

**COUNCIL
21 NOVEMBER 2019**

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL PLAN 2020 - 2025 AND COUNCIL OBJECTIVES FOR 2020-2025

REPORT OF THE: POLICY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING / PROSPER AND PROTECT / RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report proposes a refreshed Council Plan for adoption.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Full Council reviews and approves the draft complete Council Plan; which provides a summary of objectives and of activity to support the progression of the following Council Objectives:

- Be a more welcoming and inclusive **council**,
- Build thriving and resilient **communities**,
- Respond to challenges to the **environment**,
- Enable an enterprising and co-operative **economy**,
- Support the delivery of good quality and affordable **homes**.

2.2 That Full Council adopts the following document-

- Appendix A - Council Plan 2020-2025, including Proposed Actions and Achievements of the Council in 2018/19.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Council plan is a key element of the corporate business planning process, as a high level strategic document it sets out the Council's priorities for the next year. As an overarching policy framework document it guides and influences the use of Council resources; providing a focus for activities, plans and services the Council provide.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. The new administration has considered and proposed some draft Objectives, which have been reviewed and approved by Cabinet with further amendment. This follows Overview and Scrutiny Committee consideration of 16 July 2019. Executive Members have now considered the proposed priorities with the Senior Leadership team. A Member workshop took place on 18 September 2019 to consult and agree on the proposed actions for each of the objective priority areas. The final draft of the Council Plan is recommended to Full Council for adoption.

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 27 June 2019.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 The Corporate Business planning process dictates the Council's high level objectives are determined alongside consideration of budget position (Medium Term Financial Strategy) of the authority. At the meeting of the 30 July 2019, Cabinet agreed to amend the Council's objectives.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The Council Plan attached as Appendix A provides a basic overview of objectives. The finalised draft of the Plan will need to identify the actions the Council will carry out to ensure the Council Plan is being delivered. Budgets must then be allocated to enable 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.

8.2 The Council Plan therefore needs to reflect any recent changes in:

- Legislation, which may require changes to existing services, or delivery of new services.
- Capacity, since the authority has reduced headcount over recent years whilst statutory requirements placed on the authority have continued to rise.
- Financial constraints – work on the future funding of Local Authorities through a Fair Funding Formula and 75% retention of Business rates has not progressed in line with the original timetable. Alongside the delay to Central Government carrying out a 4 year Spending Review, this means that there is significant uncertainty over funding over the medium term. This is covered in more detail in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, but means that the Council has to prudently plan what it can

afford to deliver until there is greater certainty. The emphasis for Council spend remains the day to day service delivery. Firstly of those which the Council has a statutory duty to provide and secondly those that are determined as a Council priority to be funded.

- Population – the need to plan for an ageing population which requires health, social care and Council service providers to consider how necessary support can be provided together.
- Patterns and location of deprivation have changed in the past five years (evidenced by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) so we should ensure that our services, and how they may be delivered, respond accordingly to these; in times of increased financial constraint it is all the more important that limited resources, both those of the Council and its partner agencies working in the local community, are directed to areas of greater need.

The Council Plan will therefore need to highlight key issues and aims of the district. The Plans will need to set out the context in which the local authority operates, its ambitions and the links to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The format of the Plan has been reviewed to provide an easy summary of Objectives. The priorities once finalised shall provide the key information. The Council Plan will inform the subsequent agreement of the Service Plan prepared by Senior Management Team and subsequent Directorate Action Plans.

8.3 Having liaised with the administration prior to finalising the report the following Council Objectives for 2020-2025 are proposed:

- Be a more welcoming and inclusive **council**,
- Build a thriving and resilient **communities**,
- Respond to challenges to the **environment**,
- Enable an enterprising and co-operative **economy**,
- Support the delivery of good quality and affordable **homes**.

8.4 Subject to Cabinet’s consideration, the Council Plan and proposed actions was further developed at the member workshop, and will be referred to Council for adoption on 21 November 2019. All projects included in the Council Plan should be subject to the provision of sound business cases with specific targets established as they are introduced. The Council’s performance against these will be monitored and reported on a regular basis.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Cabinet’s terms of reference include at 5.6.35 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.” The Council Plan 2020-2025 at Appendix A represents the objectives and priority areas of work.

9.3 The council objectives agreed for 2020-2025 onward will provide high level reference points that will assist the Council making clear and effective decisions.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 A number of the proposed actions detailed in Appendix B will require additional resource and costs to achieve. As part of the budget planning process it will be necessary to determine the ways that the actions can be achieved and the costs involved, There is likely to be a need to prioritise the actions, in terms of the extent to which they can be delivered and the timing of delivery, to ensure that the overall programme is affordable within the resources that the Council has available. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set a target for the delivery of net savings of £300k for 2020/21 (and a cumulative £900k per year by 2023/24), As this is a net target, this does allow for additional costs relating to new priorities but does require that these will increase the gross savings (efficiencies, income generation or service changes) that need to be delivered. As negative Revenue Support Grant will not be applied in 2020/21 this increases the funding available in that year. However it is still assumed that there will be a similar reduction in funding in the years thereafter. The forecast position in later years has been made worse by greater clarity over the expected withdrawal of New Homes Bonus funding.
- 10.2 The Council will continue to face difficult spending decisions in view of the current economic climate and the expected continuing reduction in government support in future years. The availability of funding will impact on the services that can be delivered. Individual projects will be costed to enable decisions to be made on the overall programme of activity that the Council can deliver.
- 10.3 The Council received significant capital funding from the housing stock transfer to settle (formerly North Herts Homes) (set-aside receipts). It has supplemented this with the receipts from the sale of surplus land and buildings (capital receipts). The strategy adopted by the Council has been to concentrate capital funding on those schemes that reduce revenue costs or generate income. Over the next five years it is forecast that the set-aside receipts will all be used, and therefore capital funding will have to come from capital receipts or borrowing. The availability of assets that can be sold to generate capital receipts is also reducing. It is therefore important that any agreed capital projects reflect corporate priorities, to ensure effective use of diminishing capital resources particularly in view of the fact that capital spend is also required to maintain existing service provision.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The adoption of the Council Plan and within it the Council's Objectives for 2020 - 2025 is a significant part of the Council's Business Planning processes for the next financial year. A robust Corporate Business Planning process that links the Council Plan with the Medium Term Financing Plan is key to managing the Council's identified Corporate 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 their 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 In setting its Council Plan Objectives, the council is seeking to address equality implications in the services it provides and through the remainder of the Corporate Business Planning Process will carry out Equalities Impact Assessments for those Efficiency or Investment options that are taken forward.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no additional human resource requirements arising from this report other than the capacity issue raised at paragraph 8.4. The resources needed to deliver services are considered and addressed through the Corporate Business Planning process. Once these objectives are agreed for retention, then these will be cascaded to staff with several reminders via Insight, the SCF and the intranet.

15. APPENDICES

Appendix A draft Council Plan 2020-2025, including Proposed actions and achievements of the Council in 2018/19.

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 None.