

1. Culture and Training

Introduction

Culture and training is not so much a process as a state of mind. Culture represents the perception and outlook of elected members and staff, and in particular the shared belief that the LTCCP is something that is important and that everyone wants to succeed. As such this piece of the Jigsaw very much supports the fourth of the virtues – the continuous plan.

Why are culture and training so important?

Many of the best of the 2006-16 LTCCPs were those where the local authorities concerned had sought to embed the preparation of the LTCCP into their processes. The degree to which your local authority succeeds at this is essentially a culture issue.

What can be done to help create (or reinforce) a good culture for long-term planning?

The following are steps that will aid in building the right culture:

- **leading by example** – leadership must demonstrate that the LTCCP is important
- **select the right project manager and team** – one of the biggest steps in this process is to get 'buy-in' from across the organisation. The selection of a credible project manager and team is important
- **communicate** - as a rule it's better to communicate as frequently as you can, provided there is progress to report with each communication. If necessary give the plan a more interesting name such as 'ABC Tomorrow' or 'ABC 2019'. Communication needs to sell the benefits of the plan, not just for the organisation as a whole, but for the individual parts of your authority, including:
 - increased certainty for the local community (for example predictable rates)
 - increased credibility with the community as the plan provides better explanations of why your local authority does the things it does (and why some requests have to be declined)
 - more effective asset management planning and financial planning
 - introduction of more rigour into decision-making processes (prioritisation)
 - better identification of capacity issues both within and outside the local authority (such as constraints in the civil engineering market) and
 - earlier identification of 'problem issues' (and hopefully resolution).
- **support with training** – the LTCCP should be a key feature of the first meeting of the new council, and the induction materials they receive. New staff (and newly elected members) should receive a similar brief but targeted to making the job relevant to them. In terms of the ongoing training the following may be areas to concentrate upon:
 - project objectives, scope, roles and processes
 - how to training for topics such as levels of service and performance measures, budget processes, policy development standards, decision-making processes.
- **link personal performance with LTCCP work** - show people why the LTCCP is important for their day to day jobs. Staff ownership will not come just by putting LTCCP objectives into a performance agreement.

How does culture and training relate to the legislation?

There is no direct legislative requirement to have a culture and training plan.

Who should prepare the culture and training plan?

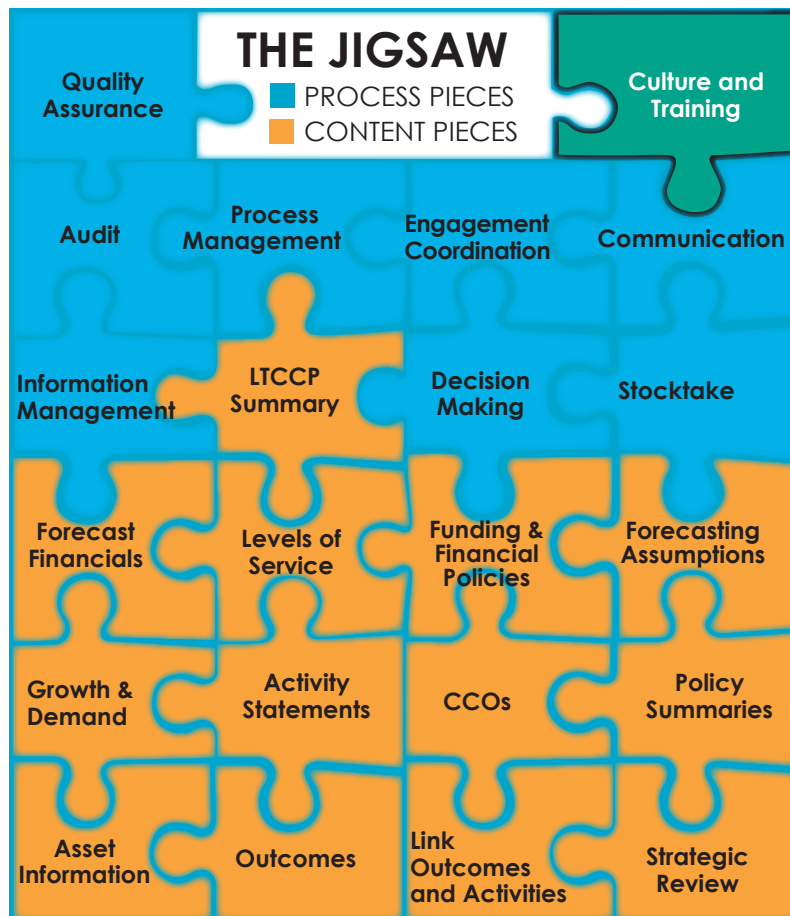
The LTCCP project team should prepare a plan and ensure that the necessary parts are endorsed by senior management and the elected members.

When should the culture and training plan be prepared?

It is important that culture and training be factored into the overall project plan and considered alongside the communication plan and the decision-making processes.

What other processes are linked with culture and training?

Culture and training underpins a successful LTCCP, and as such is linked to all the process and content of a good LTCCP.



What were the culture and training weaknesses apparent in the 2006 LTCCPs?

The LTCCP was disconnected from the daily business of the local authority. Some appeared to see the LTCCP as a distraction from core business.

Some local authorities started the process at a time that was more consistent with previous annual plan processes – suggesting the LTCCP was viewed as no different from an annual plan.

There was wide variation in the level of involvement of elected members. In some cases this was a reflection of staff management of the process, in other cases this was a reflection of elected members 'not wanting to know'.

In some local authorities there were issues securing members' and senior management ownership of the plan.

What Good Practice Information is Available?

Culture is something that is highly local authority specific – and thus it is not surprising that there is little in the way of good practice.