

CABINET

20 DECEMBER 2024

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

A.3 DELIVERING AGAINST THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN 2024-28 – INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR HIGHLIGHT PRIORITIES FOR 2025/26

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Council's strategic direction is set out in its Corporate Plan which is a fundamental element of the Council's Policy Framework. The Corporate Plan ('Our Vision') was adopted unanimously by Council on 28 November 2023 (Minute 76 refers) and covers the period 2024-28 (and the infographic of it is reproduced at Appendix A to this report). A key element of delivering against the adopted Corporate Plan is through annual highlight priority actions approved by the Cabinet. The 2025/26 initial proposals for highlight priorities are set out at Appendix B to this report. Through this report, Cabinet is invited to adopt these for consultation purposes before finalising its highlight priorities for 2025/26; which will involve consideration of the outcome of the consultation undertaken.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28 ('Our Vision') sets out the Council's strategic direction. 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 the time period of the Plan. The national requirements from Government are themselves changing following the UK Parliamentary General Election held earlier this year.

The themes of the 2024-28 Corporate Plan ('Our Vision') are:

- Pride in our Area and Services to Residents
- Raising Aspirations and Creating Opportunities
- Championing our Local Environment
- Working with Partners to Improve Quality of Life
- Promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer
- Financial Sustainability and Openness

The infographic for the Corporate Plan ('Our Vision') itself is set out at Appendix A to this report. It identifies that across all its Corporate Plan Themes the Council will look to listen to the residents and businesses in the District and undertake Community Leadership to deliver and enable improvements for those residents and businesses.

Cabinet establishes each year its highlight priority actions to deliver against the Corporate Plan and thereby ensure that the ambition of that Plan is central to its work. The highlight 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 2025/26.

At Appendix B are the initial thoughts for the highlight priorities for 2025/26 and through this

report it is hoped that they can be adopted to support an engagement with residents, businesses and partners on those priorities. The outcome of that consultation will be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet when finalised proposals will be considered having regard for the outcome of the consultation.

In developing highlight proposals, reviewing the outcome of consultation and, finally approving the highlight priorities for 2025/26, there will need to be a robust challenge to all proposals to ensure that the capacity to deliver the priority is in place or will be in place and that the highlight priorities do not undermine the key commitment of the Council to deliver sustainable budgets.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that:

- (a) Cabinet approves the initial highlight priorities for 2025/26, as set out at Appendix B to this report, for consultation;**
- (b) all Councillors, other partners and the public be invited to consider the initial priorities referred to in (a) above; and**
- (c) the outcome of the consultation referred to in (b) above be reported to Cabinet on 21 February 2025 in order that Cabinet can formally adopt its finalised highlight priority actions for 2025/26 with relevant milestones during that year.**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

The rationale for the recommendations above is to set out openly for all concerned the initial proposals for highlight priorities for 2025/26. This supports the openness agenda of the Council and provides an opportunity for engagement with the public, businesses and partners on those initial proposals. Through consultation it is hoped that the views received can help shape the priorities that will finally be adopted (within the reality of the Council's budgetary position).

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

As these are initial proposed highlight priorities the Cabinet has not discounted any alternatives replacing those identified in Appendix B. Likewise, publication of the initial proposed highlight priorities does not automatically mean each item in those priorities will be included with finalised priorities for 2025/26. The option of not publishing initial proposed highlight priorities was assessed and discounted as it did not support the Council's openness agenda and good decision making (through taking account of the views of the residents, businesses and partners).

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The initial highlight priorities set out at Appendix B seeks to deliver in the year 2025/26 on the ambitions of the four year Corporate Plan 2024-28. Other actions in 2025/26 will also be undertaken as the Council applies the strategic direction of the Corporate Plan to its work overall.

The Council's Annual Governance Statement (a statutory document which sits alongside the

Statement of Accounts, inspected by External Audit and follows the CIPFA format) covers the seven principles of Local Code of Governance (for Local Government) and expects adherence with Principle C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

Each Principle has Sub-Principles, and for Principle C these are:

- (a) Having a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation’s purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the organisation’s overall strategy, planning and other decisions
- (b) Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer
- (c) Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available
- (d) Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes
- (e) Managing service users’ expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available.

The Council can choose to have its longer term Plan/Vision at a high level with annual priorities set, with intended outcomes, milestones and performance recorded. Adoption of the Plan is the core of the Council’s Policy Framework.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT (including with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders where the item concerns proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework)

Consultation is intended with all Councillors, other partners and the public to consider the initial priorities and is intended to take place following adoption of initial proposals and, consequently, the outcome of that consultation will be the subject of a subsequent report to Cabinet.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	YES/NO	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Significant effect on two or more wards <input type="checkbox"/> Involves £100,000 expenditure/income <input type="checkbox"/> Is otherwise significant for the service budget
		And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	The highlight priorities are not themselves considered a key decision as each individual highlight priority will be the subject of individual decisions and these may be key decisions by virtue of one or more of the above criteria.

