

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 FEBRUARY 2021

Report Reference for this Committee: A.3

Key Decision Required:	NO	In the Forward Plan:	NO
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CABINET

29 JANUARY 2021

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

A.6 PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR 2021/22 AND MONITORING DELIVERY OF THOSE ACTIONS

(Report prepared by Keith Simmons and Lisa Hastings)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To invite Cabinet to determine its provisional key priority actions for 2021/22 and the means by which performance against the priorities will be monitored and reported on in that year. Cabinet is further invited to approve that consultation on these key priority actions and the performance monitoring proposals be undertaken with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The outcome of the consultation would then be reported to Cabinet on 19 March 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council approved a Corporate Plan for 2020/24 and this established its strategic direction for those four years. That strategic direction itself seeks to reflect the issues that matter most to local people, the national requirements from Government and the challenges that face the District over that time period. The Corporate Plan was adopted unanimously at the Council meeting on 21 January 2020 (Minute 78 refers).

The themes of the 2020/24 Corporate Plan are:

- Delivering High Quality Services
- Building Sustainable Communities for the Future
- Strong Finance and Governance
- Community Leadership through Partnerships
- A Growing and Inclusive Economy

Cabinet establishes each year its priority actions to deliver against the Corporate Plan and thereby ensure that the ambition of that Plan is central to its work. The priority actions do not cover every separate element of the ambition of the four year Corporate Plan; nor are they intended to indicate that other projects, schemes or activities are not being pursued. They are though intended to reflect imperatives across the Council and for the District and actions that it is right to focus on in this year.

2020 was an exceptional year not only nationally but globally. In Tending our Community Leadership role has never been more important. Working with our members we took on additional responsibilities in supporting our residents and businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst Tendring District Council did not formally report on its performance against priorities during 2020, much was achieved including but not limited to:

- The roll out of numerous grants in excess of £38million to businesses
- The adoption of a local Back to Business Agenda which not only supports businesses to survive but preparing to help them flourish.
- An Economic Growth Strategy focusing on recovery for the future.
- Allocation of monies from the Tendring Community Fund to Ward Councillors to provide grants to local organisations to enable them to respond to the pandemic locally.
- Business continuity arrangements immediately being invoked to ensure Council services remained in place where they were able to do so and for those services impacted by the various lockdowns, staff were redeployed to work with different teams in response to the pandemic, such as the Community Hub.
- Adoption of a Climate Change Action Plan to meet the Council's aspirations towards the Climate Emergency.
- Section 1 of the Local Plan was found sound by the Planning Inspectorate establishing the 5 year housing supply of 550 dwellings per annum, a North Essex vision and the Garden Community at Tendring Colchester Borders
- A balanced budget and revised governance arrangements to ensure democratic decision making continued throughout.
- Getting ready to build or acquire new council homes. We adopted a Corporate Housing Strategy to deliver homes to meet the needs of local people, making the best use of and improving existing housing and supporting people in their homes and communities. Separate strategies and policies were introduced to assist reducing homeless and rough sleeping in the district, providing financial assistance policies for private sector housing and acquiring land and buildings to increase council housing stock.

All of these provide a great foundation on which the Council will continue to deliver its priorities on the remaining years of the Corporate Plan. The 2021/22 actions will, of themselves, underpin further actions in 2022/23. As such, it is appropriate to invest time and energy to delivering them.

A provisional list has been prepared following consultation with individual Portfolio Holders and the Leader of the Council and this is set out at Appendix A to this report.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- (a) That the provisional key priority actions for 2021/22, as set out at Appendix A to this report, be considered and, if appropriate, adopted by Cabinet**
- (b) That the means by which performance against the priorities will be monitored and reported on in that year be determined on the basis set out in Appendix B to this report.**
- (c) That consultation on the adopted provisional key priority actions referred to in (a) above and the performance monitoring proposals referred to in (b) above be undertaken with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in February 2020.**

(d) That the outcome of the consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees referred to in (c) above be reported to Cabinet on 19 March 2021 in order that Cabinet can formally adopt its finalised key priority actions for 2021/22.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The key actions set out at Appendix A seeks to deliver in the year 2021/22 on the ambitions of the four year Corporate Plan. Other actions in 2021/22 will also be undertaken as the Council applies the strategic direction of the Corporate Plan to its work overall. In addition, Cabinet will establish a further set of key actions for 2022/23 to further advance achievements against the Corporate Plan.

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

The provisional key actions set out at Appendix A includes the delivery of the financial savings target within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In considering all matters it is vital that the balance of resources can be accommodated by this Council and that it does not put further strain on the Council being able to balance its budget each year.

