

	securing continuous improvement, contributing suggestions and innovative ideas and developing quality services.
Raising Voter Awareness (CS BP4)	Co-ordination of the Council's 'No Vote, No Voice' campaign to encourage residents to register to vote, apply for postal votes and to participate in the democratic process. As part of an outreach programme 39 events were held at locations across Renfrewshire.
Customers Matter training and handbook (CS BP6)	We have a training programme in place to support our Customers Matter Toolkit. It consists of a 'general guide to customer care' and a series of checklists which draw on best practice, both from within the Council and other organisations. The programme provides employees with the skills they need to deliver high standards of customer service, and also includes our first on-line training package available through the intranet.
Child protection conference	Two conferences were held to improve leadership and vision in interagency child protection work in Renfrewshire. They brought together senior politicians, frontline practitioners, officers from appropriate agencies, and significant external speakers.
Rentext (CS BP 14)	Between June and December 2003, we piloted text messaging to communicate with customers with a hearing impairment, send information to young carers, promote events at our Arts Centre, contact members of our Young Persons Housing Forum and arrange housing management inspections. 86% of customers who used Rentext said it was a good service. At the Cosla Excellence Awards in 2004/05 Rentext received a Bronze Award in the Innovative Use of Technology category.
Charter Mark (CE BP4)	We are the best performing Council in Scotland on Charter Mark awards. Currently over 32% of our employees work in a service covered by Charter Mark and we have plans to extend this to over 40% by March 2006.

Plans for Continuous Improvement

- Report progress on how well the Corporate Core Values are being delivered across the Council
- Use the joint action plans to ensure the Community Planning Partnership is achieving tangible service improvements for Renfrewshire residents.
- Review the way we communicate and publicise our achievements to ensure that good practice is fully disseminated both across the Council and to the wider local government community.