

CABINET

17 MARCH 2025

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

A.2 DELIVERING AGAINST THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN 2024-28 – FINAL 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 (Minutes 76 refers) and covers the period 2024-28 (and 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 Cabinet. The 2025/26 initial proposals for highlight priorities were adopted by Cabinet for consultation purposes on 20 December 2024.

This report summarises the response to that consultation and invites Cabinet to finalise its highlight priorities for 2025/26, giving due consideration to the outcome of the consultation undertaken and the impact of Greater Essex being placed on the Devolution Priority Programme by Government, which includes proposals being developed for local government reorganisation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28 ('Our Vision') sets out its 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 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 Corporate Plan ('Our Vision') itself is set out at Appendix A to this report.

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 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.

The initial proposals were agreed by Cabinet on 20 December 2024 and have been the subject of a consultation exercise, a summary of which is included within the body of the report.

The desire among respondents for local residents to be engaged in the big decisions facing the Council/District was clear. Likewise steps to improve the area through supporting the local economy to grow, providing opportunities for skills development and “place setting” with partner organisations come through in that consultation.

Since the initial priorities were proposed by Cabinet, the Government published its English Devolution White Paper and requested expressions of interest for areas to be included within the Devolution Priority Programme. On Wednesday, 5 February 2025 the Deputy Prime Minister announced that Greater Essex had been accepted onto the programme, which includes developing proposals for Local Government Reorganisation. An Interim Plan is required to be submitted to Government by 21st March 2025 and Full Council will be/have considering/ed this at its meeting on 11th March.

The degree of the impact of both the devolution and local government reorganisation programmes are still unknown but, due to the tight deadlines being imposed and the level of preparation work at a senior level, it is clear that the Council’s resources will be significantly affected for 2025/26. Therefore, in adopting any priorities Cabinet will be mindful that these will be subject to change and reflection throughout the year. It is also right that devolution and local government reorganisation is recognised as a highlight priority for 2025/26 given the potential importance to delivery of services for residents that decision in the parallel processes of devolution and local government reorganisation.

Appendix B sets out the final proposed highlight priority actions for 2025/26. The principal changes in those finalised proposals from the Initial highlight priorities approved by Cabinet for consultation purposes are set out in the outcome of consultation and engagement section of this report.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It recommended that Cabinet:

- a) considers the outcome of consultation on the initial highlight priorities adopted for that purpose at Cabinet’s meeting on 20 December 2024;**
- b) approves the final highlight priorities for 2025/26, as set out at Appendix B to this report; and**
- c) expressly approves the inclusion of a new highlight priority, as set out in Appendix B, in relation to the critically important area of devolution and local government reorganisation in view of their consequential impact on delivery of services to residents of the District.**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

Adopting highlight priority actions allows Council activity to remain focused against Our Vision and provides the framework for the annual performance monitoring system of the Council based on the milestones approved as part of the priority actions.

With Local Government Reorganisation pending it is important to ensure the Council can

respond accordingly, and where possible seek to identify areas where closer working between authorities will serve to be an effective use of resources.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

As part of the public consultation, respondents were invited to make alternative suggestions. Details of these are included elsewhere in this report.

Not adopting highlight priority actions is an alternative option; however, this could risk leading to a lack of focus for Council activity, and would mean there would not be specific measurable objectives for the Council which can in turn be scrutinised and support transparency around the Council's work.

Not addressing the challenges of devolution and local government reorganisation was also considered and rejected in view of the importance of those challenges and the need to be at the forefront of the consideration of those matters in 2025/26.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The 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 inclusion of a highlight priority around devolution and local government reorganisation as proposed, seeks to recognise the importance of decisions in those parallel subject areas to the intentions of the Council as set out in its Corporate Plan.

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)

Following Cabinet's approval of initial proposed highlight priorities for 2025/26, at its 20 December 2024 meeting, consultation on them took place between 2 January 2025 to 13 February 2025 (a six-week period). This consultation involved providing a press release to media outlets, writing to all Town and Parish Councils, placing a webpage on the Council's website and Social Media posts about the consultation. During the consultation 15 responses were received.

A summary of the view expressed in the consultation against each of the Corporate Plan themes is set out here:

Financial Sustainability and Openness Theme:

- To provide residents with the opportunity to provide their thoughts on Council Decisions to support the Council being Financial Sustainable and Transparent.
- To ensure strong communication with residents for example with beach hut owners

Pride in our area and services to residents Theme:

- To improve the Self-Service system on the TDC Website for easier use

- The importance of maintaining the Open Spaces within the District
- For the Waste Service to include collection of other items such as glass.

