

TITLE OF REPORT: CORPORATE OBJECTIVES FOR 2017-2021

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR FINANCE, POLICY & GOVERNANCE
EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR JULIAN CUNNINGHAM

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report recommends Corporate Objectives for 2017/21 to guide and inform the 2017/18 Corporate Business Planning Process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet recommends to Full Council the continuation of the Corporate Objectives below for 2017 to 2021;

- 1. To work with our partners to provide an attractive 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 consider the Corporate Objectives which will guide the corporate business planning process for 2017/18 through to 2021.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The option to change the 2016/17 Objectives, originally adopted in June 2015, was considered but discounted, since many of the aspects which informed their adoption in 2015 remain valid for 2016 and for the foreseeable future.

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 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 and, where applicable, outcomes of the recently completed Districtwide Survey.

- 5.2 As in previous years, Member workshops will be held in regard to corporate business planning proposals, in addition to seeking the views of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee, the North Hertfordshire Partnership (LSP), 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 22nd February 2016.

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 The 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 (including staff 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) five year plan which informs the Council's budgetary position is reviewed annually as part of the corporate business planning process, to ensure policy and budget, especially at times of increasing financial constraint, are properly aligned.

- 7.3 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. The Corporate Plan, or more the activities to deliver the priorities within the plan, is revised annually to reflect the changing environment which the Council, as other local authorities, has operated in. A number of areas of significant, mainly financial, change are anticipated going forward and it is therefore timely to reconsider whether the objectives agreed in 2015 should still apply.

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 Executive Member for Policy, Transport and Green Issues, it was agreed that the Council should return to the development of a more streamlined policy document; this will establish what the Council will deliver, not only directly but in partnership and through other service arrangements. This is not published in hard copy, but once agreed, provided for download from the Council's website. The Corporate Plan describes in narrative below each of the high level objectives what individual activities will be completed through the next and subsequent years to ensure those objectives are met.

- 8.2 There are obviously areas of work which still remain important to future delivery by the Council, and indeed some have increased in their significance since the last review in 2015; for example, the Local Plan, the way in which the Council will control of the way in which future development for the district may happen, will cover the period to 2031, set targets for new homes, employment and retail development, and identify areas of land where these developments should be built. It will also consider

what infrastructure is needed to support development. The Local Plan's policies will be used for making decisions on planning applications. Failure to deliver an agreed Local Plan would directly impact the Council's budget position in regard to receipt of New Homes Bonus.

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 consultation and further review)
- Population – what we know for certain 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, Alzheimers) 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, with three areas of Letchworth now identified as being in multiple deprivation, 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 2017/21 therefore remain;

- 1. To work with our partners to provide an attractive 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 2016, ready for delivery from the new financial year 1st April 2017. The Corporate Plan will action plan identify key priority areas and the key projects that will deliver against these objectives and include appropriate measures of success.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference include at 5.6.34 the power, by recommendation "to advise the Council in the formulation of those policies within the Council's terms of reference".

9.2 Full Council's terms of reference provide "approving or adopting the policy framework which at 4.2.1 (f) include "Priorities/ Objectives for the District."

- 9.3 The corporate objectives agreed for 2017/21 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 2017/21 will be resourced through the corporate business planning process cycle for 2017/21. A number of these projects are likely to form part of the Council's capital programme for 2017/18, 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 objectives for 2017/21 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 and addressed 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.
16.2 ONS Indices of Multiple Deprivation published September 2015
16.3 Corporate Plan 2016/21 and background reports.