

## **AGENDA ITEM**

### **REPORT TO EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY**

**19 JANUARY 2021**

### **REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM**

## **COUNCIL PLAN 6 MONTHLY UPDATE**

### **Summary**

This report provides an update on the implementation of the Council Plan and the priority actions for 2020/21. It is in three parts: an outline of the priorities; a commentary on progress (with the detail on each priority action attached in **Annex 1**); and an analysis of priority actions for the rest of 2020/21 and in future years which incorporates the implications of COVID-19.

**Recommended that the report be noted.**

### **REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT**

To update on the progress in implementing the Council Plan and to identify the emerging key priority issues which will underpin the Council Plan for 2021/22.

### **DETAIL**

#### **The impact and implications of COVID-19, including new roles and responsibilities**

1. A detailed report on the implications of COVID-19 was presented to Cabinet in July 2020. It outlined some of the key implications, the decisions taken around the delivery of key Council services and the mitigating actions undertaken to respond. It also summarised the approach to recovery planning including outlining how some services will be delivered differently, embedding learning from different ways of working applied during the pandemic.
2. Despite the impact of COVID-19 work has progressed on many priorities in the Council Plan. Services and staff have responded flexibly, innovatively and effectively to ensure there is minimum disruption to service delivery. Around 60% of this year's actions remain on track, and many others are only slightly delayed. This reflects a huge commitment and effort from all services in responding quickly to the challenges, and in maintaining service provision, even as services are impacted by positive cases or staff absence through isolation.
3. Many changes in the way services are delivered. For many this has been made possible through a shift to more virtual ways of working, alongside adjusting to the routine of working from home. For those services where home working is not possible, significant changes have had to be made to ways of working on shift patterns, changes to the physical environment and other adjustments to procedures and protocols to keep services running. There are examples of this across a range of services, from staff keeping in touch and visiting those in need in their homes, to care homes, children's homes, to refuse, catering and cleaning services to name a few.
4. In addition, many additional new services have been developed; others have seen their work increase significantly and others have adapted their focus to be on COVID-19 related activity, including:

- a. The key role of the Public Health team in the development of outbreak management plans and responses, including the provision of advice, guidance, support and risk assessment support to workspaces, schools and other settings, 7 days a week;
  - b. Establishment of the Community Support Team and other work to support those isolating; we have over 9,000 Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people who have been contacted to advise on the help available;
  - c. The risk assessment of buildings and services;
  - d. The additional role and responsibility for advice and guidance to staff, the public and service providers and partners, we continue to proactively send COVID-related communications to businesses and residents;
  - e. Enhanced arrangements to support care homes including financial support and advice, infection control and access to personal protective equipment;
  - f. Support for schools including risk assessments, staffing advice, public health advice;
  - g. Design of new approaches to and the allocation of, business loans and grants with over £33m of business grants paid to a range of businesses across the Borough.
5. In this context, the delivery of priorities in the Council Plan has been sustained wherever possible. COVID-19 has had an impact in delaying only some actions, or in requiring others to be put on hold. In some cases this was as a result of direct Government advice and guidelines, and in others it was related to the restrictions imposed on other partners.
6. The detail of this is set out in the next section and in **Annex 1**.

#### **The Council Plan priorities for 2020/21**

7. The summary of the priorities is set out below:

#### **Making the borough a place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm means creating a place where:**

- People live in cohesive and safe communities
- People are supported and protected from harm
- People live healthy lives

#### **Making the borough a place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed means creating:**

- A growing economy
- Improved education and skills development
- Job creation and increased employment

#### **Making the borough a place that is clean, vibrant and attractive means creating:**

- Great places to live and visit
- Clean and green spaces
- Rich cultural experiences

#### **We are committed to being a Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve This means we will provide:**

- Financial sustainability and value for money
- Dedicated and resourceful employees
- Strong leadership and governance

## **Progress to date – summary**

8. The details in Annex 1 set out all of the priorities identified in the Council Plan, and a classification of their current status.
9. A summary of key updates is as follows:

### *A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm*

10. Key work continues to reshape a range of services in Children's Services, though progress has been delayed as a result of COVID-19. A major review of services will be implemented in early 2021;
11. Work to support closer integration with the NHS continues – intermediate care services are in place and further opportunities will take into account learning from close working during the COVID-19 pandemic;
12. Support to VCSE sports organisations has focused largely on reactive support but will become more proactive in 2021;
13. There are a number of existing priorities focused on area working and local approaches to tackling inequalities.

