



London Borough of Brent

Efficiency Strategy 2007

1. WHY AN EFFICIENCY STRATEGY?

Efficiency is about making best use of resources to deliver improved services.

Brent Council members and officers have had a long-standing commitment to ensuring services provided to residents of the borough are as efficient as possible. This is reflected in the quality of services provided and the fact that Brent has one of the lowest council taxes in outer London. The council has been successful at meeting government targets on efficiency and has a CPA score of 3 out of 4 on efficiency.

The council carries out a lot of activity to improve efficiency, which includes:

- At a corporate level, the Efficiency Board has overseen the development of a programme of efficiency projects including, for example, more efficient procurement of agency staff and the development of a customer services strategy.
- There are some major initiatives in services including, for example, changes to the way children's and adults' social care are provided.
- The annual 2% savings requirement as part of the budget process requires departments to review across the board how services can be provided more efficiently.
- Staff in their day-to-day activity are constantly looking at different and better ways of doing things.
- The council is increasingly looking at ways it can work better with partners – other local authorities and other local public service providers – to increase efficiency by sharing services.

This activity has been positive, has delivered real results, and places the council in a good position to deliver further efficiencies.

The aim of this strategy is to provide coherence to the council's overall approach to efficiency in order to:

- Develop understanding amongst members, staff, partners and local residents of the council's approach to delivering improved efficiency;
- Ensure that the council maximises the benefits of integrating efficiency into other council strategies including:
 - Resource strategies – eg human resources, IT, property, and procurement;
 - Cross-cutting strategies – eg customer services, sustainability, diversity, regeneration and community safety; and
 - Key service strategies – eg libraries, adult care, children's care, housing etc.
- Focus corporate and service attention on the delivery of efficiencies;

- Ensure resources that are available to support delivery of improvements in efficiency – at corporate and directorate level within finance, HR, IT, property, procurement, management services etc – are used where they can have most effect;
- Provide a basis for prioritising invest-to-save funds.

2. KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EFFICIENCY STRATEGY

The key elements of the strategy (and the way in which they fit into the overall performance management framework) are set out in Annex A. These elements, which will be the focus of the council's efficiency programme, are as follows:

Major cross-cutting projects that can deliver better outcomes cheaper

- Customer access
- IT infrastructure
- HR transactions/People Centre
- Financial transactions/e-procurement/debt recovery
- Energy efficiency
- Staff travel
- Remote/home working
- Office accommodation strategy
- Procurement of residential care (adults and children)
- Standardisation of procurement

Major service projects that can deliver better outcomes cheaper

- Adults' care
- Children's care
- Special education needs
- Library services

Shared services that can deliver savings by joining up across public service organisations

- West London Alliance:
 - Human resources
 - Adults' care
 - Children's care
 - Regulatory services
- Local Strategic Partnership:

- Shared delivery of front-line services eg adult care, children's assessments, community safety
- Customer access
- Property
- Information technology
- Human resources

More efficient service delivery as part of service planning, contributing to annual service savings targets

- Service reconfiguration
- Business process re-engineering
- Flexible use of staff
- Rationalisation of corporate and service support
- Management and staff restructuring

Working SMARTER to ensure day-to-day processes are carried out efficiently

- Staff appraisal
- Staff suggestion scheme
- Customer feedback

Using fees and charges effectively as a way of prioritising services and maximising income

- Corporate and service review of fees and charges

3. DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY

Overall co-ordination of delivery of the strategy will be the responsibility of the Efficiency Board. The Efficiency Board's terms of reference are attached as Annex B. These include developing the efficiency programme, ensuring efficiency is built into the council's resource strategies and service planning processes, monitoring the delivery of efficiencies, and developing and delivering a communication strategy.

4. GOVERNANCE

Members

Full Council

Overall accountability to the electorate for ensuring efficiently delivered services

Executive

Collectively responsible for overseeing delivery of the efficiency strategy

Decision making on major cross-cutting and service projects

Lead Member for Resources

Corporate efficiency champion

Oversight of efficiency strategy at corporate level

Challenge of efficiency within services

Other Lead Members

Efficiency champions for own areas of responsibility

Oversight of delivery of efficiency strategy at service level

Performance and Finance Select

Scrutiny of:

- Robustness of efficiency strategy
- Delivery of efficiency strategy
- Delivery of major efficiency projects

Budget Panel

Scrutiny of:

- Contribution of the efficiency strategy to the medium term financial strategy
- Robustness of savings from the efficiency strategy included in the budget.

Officers

Corporate Management Team

Overall responsibility at officer level for the efficiency strategy

Chief Executive

Council efficiency champion within partnerships including the West London Alliance and the Local Strategic Partnership

Director of Finance and Corporate Resources

Overall officer efficiency champion

Chair of the Efficiency Board

Efficiency Board (terms of reference in Appendix B)

Responsible for developing, managing and monitoring the efficiency programme

Improvement Board

Oversight of delivery of the efficiency strategy as one strand of the Improving Brent Action Plan

Receives regular reports from the Efficiency Board on progress in delivering the efficiency programme

Corporate directors

Officer champion for efficiency in corporate units

Responsible for building efficiency into relevant resource strategies

Responsible for delivering improved efficiency in corporate support services for which they are responsible including regular fundamental review of the way the services are provided