A key risk as Cabinet prepares its key actions for 2021/22 is the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed to address the pandemic. These risks will need to be assessed in a dynamic way as infection and hospitalisation rates change and the restrictions are adjusted over time. There may yet be further work for the Council to achieve, such as new grant schemes, as there has been in 2020/21 and this too will impact on the capacity of the Council to achieve the Cabinet's adopted key actions.

LEGAL

The legal implications of individual actions will be assessed when they are brought forward for formal decisions to be made.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.

In preparing this report, due regard has been given to the likely effect of the exercise of the Council's functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. In addition, due consideration has been given to the District Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The proposals set out in this report have been anchored in the findings from the last Peer Challenge Review of the Council.

In 2018, through the Local Government Association, the Council benefitted from a 'Peer Challenge Review'. Peer Challenges provide a robust and effective improvement tool managed and delivered by the local government sector, for the sector. Peers are at the heart of the peer challenge process and provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge. The Review considered five key strands that all Peer Challenges cover:-

- Understanding of the local place and priority setting
- Leadership of place
- Financial planning and viability
- Organisational leadership and governance
- Capacity to deliver

Following the Peer Challenge Review, the Council was recommended to:

- Improve how we tell the story of what we are achieving
- Devise an approach to programme management and project delivery
- Bring the four strands of transformation – customers, property, digital and people – together
- Review how we deal with underspends, savings and financial risk and look at the phasing of our capital programme
- Add housing as a strand to our community leadership focus alongside education, health and community safety
- Be confident in our plans for Jaywick

In respect of programme management and project delivery the following detailed recommendations were identified to strengthen governance:

- Be clear from outset of projects re desired outputs / outcomes.
- Establish a clear decision making process re priorities / projects and ensure it is understood by members, staff and partners.
- Develop a TDC approach to Project Governance – e.g. business cases, PID, risk, dependencies, budget, tolerances, milestones, performance management.
- Set out clear “golden thread” to members / staff / partners linking Corporate Plan, annual priorities, budgets, performance monitoring.
- Quarterly Performance report should cover all Cabinet priorities and projects.
- Strengthen role of Members on Performance Management - ensure new O+S arrangements add value and align strongly with key priorities and projects.

Building on the changes made already since the Peer Challenge Review, the proposals now submitted seek to:

- Ensure that success measures and key milestones for delivery are built into the project/priority before it is/they are approved so that implications for resource allocation and other consequences can be factored in.

- Align the Cabinet’s Annual Priority Actions with the Budget approval process and thereby to clarify decision making. Likewise the six monthly review provides the opportunity to reset projects/priorities to take account of events.
- Strengthen further project governance by giving greater clarity as to the measures of success and the key milestones in delivery of the Cabinet’s priority actions.
- Link back the annual priority actions are to at least one Corporate Plan Priority Theme. The golden thread approach is further enhanced through the alignment with the budget timetable to ensure there is clarity that both have been developed to the same aim around achieving the Corporate Plan.
- Cover all Cabinet approved Priority Actions in the Quarterly reporting to Portfolio Holders and then publishing that data.
- Enhancing the role of Members in Performance Management so that OSCs will be free to review and scrutinise individual matters through bringing forward those matters in a more timely way following publication (one month after the end of the quarter concerned). And otherwise ensuring that review items approved for the OSC work programme include relevant performance data.
- Requiring OSC’s, in submitting their work programmes each year to Council, how the items in the work programme address the Corporate Plan ambitions.

CURRENT POSITION

For the reasons set out here it is opportune to revisit the development of Priority Actions on an annual basis within the ambition of the Corporate Plan.

The Cabinet priorities for 2019/20 were, for obvious reasons, delayed due to the ‘all-out’ elections to the Council in May that year and then by the postponed elections for St Osyth Ward. It was also necessary to refresh the Corporate Plan and adopt a new Plan for 2020-24. The impact then of the Covid-19 Pandemic from early 2020 meant there was further disruption to the implementation of new performance management arrangements to enhance policies, procedures and practices at the Council to take further the recommendations from the 2018 LGA Peer Challenge Review recommendations.

In addition, there is a recognised need for performance data on the Cabinet’s key annual priority actions to be provided in a timely way to the relevant Portfolio Holders and then on to the ‘critical friend’ in the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None

APPENDICES

A – Provisional Key Actions for 2021/22 in support of the Corporate Plan themes
 B - Monitoring Delivery of the Corporate Plan Priority Themes and the Cabinet’s Annual Key Priority Actions