Through highlight priorities, that will be adopted following the intended consultation, it is intended to support delivery against the Council’s adopted Corporate Plan 2024-28. That Corporate Plan decision was a key decision for the Council. While this report (and its recommendations) are not of themselves a Key Decision, particular schemes and actions referenced in the highlight priorities will be such decisions and require the relevant prior notification. The legal implications of individual actions will be assessed when they are brought forward for formal decisions to be made.

The Best Value Duty relates to the statutory requirement for local authorities and other public bodies defined as best value authorities in [Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999](#) (“the 1999 Act”) to “*make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness*”.

YES | **The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:**

Leadership being one of the seven Best Value themes, is described as “*Effective political and administrative leaders who have a clear vision and set of priorities for their area, are key to building local economic growth, social cohesion and a healthy local democracy.*”

Characteristics of a well-functioning authority, includes “*The authority’s corporate plan is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation’s performance to be measured and held to account. The authority’s financial strategy and delivery arrangements are aligned with priorities in the corporate plan, and respond appropriately to local need, including the plans of partners and stakeholders.*”

Indicators of potential failure include “A lack of corporate capacity or capability, resulting in a lack of strategic direction, oversight and sense of accountability. Corporate plan is out of date, unrealistic and unaffordable and/or has too many priorities.”

Through an annual review of its priorities Cabinet is ensuring that it demonstrates the expected standards of a well-function authority for the purposes of achieving its Best Value Duty.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The initial highlight priorities set out at Appendix B 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.

| **The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:**

It is important to highlight the importance of financial sustainability that underpins the delivery of the various priorities and projects across the Council and recognising that financial management and sustainability is a reoccurring expectation throughout the themes and indicators set out in the revised Best Value guidance issued by the Government earlier in the year.

Corporate priorities and objectives should be reflected in the financial plans of the Council, which is achieved via the budget process that runs alongside the development of the highlight priorities set out within this report and should be seen as an on-going process throughout the year rather than just an annual exercise. In practice, this joined up approach needs to be demonstrated via the various financial reports presented during the year, such as the quarterly financial performance reports and any associated use of the Corporate Investment Fund.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

<p>A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;</p>	<p>The Corporate Plan 2024-28 includes the critical theme of “Financial Sustainability and Openness”, and Cabinet intends to pursue this theme in order to secure services and functions for the residents the Council serves. To this end, the initial highlight priorities outline actions that at this stage appear appropriate to support good resources management.</p>
<p>B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and</p>	<p>The development of highlight priorities each year seeks to keep the organisation focussed on measure aimed at securing the intentions of the Council Corporate Plan. These highlight priorities sit between the Council’s Corporate Plan and Individual decisions that will relate to the actions and activities necessary to achieve the intentions for the highlight priorities at Appendix B. As such, this process seeks to add to the governance reassurance of the Council around good decision making and awareness of cross cutting risks.</p>
<p>C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.</p>	<p>Performance against the annual highlight priorities is measured during the year concerned (and beyond) and the experience obtained from that monitoring assists the Council on its continuous improvement journey.</p>

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

The Council has worked at a pace to reach this point with initial highlight priorities for 2025/26 being considered by Cabinet at this meeting. The proposed highlight priorities for 2025/26 will be made available for comment and suggestions for changes by residents, businesses and partners from 2 January 2025 to 13 February 2025 The outcome of this consultation will then be submitted to Cabinet for consideration of the finalised highlight priorities. This is scheduled for the Cabinet meeting on 21 February 2025.

It is an important part of this process that, for each highlight priority action/activity, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely milestones are identified, approved and resources allocated to achieve those milestones. These milestones will be reported to the 21 February 2025 meeting of Cabinet as part of its consideration of the highlight priorities to be adopted for 2025/26.

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

The most significant risk associated with this process is that overall package of highlight priorities for 2025/26 do not match with the issues that matter most to local people the national requirements from Government, the challenges that face the District and the capacity of the organisation to deliver those activities and actions in 2025/26. Through the process of consultation and evaluation of the resource needs associated with each activity and action, prior to the adoption of the finalised highlight priorities, the Councils seeks to address that risk and ensure that the finally adopted priorities do not match the various tests referenced.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

In developing the initial highlight priorities for 2025/26 consideration has been given to the general equality duty set out in S149 of the Equality Act 2010. This requires that the Council (as a public authority), in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Further consideration of equalities implications will be given in respect of each and every decision that will, in due course, be taken in respect of the actions and activities that will form the finalised highlight priority actions. The views of residents, businesses and partners will help to frame that consideration in so far as that related to those with protected characteristics and implications of taking particular decisions on those actions/activities.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

The actions and activities that will, finally, be adopted by the Cabinet as its highlight priorities for 2025/26 will seek (collectively) to secure social, economic and environmental benefits for the District and its residents. More generally, the Council will continue to encourage the creation of job opportunities for local people, support young people into apprenticeships and provide opportunities for local suppliers (and in particular SME businesses) to be presented in the Council's supply chain.