Raising Aspirations and Creating Opportunities Theme:

- To focus on economic growth in the District, particularly in relation to creating more jobs and encouraging more businesses in the District
- Prioritising deprived areas in terms of housing
- Providing more opportunity for feedback by residents

Championing our Local Environment Theme:

- Implement strategies such as Coastal Protection, Sport and Activity and Climate Change Action Plan using partnership work
- To publicise the strategies and engage with residents to understand their needs

Working with Partners to Improve Quality of Life Theme:

- To have more police presence within the District
- To have clear action plans for the strategies proposed within this theme

Promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer theme:

- To balance strategies/planning with tangible actions being taken towards projects

The feedback above will help shape reinforce intentions behind the highlight priorities to be adopted as set out at Appendix B. The feedback will also be raised with our partners in so far as it is relevant to them (e.g. Police numbers being relevant to the Police and the plans of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner).

Due to the fast pace of the devolution and local government reorganisation agenda, it was not possible to include a reference to that agenda in the consultation process. However, it would be inexcusable not to now address the importance of these parallel matters in the highlight priorities 2025/26.

During the period since the initial highlight priorities were approved at the 20 December 2024 Cabinet meeting, there has been further reflection by Portfolio Holders and Officers in respect of the priorities. The principal changes between the initial and finalised highlight priorities are:

- (a) The initial priorities, included three separate priorities around delivery of the savings plan for 2025/26, develop the savings plan 2026/27 and develop a High-Level Transformation Strategy have been merged because of their co-dependencies into a single priority for delivering and developing savings and efficiency plans for 2025/26 and onwards.
- (b) The initial priority around embed the Social Value Policy has moved out of the highlight priorities as it now represents business as usual. The monitoring of delivery of the expected themes, outcomes and measures under the Social Value Policy will continue to be undertaken.
- (c) The initial highlight priority around the service review of open spaces has been removed as the actions envisaged, and the implementation of those actions, will be undertaken as part of the “business as usual” process.
- (d) The initial highlight priority in respect of the Careline Service has been adjusted to reflect the fact that the Cabinet has now determined the future of that service. As such the finalised priority related to the implementation of that decision.
- (e) The initial highlight proposal in respect of planning and actions for major Government

funded regeneration schemes has been adjusted by the addition of the High Street Accelerator schemes for green space and seed funding in the finalise priority.

- (f) The two priorities in respect of Theme E from the Corporate Plan (Promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer) have been reworked to reflect economic advantages of tourism to the area.

Other minor changes to the text of several of the initial highlight priorities have been changed to reflect the anticipated position in 2025/26.

In addition, the inclusion of a specific highlight priority around devolution and local government reorganisation reflects the imperatives around those parallel processes linked through the Government’s Devolution Priority Scheme.

“Consultation and engagement is a key activity in delivering most of the Cabinet’s highlight priorities for 2025/26 and will be reflected in the Community Engagement Strategy”.

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.

The recommended highlight priorities will support to deliver against the Council’s adopted Corporate Plan 2024-28. That Corporate Plan decision was a Key Decision for the Council. While this report is (and its recommendations are) not of themselves (a) Key Decision(s), particular schemes and actions referenced in the highlight priorities may 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 Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:

The Monitoring Officer's comments have informed the wider content of this report. More generally, Cabinet is reminded that, by virtue of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999, the Council is defined as a Best Value Authority. The statutory guidance to Best Value Authorities makes it clear that it must 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. This means that while authorities are not expected to be perfect, they should prioritise learning and development throughout the organisation and always strive to learn from past mistakes, address under-performance, and avoid continuing in a direction where failure is evident.

Through the development of the proposals set out in this report, and the process of developing and reviewing the Council's Annual Governance Statement, the Council looks to implement a lessons learned approach and the steps taken to address improve performance.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The highlight priorities set out at Appendix B include to carefully plan the Council's budget and taking appropriate action to respond to liabilities and cost pressures. 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.

X 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. The Highlight Priorities also include as a defined action the delivery of the savings in the savings 2025/26, the identification of savings 2026/27 and the associated transformation proposals

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. 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. In this regard and although subject to a separate decision set out elsewhere on the agenda, an initial sum of £0.250m is proposed to be set aside as part of the in-year budget adjustments for 2024/25 to support a number of activities, including the delivery of priorities set out within this report.

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 proposed highlight priorities outline actions that at this stage appears appropriate to support good resource 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 measures aimed at securing the intentions of the Council's Corporate Plan. These highlight priorities sit between the Council's Corporate Plan and the individual decisions that will relate to the actions and activities necessary to achieve the intentions for the highlight priorities</p>

	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.
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.	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.
MILESTONES AND DELIVERY	
<p>The performance reporting at the end of each quarter provides yet further milestones in 2025/26 for these highlight priorities.</p> <p>The consideration of initial highlight priorities by Cabinet on 20 December 2024, when the initial budget for 2025/26 was a significant milestone of itself. Likewise, the delivery of consultation on them between 3 January – 13 February 2025 also represents a significant milestone. This meeting of Cabinet allows priorities for 2025/26 to be adopted in advance of the start of the financial year and in light of the finalised budget.</p>	
ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION	
<p>The most significant risk associated with this process is that the overall package of highlight priorities for 2025/26 do not match 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 and funding to deliver those activities and actions in 2025/26. This risk is considerably mitigated by the process of consultation and evaluation of the resource needs associated with each activity and actions which has taken place prior to the adoption of the finalised highlight priorities. As indicated earlier, the development of the priorities for delivery will require further decisions and these risks should be identified with appropriate mitigation and solutions proposed for consideration.</p>	
EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS	
<p>In developing the proposed final highlight priorities for 2024/25, 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>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.</p>	
SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS	
<p>The actions and activities that deliver against the highlight priorities 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</p>	

people, support young people into apprenticeships and provide opportunities for local suppliers (and in particular SME businesses) to be represented in the Council's supply chain.

