

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting27th November 2013

1. Title of Item/Report

Council Plan 2014-2017

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that presented a proposed framework for the Council Plan 2014-17.

The Council Plan was last reviewed in 2010 and covered the period 2010-2013. Subsequent years had seen the plan reviewed based on an analysis of key policy and legislative changes during the preceding year and known forthcoming changes. Since the production of the last Council Plan, the context in which the Council operated had changed significantly in relation to policy, central government relationships and not least the financial climate. The period for the next Council Plan was likely to see further changes in the financial settlement and would also cover the period leading up to and beyond national and local elections. The plan, therefore needed to be developed and considered alongside the available financial resources as outlined in the MTFP.

Historically the process and timescale for producing the Council Plan and the associated performance targets had been through engagement and discussion with Heads of Service and teams in individual Service Groupings, via the Heads of Business Support and Improvement in the respective service groupings, between October and March, aligned to the 8 themes within the Council Plan.

It was noted that since the last Council Plan was produced significant policy, planning and performance capacity had been taken out of the organisation (alongside other 'back office/support services) so as to protect, as far as possible, front line services. It was therefore appropriate to ensure the approach was more focussed, targeted and manageable within the available resource.

The context outlined in the following paragraphs provided the basis on which it was proposed to review the current Council Plan and gave the rationale for the recommended framework.

As the Council had sought to address the impact of national policies and legislative changes and the changing circumstances in which it delivered its services on the people it sought to serve, a number of local policy principles had been agreed through, for example, approval of the Medium Term Financial Plan, recommendations from Efficiency, Transformation and Improvement Reviews. These were:-

There had been significant resource invested in the development of the Council branding which was embedded within all of the corporate communications, links clearly with the thematic areas within the Council Plan, Cabinet Member portfolios, Scrutiny Committee themes and had served the Council well in terms of resident communication and partner engagement. The recommended framework did not seek to change or detract from these but to add clarity and focus.

Neither was it the intention to suppress the ambition the Council had for its residents, businesses and visitors. Ambition and vision which had historically resulted in inward external investment, positive inspection outcomes, high levels of resident and business satisfaction and provided strong strategic and community leadership. The recommended framework provided an opportunity to restate commitment to medium-long term ambitions and aspirations, whilst providing a framework to support decision-making, resource allocation, secure external funding and give a clear focus on the shorter term actions.

Since the last Council Plan and during the duration of the next Council Plan significant capacity had been taken out of the organisation and through the implementation of the agreed reviews would continue to do so. The 2014-17 Council Plan needed to take both of these factors into account in being realistic and clear about what could be achieved over the duration of the plan.

It was recognised that this was a medium-term plan; in line with the financial planning framework and that circumstances were likely to further change over its duration. It was therefore recommended that whilst the plan would cover the period 2014-17 it would be subject to an annual refresh to take account of any change in policy, legislation or financial circumstances.

It was not the intention of the plan to capture the totality of the Council's business but rather provide a focus on key strategic priorities and activities and provide the framework for reporting to Cabinet, Executive Scrutiny and Council. The day-to-day business of the Council would continue to feature in the Business Plans within individual Service Groupings.

Whilst it was acknowledged that much of the success of the Council was through its work in partnership with others there was a need, in terms of accountability and transparency, to be clearer about what the Council's plans and priorities were, how it was going to deliver them and how it would know it was doing when set against the context of reducing budgets, growing demographics and increased demand for services.

The overall outcome for the plan was for "A healthy, vibrant and successful Borough", which captured all of the elements within the current vision for the Borough but was represented in a much more succinct statement.

Four key priorities were suggested, each of which was explained in more detail below. Activity would be able to be captured within the current 8 themes and could, if required, be presented and reported either within the key priorities and/or the existing themes/member portfolios (in line with the corporate branding):-

- Promoting equality of opportunity (focussing in particular on targeted intervention)
- Protecting the vulnerable (focusing on intervention and activity aimed at protecting the vulnerable and being clear about what we mean by vulnerable)
- Developing strong and healthy communities (capturing preventative and universal activity)
- Creating economic prosperity (universal activity) in line with our ambition for economic recovery and growth

A fifth organisational priority of 'Continuing to be an ambitious and effective council that was proud to serve' would capture the organisational values and approaches that underpin everything the Council does.

Key objectives would add more detail to the overall aim / outcome with clarity on how the Council was going to achieve it and would be provided through detailed actions. The plan would be underpinned by identifiable performance measures and targets which would allow progress to be monitored through the existing approved performance management arrangements.

Work was also underway to develop an internal performance management database which would provide the Council with the opportunity to 'tag' the various elements of the plan to support multi-faceted reporting, for example, by priority or by theme.

Taking information from a range of sources, including information from

the existing Council Plan, the Health & Well Being Strategy and the Green Vision, Appendix 1 that was attached to the report sought to indicate by way of some examples from health and the Green Vision, how the proposed framework would work in practice. Clearly, this information would need to be updated, amended and added to should the framework be agreed.

Subject to approval of the framework by Members, officers would work on the detail with a view to a further report to Cabinet to secure sign-off in February/March 2014 for implementation from April 2014. Opportunities for discussion with Members as part of the development of the MTFP would be made available as had been the case previously in relation to Council Plan development.

Furthermore, as the Sustainable Community Strategy no longer formed part of the strategic policy framework of the Council, following the review of the Local Strategic Partnership, it was proposed that future reports to Cabinet were no longer required to identify which of the SCS themes the report being presented supported. Instead it was recommended that the Cabinet report template be amended so that reports were required to indicate which of the Council Plan themes and priority areas they supported.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposed framework be agreed.
2. The proposed changes to the Cabinet report template as indicated at paragraph 19 be agreed.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The Council Plan is one of the key policy documents within the Council's Constitution and sets out the ambition, values and direction of travel for the Council within the resources available to it.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Thursday, 5th December 2013

Proper Officer
29 November 2013