

MINUTE EXTRACT

Cabinet Meeting.....13th February 2014

1. Title of Item/Report

Council Plan 2014 - 2017

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that presented a draft Council Plan for 2014 - 17 in line with the framework agreed by Cabinet in November 2013, prior to it being submitted for Full Council approval. A copy of the Council Plan 2014 – 17 was attached to the report.

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.

The Council Plan was last fully 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 the impact of the reductions to meet the financial gap would continue to have an impact. The plan had been developed in this context and giving due consideration to the content of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The context outlined in the following paragraphs provided the basis on which the Council Plan had been reviewed.

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, reports to Cabinet and these had 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

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 draft of the Council Plan 2014 - 17 did not seek to change or detract from these but to add clarity and focus.

The draft Council Plan retained the ambition the Council had for its residents, businesses and visitor over the medium to long term and provided a framework to support decision-making, resource allocation and as a platform on which to secure external funding. 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 draft plan provided an opportunity to restate commitment to the 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 Council Plan 2014 - 17 took 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. Therefore whilst the plan covered the period 2014 - 17 it would be subject to an annual refresh to take account of any changes 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 CMT, 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 Council Plan 2014/17 was in 2 parts. The "front end" set out the Council's overall ambition as detailed below and provided the context in which the Council delivered its services. This was supported by narrative providing information about changing demographics, details of national policy and legislation that had informed the plan, the links to other key strategic plans and strategies and details of the 4 under pinning 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"

The second part provided the detailed activity to be undertaken under each of the themes and policy principles. The final version of the plan would include a range of targets on which progress could be monitored and success measured. Officers were developing these targets and Cabinet was requested to delegate the decision on approval of the targets to the Corporate Director for Resources in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.

Briefing sessions had been organised for the 12th and 13th February 2014, for Members to discuss the Council Plan 2014/17 alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan arrangements. Work was also underway to develop an internal performance management database which would provide the opportunity to 'tag' the various elements of the plan to support multi-faceted reporting, for example, by theme and / or by policy principle.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

1. The Council Plan 2014 – 2017 be approved.
2. Authority for the agreement of the targets associated with the delivery of the Council Plan be delegated to the Corporate Director for Resources in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.