### *A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive*

14. A strategy to accelerate affordable housing has been delayed and will now be taken forward in 2021/22;
15. Major schemes for Victoria estate redevelopment, Ingleby Barwick Leisure Centre and the Globe are complete or on schedule;
16. The review of refuse collection and recycling has been paused to await the outcomes of the national strategy;
17. Work on activities and events is being reconsidered in view of current restrictions.

### *A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed*

18. The implementation of the recent scrutiny review of careers continues, and schools are beginning to implement catchup programmes for children who have lost education time. A new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities strategy will be considered by Cabinet in February 2021. An early years strategy is in development following the peer review in February 2020;
19. Inclusive growth and place branding work remains on track, with close working arrangements where appropriate with Tees Valley Combined Authority;
20. Some aspects of highways work have been delayed, but are now picking up with COVID-19 safe working practices in place.

### *A Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve*

21. Medium Term Financial Plan revisions to reflect the changing picture with additional Government funding to local government;

22. Accommodation review is ongoing and addressing the key learning from the different ways of working, and the scope for additional home working;
23. Submission of the response to the Local Government Boundary Commission;
24. A refocusing of Shaping a Brighter Future to focus on key changes to the delivery of more virtual forms of employee engagement.

### **The period to March 2021 and beyond**

25. This period will continue to require a range of specific and dedicated action to support the response and recovery phase:
  - a. Test and trace system
  - b. Outbreak control and management
  - c. Support for those self-isolating
  - d. Financial support for business and the self employed
26. These specific roles and functions will continue to require considerable focus and attention in this period. There are some additional resources allocated to support this activity, though largely this will be supplemented by reallocation of existing staff where necessary.
27. However, we also propose to continue to focus on those more fundamental and long term actions which will be required to support long term recovery, and to mitigate for the negative impacts of COVID-19. This will require a more fundamental re-appraisal of our approach to tackling some of the long term issues facing the borough.
28. A number of these are already underway and will be developed further in this period:
  - a. Additional work on **reducing inequalities** with an emphasis on the inequalities which have widened throughout the pandemic. This work will focus on the Council's approach to tackling inequalities and a specific emphasis on:
    - i. Health inequality;
    - ii. Skills and employment inequalities;
    - iii. Inequalities in educational outcomes;
    - iv. Housing inequality;
    - v. Inequalities through poverty and income
  - b. The focus on the specific role **area based approaches** can play in helping to reduce inequalities which are closely related to geography. Although already included in the Council Plan, work is progressing to develop the existing priorities into a more comprehensive and fundamental approach. This work will result in the next stages of activity for the Targeted Action Areas for example.
  - c. A refreshed approach to **supporting the local economy** and mitigating the impacts of lockdown and extended periods of trade restrictions. Key elements of this proposal include the establishment of the education, employment and skills hub which was detailed in the economic update report to Cabinet in October 2020.
  - d. The development of a **local environmental strategy** which draws together a range of current actions, and also seeks to build on some of the environmental benefits associated with the lockdown period into a comprehensive approach for the borough.
29. It is anticipated that a number of these actions will be carried forward into the draft Council Plan Action Plan for 2021/22, which will be brought to Cabinet in March 2021.

### **Conclusions and next steps**

30. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, around 60% of actions for this year are completed or on track. Very few priorities are on hold, though some are being refocused to reflect the experience and impact of COVID-19.
31. Key revised priorities as set out in para 21-25 reflect the key priorities identified as part of the emerging work on recovery and in some cases will be continued into the priorities for 2021/22.
32. The updated priorities for 2021/22 will be brought to Cabinet in March 2021 with a further annual update on 2020/21 in May 2021.

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