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.

<p>Crime and Disorder</p>	<p>Individual highlight priorities set out in Appendix B seek to specifically support anti-crime and disorder measures and, more widely, each action/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.</p>
<p>Health Inequalities</p>	<p>Individual highlight priorities set out in Appendix B seek to specifically support measure to address and respond to health inequalities.</p>
<p>Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)</p>	<p>While this is not a matter for this report, subsidy control considerations will be undertaken in respect of any relevant actions/activities undertaken as highlight priorities 2025/26 (and more generally where relevant).</p>
<p>Area or Ward affected</p>	<p>All Wards</p>

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 the 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 highlight 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 Holder 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 highlight 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 processes to set key actions for the following financial year.
- The half-yearly report will be available for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to include their work programmes so as they can consider the likely achievement of the envisaged outcomes.

The Council is currently at the third bullet point above. Reporting on the priorities in 2025/26 after each quarter and annually will continue as set out above in 2025/26.

The Outturn position on performance against the Cabinet's annual highlight priority actions for the previous financial year will be timed to be reported to the Cabinet Meeting at which the budget Outturn for that year will be reported.

While the above represents the rhythm of the annual development and implementation of measures to secure the longer term intentions of the Corporate Plan, through this report (and more generally), the Council needs to respond to and seek to influence the outcome of the intended parallel processes of devolution and local government reorganisation in Greater Essex. The pace of this has been fast, from publication of the Government's English Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024, the 10 January 2025 deadline for applications to Government to join a fast track Devolution Priority Programme, the 21 March 2025 deadline for interim plans for local government reorganisation, the Autumn 2025 deadline for full plans to be submitted for re-organisation, the May 2026 election of the newly created Mayor for Greater Essex to exercise the devolved powers from Whitehall and new Unitary Councils coming into being on 1 April 2027 or 2028.

To be part of the devolution and local government re-organisation will take resource that would, at other times be addressing highlight priorities directly seeking to achieve the intentions of the Corporate Plan as it was adopted. In submitting the finalised priorities as set out at Appendix B to this report, Cabinet (and Council more widely) will appreciate that the capacity of the organisation to deliver the highlight priorities will be impacted. Equally, collectively we will recognise that not taking part in the processes of devolution and local government reorganisation would be to put one year's priorities above securing the long-term best interests of Tendring and those who live and work here. The creation of the new cross-cutting priority around devolution and local government reorganisation seeks to recognise that the longer-term position of those residents and businesses must be a particular focus as the programmes of devolution and local government reorganisation unfold.

Several of the highlight priorities now submitted themselves identify the need to consider them in the light of local government re-organisation. These will build on the existing collaborative work taking place with colleagues. These include the North Essex Economic

Board and the Essex Procurement Partnership. Shared learning and jointly looking at the same issues can themselves offer solutions which can align delivery so that existing administrative boundaries do not present separate approaches where this is not otherwise beneficial.

The intention of the new priority submitted within Appendix B to this report around devolution and local government reorganisation also seeks to recognise the decision of Council on 21 January 2025 in which it was RESOLVED that Council –

- i) acknowledges work will continue to ensure that the District of Tendring is in the best possible position should devolution and/or local government reorganisation go ahead;*
- ii) mandates the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to seek to ensure that the voice of Tendring (and north Essex more generally) is as strong as possible in any negotiations around devolution and local government reorganisation recognising its opportunities and challenges;*
- iii) recognises that Members and Officers will continue to deliver this Council's best value and other statutory duties for the benefit of its residents, businesses and communities every day that it exists; and*
- iv) welcomes the intention to provide periodically, briefings to Members (and reports to this Council as necessary) as the agenda around devolution and local government reorganisation develops locally."*

Although it is not an executive function, Cabinet also understands the need to support the intended community governance review for Clacton-on-Sea, Holland-on-Sea and Jaywick Sands. This review itself will involve considerable resources over a protracted part of the year ahead and this too will impact of delivery of highlight priorities.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

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

Cabinet on 20 December 2024 (Minute 96 refers) – Delivering against the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28 – Initial Proposals for Highlight Priorities for 2025/26

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

APPENDICES

A – Our Vision (adopted Corporate Plan)

B – Final proposed highlight priority actions for 2025/26

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