Within the proposed highlight priorities, reference is made to the newly adopted Social Value Policy and how its awareness will be raised and embedded within the organisation and monitor delivery of the expected Themes, Outcomes and Measures.

The Policy sets out how social value can be achieved through procurement ensuring that delivering against Council priorities, through Themes, Outcomes and Measures are relevant and proportionate to the subject matter of the contract and non-discriminatory. Achieving Social Value also requires suppliers to understand and commit to delivering the objectives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050

The consideration of measures to support the Council's net zero by 2050 aim will be a feature of consideration of each of the required decisions involving Cabinet that will be associated with the activities and actions that will form the highlight priorities for 2025/26.

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR 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

Individual highlight priorities set out in Appendix B seek to specifically support anti-crime and disorder measures and, more widely, each action and activities that will form part of the finalised highlight priorities for 2025/26 will, in due course, be considered against the duty under S17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to (within the limits set out in that section) do all

	that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder, misuse of drugs etc., re-offending and serious violence.
Health Inequalities	Individual highlight priorities set out in Appendix B seek to specifically support measures to address and respond to health inequalities.
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	While this is not a matter for this report, subsidy control considerations will be undertaken in respect of any relevant actions/activities finally adopted as Highlight Priorities for 2025/26 (and more generally where relevant)
Area or Ward affected	All Wards

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The development of the Cabinet's annual highlight priorities in support of the Corporate Plan ambition, and the reporting on them, follows the rhythm set out below:

- Initial draft proposals for the Highlight Priorities for the following financial year will be considered at the meeting of Cabinet that also considers the Initial budget for the Council for the same year (in December).
- The initial proposals will be subject to consultation; including Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- The outcome of consultation and finalised proposals for the Annual Highlight Priorities for the following financial year will be considered early in the New Year.
- Following the adoption of the Annual Key Priority Actions, the performance triggers will be built into the performance monitoring system of the Council based on the milestones approved as part of those Priority Actions.
- Officers will report to the relevant Portfolio Holder on delivery of the Priority Actions and Portfolio Holders will determine, by exception, if issues need to be reported to Cabinet throughout the year.
- Each quarter, a summary report on delivery against all of the Cabinet's Annual Highlight Priority Areas for the year will be reported to Portfolio Holders and then published as part of the Council's transparency data. Overview and Scrutiny Committee members may then identify specific key actions where there is performance against relevant milestones that should be subject to further enquiry, and these may then be referred to the next relevant meeting of the Committee.
- A half-yearly report on performance against the Annual Key Priority Actions will be submitted to the relevant Cabinet Meeting (in October). This not only enables the Cabinet to consider the delivery of key actions in that year but also to encourage the start of the process to set key actions for the following financial year.
- The half-yearly report will be available for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to include in their work programmes so as they can consider the likely achievement of the envisaged outcomes envisaged.

The Outturn position on performance against the Cabinet's Annual Highlight Priority for the previous financial year will be timed to be reported to the Cabinet Meeting at which Budget

Outturn for that year will be reported.

In considering the annual highlight priorities for 2025/26, Cabinet has been made aware of the following deliverables across the remaining lifetime of the Corporate Plan 2024-28. These deliverables are in addition to the multi-million pound investment schemes the Council is responsible for that are referenced in Appendix B that will span several of those years:

2025/26:

- Review the Council's arrangements against the Government's Best Value Duty Guidance.
- Undertake a Community Governance Review.
- Look at opportunities for a Beach Festival
- Take forward the implementation of Bio Diversity Net Gain in the District

2026/27:

- Council to implement significant savings.
- Tendring-Colchester Borders Garden Community – Spades in the ground to commence.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

Council on 28 November 2023 (Minute 76) – Adoption of the Corporate Plan

Cabinet on 15 December 2023 (Minute 62) – Adoption of the Draft Highlight Priorities

Cabinet on 12 March 2024 (Minute 101) – Adoption of the Final Highlight Priorities

Record of Executive Decision 14 June 2024 – Adoption of the milestones for the 2024/25 Highlight Priorities

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

APPENDICES

A – Corporate Plan 2024-28 Infographic

B – Initial Highlight Priorities for 2025/26

REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Name	Keith Simmons Hattie Dawson-Dragisic
Job Title	Head of Democratic Service & Elections Performance and Leadership Support Officer
Email	ksimmons@tendringdc.gov.uk hdawson-dragisic@tendringdc.gov.uk