

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

DATE: 5th MARCH 2014

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

THE COUNCIL PLAN 2014-17

SUMMARY

This report presents a draft Council Plan for 2014-17 in line with the framework agreed by Cabinet in November 2013. A copy of the Council Plan 2014 – 17 is detailed at Appendix 1 to this report and available on e-genda, or on request to Policy Improvement and Engagement Ext 6089.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The Council Plan is approved.
- ii. Authority for the agreement of the targets associated with the delivery of the Council Plan is delegated to the Corporate Director for Resources in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.

DETAIL

1. At the Cabinet meeting of 27th November, 2013 members received information about the context and proposals for developing the Council Plan for 2014-2017 and approved the framework.
2. The Council Plan was last fully reviewed in 2010 and covered the period 2010-2013. Subsequent years have 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 operates has changed significantly in relation to policy, central government relationships and not least the financial climate. The period for the next Council Plan is likely to see further changes in the financial settlement and the impact of the reductions to meet the financial gap will continue to have an impact. The plan has been developed in this context and giving due consideration to the content of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

CONTEXT

3. The context outlined in the following paragraphs provides the basis on which the Council Plan has reviewed.
4. As the Council has sought to address the impact of national policies and legislative changes and the changing circumstances in which it delivers its services on the

people it seeks to serve, a number of local policy principles have been agreed through, for example, approval of the Medium Term Financial Plan, recommendations from Efficiency, Transformation and Improvement Reviews, reports to Cabinet and these have been taken into account in the draft plan.

- 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
5. There has been significant resource invested in the development of the Council branding which is embedded within all of our corporate communications, links clearly with the thematic areas within the current Council Plan, Cabinet Member portfolios, Scrutiny Committee themes and has served us well in terms of resident communication and partner engagement. The draft of the Council Plan 2014-17 does not seek to change or detract from these but to add clarity and focus.
 6. The draft Council Plan retains the ambition the Council has for its residents, businesses and visitor over the medium to long term and provides a framework to support decision-making, resource allocation and as a platform on which to secure external funding. Ambition and vision which has historically resulted in inward external investment, positive inspection outcomes, high levels of resident and business satisfaction and provided strong strategic and community leadership. The draft plan provides an opportunity to restate our commitment to our 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.
 7. Since the last Council Plan and during the duration of the next Council Plan significant capacity has been taken out of the organisation and through the implementation of the agreed reviews will continue to do so. The Council Plan 2014-17 takes both of these factors into account in being realistic and clear about what can be achieved over the duration of the plan.
 8. It is recognised that this is a medium-term plan; in line with the financial planning framework and that circumstances are likely to further change over its duration. Therefore whilst the plan covers the period 2014-17 it will be subject to an annual refresh to take account of any changes in policy, legislation or financial circumstances.
 9. It is 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 CMT, Cabinet, Executive Scrutiny and Council. The day-to-day business of the Council will continue to feature in the Business Plans within individual Service Groupings.
 10. Whilst it is acknowledged that much of the success of the Council is through its work in partnership with others there is a need, in terms of accountability and transparency, to be clearer about what the Council's plans and priorities are, how it is going to deliver them and how it will know it is doing when set against the

context of reducing budgets, growing demographics and increased demand for services.

The Council Plan

11. The Council Plan 2014/17 is in 2 parts. The “front end” sets out the Council’s overall ambition as detailed below and provides the context in which the Council delivers its services. This is supported by narrative providing information about changing demographics, details of national policy and legislation that have informed the plan, the links to other key strategic plans and strategies and details of the 4 underpinning policy principles referenced at paragraph 4.

“Big Plans, Bright Future

Our ambition is to create a Borough that is more confident, more vibrant and more successful than ever before. A place where people prosper and grow, where people feel happy, safe and healthy. A place where people can see that our drive, our integrity and our imagination have delivered a genuine improvement and exceptional value for money. A place that every single one of us is proud of”

12. The second part provides the detailed activity to be undertaken under each of the themes and policy principles. The final version of the plan will include a range of targets on which progress can be monitored and success measured. Officers are currently developing these targets and Council is requested to delegate the decision on approval of the targets to the Corporate Director for Resources in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.
13. Following a series of planned consultation with elected members, Cabinet considered the Council Plan 2014-17 at its meeting held on 13th February 2014 and a copy of the relevant Cabinet minute extract is attached at Appendix 2.
14. The final approved Council Plan 2014 – 17 will be made available on the Council’s web site, in the members library and key libraries throughout the borough. Both a full and summary version will be available.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The development of the draft Council Plan has been closely linked to the medium term financial planning process, to ensure that resources are in place to deliver the key objectives and outcomes set out in the plan.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The development of the Council Plan is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce the risk.

A BRIGHTER BOROUGH FOR ALL – TACKLING FAMILY POVERTY ACROSS STOCKTON-ON-TEES

The draft Council Plan includes a range of actions that support the delivery of the Council's contribution towards delivering 'A brighter borough for all'.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

Elected members were consulted through briefings with the Group Leaders at the framework stage and via the budget drop-in sessions for all members.

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Education related? Not specifically

Background Papers: None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: N/A

Property: N/A