

Corporate Plan 2023-2027

Report of the Leader

Recommended:

1. That the Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027, as shown in Annex 1 to the report, be approved.
2. That the Head of Strategy and Innovation, in consultation with the Leader, be authorised to make changes of a minor nature prior to publication.
3. That the Council places on record its thanks to the residents who took part in the deliberative engagement workshops, the outcomes of which have played a key role in informing the priorities of the Corporate Plan.

SUMMARY

- The Council's current Corporate Plan "Growing our Potential" was approved in 2019 and adopted for a four-year period to April 2023. A new recommended Corporate Plan has been developed for the next four years, 2023 to 2027. (Annex)
- The recommended Corporate Plan outlines the Council's priorities for the next four years and provides a focus for the services provided by the Council, informing decisions and the allocation of resources. The delivery of the corporate plan will be through the Corporate Action Plan. A new Corporate Action Plan will be prepared during the summer and considered by Cabinet in July 2023.
- The Corporate Plan has been prepared using a robust evidence base which includes extensive public engagement and a full analysis of the external environment to shape the Council's strategic priorities.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Corporate Plan is one of the key documents that forms the Council's policy framework. The Corporate Plan sets out the council's key priorities and can be used in conjunction with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Local Plan as part of the overarching strategic plans for the council.
- 1.2 The current Corporate Plan "Growing our Potential" ends in April 2023. A new recommended Corporate Plan, **A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive**, has been developed for the council cycle 2023-2027. The plan is attached at Annex 1 to this report.

- 1.3 The Corporate Plan is underpinned by a Corporate Action Plan (CAP) which runs for the lifetime of the Corporate Plan. The CAP details the key projects that will be delivered in pursuit of the strategic priorities of the Council. A new CAP is to be prepared this year alongside the draft proposed Corporate Plan; this will be considered by Cabinet in July 2023 and updated thereafter on an annual basis each spring.

2 Background

- 2.1 The recommended Corporate Plan has been developed using a detailed and thorough evidence base. This includes a review of statistical data, extensive public engagement, and an analysis of the external environment to ensure that key strategic influences have been considered.
- 2.2 During the summer and autumn of 2022, the Council undertook an extensive and innovative programme of public engagement engaging with more than 1600 people across two phases of engagement. This included a wide-ranging survey available online, engaging and surveying people attending local events, and the delivery of cutting-edge deliberative engagement workshops in partnership with the Involve Foundation. This has enabled a detailed insight of what matters to local people to be gained and has informed the development of the plan.
- 2.3 The recommended Corporate Plan has been developed in a collaborative way, with councillors playing an active role throughout alongside the extensive public engagement. This has included sessions with members of Cabinet, several roundtable sessions with members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and an all-member briefing.

3 New Corporate Priorities

- 3.1 The recommended Corporate Plan, **A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive**, builds on the focus of the current plan “Growing our Potential”. It is about making the wider opportunities for our communities a reality, progressing long-term strategic projects such as the regeneration of town centres and the Council’s approach to climate change, and being able to influence partners so that together we can deliver the best outcomes and quality of life across Test Valley.
- 3.2 The proposed strategic priorities are as follows:
- **Sustainability**, delivering lasting benefits for our communities.
 - **Connection**, building upon the identity, strengths and ambitions of our communities.
 - **Inclusion**, working together to create opportunities for our communities.

- **Prosperity**, economic growth that impacts positively on our communities.
- **Environment**, a greener borough for our communities.

3.3 As part of the ongoing approach to work in a place-based way that recognises the varying needs of our borough's communities, the draft plan renews the long-standing commitment to empower local communities through the way the Council works. The plan sets out how the Council will deliver the priorities through a community focus so that they can be tailored to make sure they are relevant and appropriate to local circumstances. The framework used to describe this in the plan is viewed through the lenses of a number of communities:

- Village and rural communities
- Andover and Romsey
- Chilworth, North Baddesley, Nursling, Rownhams and Valley Park

4 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

4.1 The Corporate Plan is a key policy framework document at the heart of the Council's strategic planning. The Corporate Plan sets out the medium-term priorities and can be used in conjunction with the Local Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

4.2 The plan has been built on the strong foundations of the last plan. Elements of the previous plan live on in the new corporate priorities, recognising that some of the major projects we are working on will still require a focus beyond a four-year cycle. These will be considered through the development of the new Corporate Action Plan during the summer of 2023 following the adoption of a new corporate plan.

4.3 In developing the plan, we have looked closely at internal and external influences on the Borough which may provide challenges and opportunities in the lifetime of the corporate plan. New wide-ranging legislation such as the introduction of the Environment Act, the pressure of increased demand on front line services to support our most vulnerable residents, and the challenging financial environment in which local government operates, all reflect the complex environment the new plan will exist within.

4.4 The last four years have brought into sharp focus how unprecedented global events can also have a real impact within communities at the most local level. The pandemic, global economic conditions leading to a cost-of-living crisis, refugee crises and the effects of climate change are all presenting new and unique challenges that will continue to factor in the years ahead.

- 4.5 Our experience to date, however, shows that the Council can be optimistic about how we play our part in addressing the challenges our communities face. Our commitment to community resilience, partnership working and innovation, mean we can adapt and bring resources together where and when they are needed most. This agility alongside our financial stability and organisational resilience, means that we have the capability to deliver long-lasting benefits for our communities that deliver impactful outcomes and value for money.

