

2.0 LTCCP culture

2.1 What does the right culture for long-term planning look like?

There can be few hard and fast rules regarding organisational culture, but the following characteristics were common in those local authorities that ran good processes:

- the LTCCP was approached from the point of view of organisational success and good business practice, rather than being approached as a compliance exercise
- elected members valued the process, and also were involved at all the major steps of the process, not just at the end
- the focus was on improving wellbeing (or making people's lives better)
- there was an acceptance that the status quo was not inviolate i.e. questions such as "why is this in the LTCCP?", "how did you decide that?" and so on were asked without anyone feeling threatened
- the Chief Executive and all senior management were actively involved, and seen to be actively involved in the process;
- LTCCP teams were drawn from a variety of disciplines or areas of the organisation
- the LTCCP was seen as part of the core business of the organisation rather than an interruption to the real business of the local authority
- contributions to the LTCCP formed a key part of the performance agreements of individual staff
- a willingness to use both the 2004 and 2006 processes as learning i.e. doing the best possible job while recognising that there would be opportunities for further improvement in 2009.

2.2 LTCCP readiness

"Remember, a well planned project will take only twice as long, whereas a poorly planned one will take three times as long."

In keeping with the notion of the LTCCP as a process of continuous learning, one of the first steps in the long-term planning process should be an evaluation of the current organisational readiness for the process. An organisation that is ready to begin long-term planning will probably have:

- a good idea of the likely issues of importance during the process, both in terms of the issues that are likely to be controversial and those that are non-negotiable
- a process that constantly monitors the robustness of the forecasting assumptions against the events as they evolve
- an up to date base of underpinning information
- a set of information systems that are delivering the information necessary to govern and manage your affairs
- a well developed programme of communication and engagement with the community
- a commitment from all business units within the council.

To help you assess how ready your local authority is to begin long-term planning we have prepared a health check of your local authority's readiness for the process (see Tool A on page 10). To get the maximum value from the health check:

- the questions need to be answered honestly (the old mantra of free, frank and fearless applies here)
- the results should be shared with management and with elected members
- the answers cannot just focus on the readiness of your local authority but focus on what action needs to be taken, by whom and by when.

2.3 Education

Anecdotal evidence from the 2006 LTCCP process suggests that some local authorities did not see the value of the LTCCP process. Some labelled the LTCCP as a distraction from the real business of the local authority.

The LTCCP should form an important part of both the briefing that the elected members receive at their first meeting, with regard to their roles and responsibilities, and of the induction process for new staff. The induction message needs to:

- briefly explain what the LTCCP is
- avoid the jargon of the Act where possible
- emphasise that long-term planning is good for both the local authority and the local community rather than a legal requirement
- emphasise the importance of the process to the individual. For an elected member, the communication should talk about the LTCCP as a commitment to the community, and how the LTCCP will play a major part in the community's assessment of the performance of elected members. With staff members explain that the LTCCP is the tool that explains how what they do makes a difference, and the thing that their performance agreement links back to).

Existing staff are likely to need periodic booster shots to whatever education they have been given regarding the LTCCP.

Things to remember: Long-term planning culture

- 1. Those that produced the best LTCCPs in 2006 were those that approached the LTCCP as more than an exercise in compliance, and as a team effort of genuine value**
- 2. Early assessment of the organisation's readiness for the long-term planning process is valuable. Areas to focus on are the likely issues, the readiness of systems, the availability of resources and the state of the governance processes. To have value the assessment needs to be conducted freely and frankly basis with involvement from elected members and management.**
- 3. Selling the benefits of the LTCCP throughout the organisation and community is a continuous process, not just a once in three year activity.**