

TITLE OF REPORT: CORPORATE OBJECTIVES FOR 2016 TO 2021

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR FINANCE, POLICY & GOVERNANCE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report recommends revised Corporate Objectives for 2016 to 2021 to guide and inform the 2016/17 Corporate Business Planning Process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet confirms, following due discussion, that it shall recommend to Full Council that the authority adopts revised Corporate Objectives for 2016 to 2021 as follows;

- 1. To work with our partners to provide a clean and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported;**
- 2. To promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage;**
- 3. To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints.**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To allow Cabinet and Council to review the Corporate Objectives which will guide the corporate business planning process for 2016/17 and for a period of five years.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The option to retain the 2015/16 Priorities, as agreed in September 2013, was considered but discounted.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 5.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. Members will, however, be aware that consultation is an integral part of the corporate business planning process, and consultation on the individual actions and projects planned to support the revised Objectives will be carried out in accordance with the Corporate Business Planning Timetable. Wherever it is available, use has been made of valid opinion research data.

- 5.2 As in previous years, Member workshops will be held and this is in addition to seeking the views of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee, the North Hertfordshire Partnership, parish, town and community councils, panel of residents, statutory partners and business ratepayers views as appropriate

6 FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 19 May 2015.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Before considering the detailed budget position for the authority, the Corporate Business Planning Process requires that the Council's objectives are determined. Budgets must then be allocated to ensure their achievement; this is known as 'policy led' budgeting and enables the authority to best reflect not only services it must deliver by statute, but those over which it has a degree of discretion.

- 7.2 Then Council's budget and its objectives are inextricably linked. There is no point in having a key project that cannot be funded and no point in spending limited resources if they are not achieving the objectives that have been set. This aligns the agreed policy of the Council with the finances which will deliver it. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which informs the Council's budgetary position is also currently under development to ensure policy and budget, especially at times of increasing financial constraint, are aligned.

- 7.3 The previous priorities were agreed by Full Council on 5 September 2013 commencing in 14/15. These were:

- Promoting Sustainable Growth
- Working with our Communities
- Living within Our Means

These will continue to apply throughout 2015/16.

- 7.4 North Hertfordshire District Council published its first 'Corporate Plan' in 2005. This high level strategic document set out the Council's ambitions and aspirations for the district over the 10 years from 2005 to 2015. In recent years this has become known as the Priorities for the District. The plan, or more the activities to deliver the priorities within the plan, has been revised annually in recent years to reflect the changing environment which the Council, as other authorities, has operated in. A number of areas of change are anticipated going forward and it is therefore timely with the expiry of one plan to reconsider the objectives and Corporate Plan for the next five years.

8. ISSUES

- 8.1 North Hertfordshire District Council moved away the production of a formal, printed Corporate Plan document some time ago, but following discussion with the Policy Portfolio Holder it has been agreed that we return to the development of a similar, streamlined policy document; this will establish what the Council will deliver, not only directly but in partnership and through other service arrangements. This will not be published in hard copy, but once agreed, provided for download from the Council's website. This document is currently in draft and will be submitted to the next meeting of Cabinet.

8.2 There are obviously areas of the existing three priorities which still remain important to future delivery by the Council; the development and adoption of the Local Plan, providing areas for sustainable growth in the district, ensuring we deliver schemes whilst still balancing budgets, and more notably, continuing to work with our local communities, be they communities of residents or businesses.

8.3 However, the Council also needs to reflect more recent changes in;

- Legislation, which may require changes to existing services, or new provision to deliver
- Capacity, since the authority has reduced headcount over recent years
- Financial constraints – there is still a degree of uncertainty in regard to the availability of New Homes Bonus, Revenue Support Grant, district retention of their proportion of National Non-domestic Rate collection (still subject to review)
- Population – what we know for certainty is that any individual or population ages, but it is the degree to which our older population will increase as a proportion of the overall district population which we must factor in. Over the age of 70, it is increasingly likely that an individual will have one or more health needs, over the age of 80 that can become more complex especially with potential for sensory and mental (dementia, Alzheimer) deterioration too. But for many of these older people there is a wish to remain living independently at home which requires health, social care and Council service providers to consider how this support can be provided together. Equally, patterns and location of deprivation have changed since the development of the last Corporate Plan, so we should respond accordingly to these.

8.4 Having considered all of these additional factors, the three objectives proposed to inform the Council's Corporate Budget Setting 2016/21 are;

- 1. To work with our partners to provide a clean and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported**
- 2. To promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage**
- 3. To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints.**

8.5 Following discussion and agreement at Cabinet, these Objectives will be presented to Council to inform the Corporate Budget setting process, through late 2015, ready for delivery from the new financial year 1st April 2016. The Corporate Plan will identify key priority areas and the key projects that will deliver against these objectives and appropriate measures of success. The Corporate Plan will be for a five year period to align with the Medium Term Financial Strategy rather than ten years as previously.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference include the power, "to advise the Council in the formulation of those policies within the Council's terms of reference" and the power to make recommendations regarding that advice.

9.2 Full Council's terms of reference include "approving or adopting the policy framework...Priorities for the District."

9.3 The corporate objectives agreed for 2016/21 onward will provide high level reference points that will assist the Council making clear and effective decisions.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The projects to support the agreed Priorities for 2016/21 will be resourced through the corporate business planning process cycle for 2016/21. A number of these projects are likely to form part of the Council's capital programme for 2016/17, and for those which will need to be delivered over a longer period, across subsequent years.

10.2 It is clear that the Council will continue to face difficult spending decisions in view of the current economic climate and the continuing reduction in government support in future years and that the availability of funding will impact on the projects that can be undertaken. Individual projects will be costed to ensure that the overall programme of activity corporately can be achieved within the agreed budget assigned.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Agreeing the Council's priorities for 16/21 commences the Council's business planning processes for the next financial year. A robust Corporate Business Planning process is key to managing the Council's Top Risk of Managing the Council's Finances.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give **due regard** to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2 By developing and reporting delivery against the Corporate Plan and priorities which inform the delivery of individual projects, this provides a means to monitor whether the Council are meeting the stated outcomes of its priorities, its targets or delivering accessible and appropriate services to the community to meet different people's needs. This helps the Council to fulfil a number of obligations arising from the Public Sector Equality Duty. Where individual projects exceed a value of £50k, or affect two or more wards (a 'key decision') it is a requirement that a full equality analysis is completed, to ensure that all aspects of a project ensure best compliance with equalities requirements in place at such time.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at Paragraph 13.

13.2 Where any key projects proposed as part of the Corporate Plan or priorities referred to in this report relate to the award of a public service contract, 'social value' will be

captured and reported in accordance with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no additional human resource implications arising from this report. The resources needed to deliver projects are considered through the Corporate Business Planning process.

15. CONTACT OFFICERS

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16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1 The 2011 Census and the District Wide Survey.