Service area directors

Officer champion for efficiency within their service area

Service area management teams

Contribute to delivery of the corporate efficiency programme

Responsible for delivery of the efficiency programme in service areas

Oversight of delivery of efficiency projects in service areas

Service unit managers

Responsible for integrating efficiency into service planning

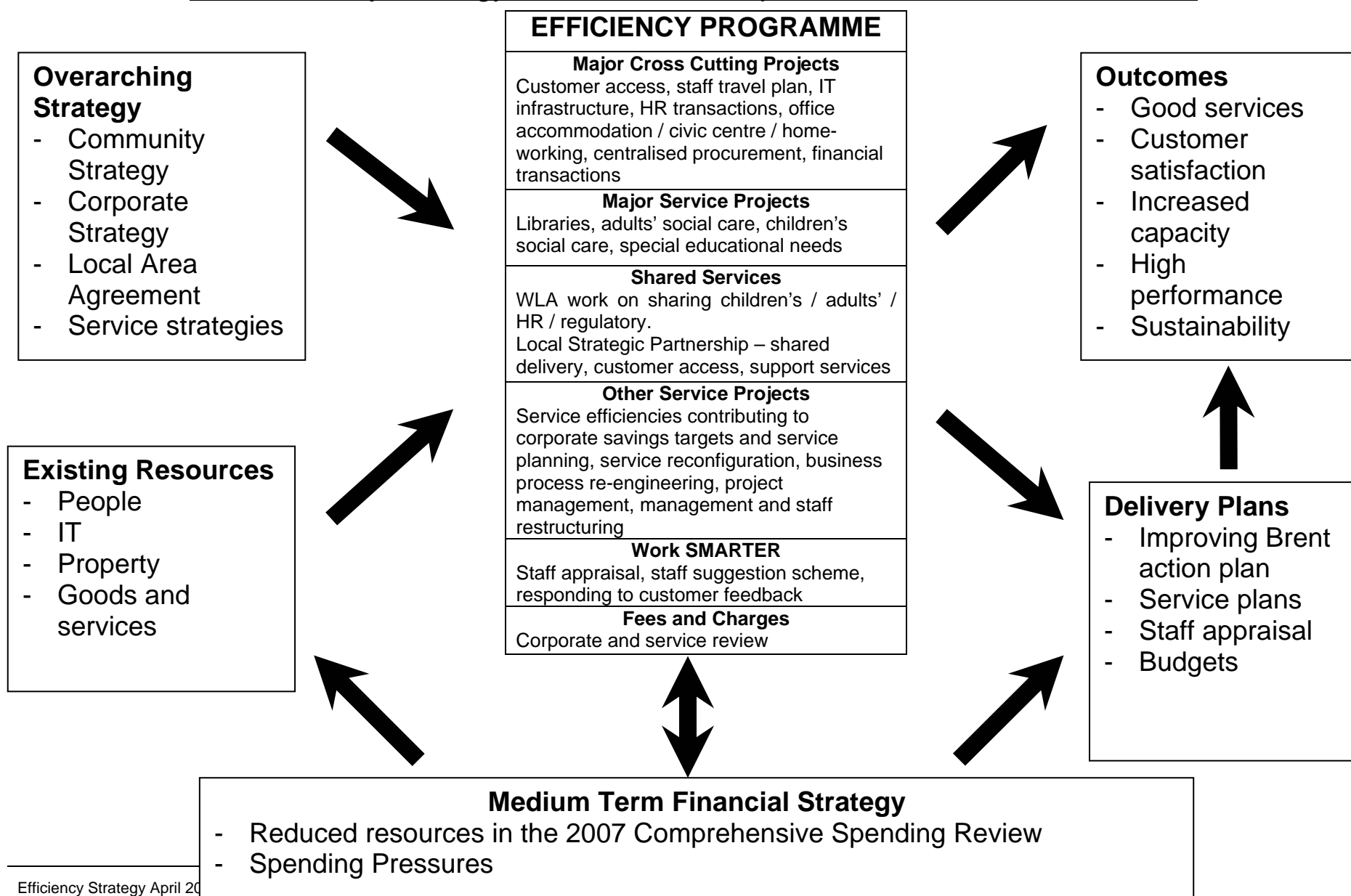
5. Efficiency as part of the overall corporate performance management framework

The efficiency strategy and programme are a crucial element of the council's overall performance framework (see Annex A).

They cannot be divorced from that framework. The corporate strategy, the improving Brent action plan, service planning, monitoring of hot-spots, the vital signs process, the corporate complaints process, and budget planning and monitoring are all part of the process aimed at delivering more efficient and effective services for Brent residents.

As part of the process for taking forward the efficiency strategy, the Efficiency Board will be responsible for ensuring efficiency is an integral part of the council's overall performance management framework.

The Efficiency Strategy as Part of the Corporate Performance Framework



Proposed revised terms of reference for the Efficiency Board

Membership

- Director of Finance and Corporate Resources (Chair)
- Deputy Director of Finance and Corporate Resources
- Senior representative from each service area
- A senior representative from each of the following areas: HR, IT, PRU, procurement, and property

Terms of reference

- To develop a corporate efficiency strategy;
- To establish and monitor a co-ordinated programme for the delivery of the corporate efficiency strategy;
- To ensure there is an effective a communication strategy which will encourage collective buy-in to the efficiency strategy and its aims;
- To ensure the efficiency strategy and programme are an integral part of the council's overall performance management framework;
- To work with other groups within Brent to deliver invest to save initiatives, cross cutting projects, and shared services;
- To work with Brent's partners to find innovative ways of delivering services;
- To establish and maintain links with related groups within Brent, including the Improving Brent Board;
- To consider what external help and support might be required from other agencies, including the Centre for Procurement Excellence for London, the West London Alliance, and the Improvement and Development Agency;
- To ensure there is a robust process for the identification and calculation of efficiency gains;
- To monitor delivery of efficiency across the council;
- To provide guidance to council services on monitoring and managing efficiency;
- To ensure that Brent meets the requirements of government and other external agencies in relation to efficiency>