5 Consultations and Communications

- 5.1 Community engagement and consultation has been at the heart of the development of the recommended Corporate Plan with the views of around 1,600 local people being gathered.
- 5.2 In May 2022, a public survey was launched inviting residents to express their views on several themes, focussed on services and assets provided by the council to give the Council a deeper understanding of community aspirations. Councillors and Officers attended community events, markets and fetes across the summer to engage with residents and to undertake the survey with as many people as possible. In addition, surveys were undertaken with a range of targeted groups to gain a wide range of views and to ensure an inclusive approach for those groups who are harder to reach. Analysis of the results show that a statistically significant number of people took part in the survey broadly reflecting the geographical and demographic make up of the borough. This means that we can be confident that the insights gathered provide a consistent view of public opinion.
- 5.3 The survey results provided a strong evidence base of headline issues. To delve deeper into them and get underneath the issues raised, the Council worked with the Involve Foundation to host a series of cutting-edge deliberative workshops during November 2022. These involved around 100 residents (approximately 35 at each of four events) reflecting the demographic make-up of residents in the borough. At the events residents were invited to discuss: ***What makes communities work well as thriving places, where people can live fulfilled lives?*** and, ***What role should the council be playing to help make this a reality in Test Valley?***
- 5.4 Through facilitated debate, sharing their lived experience and considering a range of evidence (including the survey results), participants developed a set of statements for the Council to consider as part of developing its next Corporate Plan. The Involve Foundation have produced an independent report of this work and an executive summary is attached at Annex 2 to this report. The full report will be published alongside the new corporate plan once adopted.
- 5.5 A summary of the outcomes of this work is detailed in the recommended plan and broadly falls across four key areas, namely:
- Building thriving communities, so that people want to stay living in the area. A sense of belonging, where they are invited to participate and be involved in playing their part in their communities.

- Making the most of existing facilities that bring the community together, where people can meet.
- Protecting local wildlife and nature for the future, whilst also providing access to local green spaces and parks.
- Valuing and celebrating inclusivity and diversity, creating a welcoming environment for people to take part in and value as a community.

5.6 Working with the Involve Foundation, a nationally renowned leader in public participation and deliberative engagement, ensured an impartial approach and enabled the council to draw upon expert knowledge and experience. This gave confidence in the process and has enabled the Council to continue to build its expertise in facilitating this form of engagement.

5.7 It is proposed that given the extensive nature of the public engagement undertaken to inform the Corporate Plan, that the insights gathered should be used as an ongoing evidence-base to inform the development of other future council strategies.

6 Options and Option appraisal.

6.1 For Council to consider the draft Corporate Plan as presented in this report and agree to either:

- a. Approve the Corporate Plan (Recommended).
- b. Approve some other iteration of Corporate Plan.
- c. Not approve a Corporate Plan.

6.2 The Corporate Plan is a key policy framework document setting out the Council's priorities for the coming four years. Proceeding in the absence of a Corporate Plan as contemplated in Option C is therefore not recommended. Council could adopt a Corporate Plan in some other form than the draft attached. As set out in the preceding paragraphs, the recommended Corporate Plan as annexed to this report has been produced as a result of an exhaustive piece of work by professional officers. Officers have carried out extensive and innovative public engagement and canvassed the views of elected members. The recommended plan therefore reflects to the fullest extent the Borough residents' wishes, priorities and aspirations for the next four years.

7 Risk Management

7.1 An evaluation of the risks indicates that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks have been identified at this time.

8 Resource Implications

8.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

- 8.2 The recommended Corporate Plan will guide the extent to which resources are allocated to future projects that form the Corporate Action Plan and will be a key consideration when the Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated in the Autumn.
- 8.3 Projects will be subject the Council's corporate project management framework which will assess and consider resourcing applications.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Corporate Plan forms part of the Council's policy framework and as such must be approved by full Council.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been undertaken in relation to the Corporate Plan including its development. The EQIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
- 10.2 The evidence-led and collaborative approach taken to developing the Corporate Plan is in accordance with the Council's Equality Objectives. The objectives set out a commitment to ensure engagement is inclusive and that our evidence base should reflect the lived experience people have of the Council.
- 10.3 Officers have undertaken a detailed process to review and understand the emerging needs of communities across Test Valley as part of developing the draft priorities for the next four years. The new approach of using Deliberative Engagement has ensured the way in which the Council engages with a wide variety of residents is inclusive and reflective of the wider population and those who are seldom heard. This has allowed us to understand more clearly some of the barriers and inequalities faced by certain groups of residents and will inform our onward approach through the delivery of the Corporate Action Plan.

11 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate

- 11.1 The draft proposed Corporate Plan sets out a strategic priority for the environment in which addressing a changing climate is a key focus. This will influence the future development of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan both in terms of the role the Council can play in reducing its own emissions and the community leadership role it can play in supporting local communities.

12 Other Issues

- 12.1 Wards/Communities Affected – All

13 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

- 13.1 The recommended Corporate Plan outlines the Council's vision and priorities for the Borough over the next four years of the newly elected council. It sets the direction and provides a focus for all the Council's projects and services. As a result, it informs decision making and allocation of resources across the Council.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
None			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	2	File Ref:	N/A
(Portfolio: Leader) Councillor P North			
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Report to:	Council	Date:	5 April 2023