

Overview Report

People Select Committee

Overview Meeting 2022

14 February 2022

Finance, Development and Business Services

Context

Members are reminded of the Council's Vision that supports decision-making:

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

- This means the Borough will be a place where:
 - People live in cohesive and safe communities
 - People are supported and protected from harm
 - People live healthy lives

A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive

- This means we will enjoy:
 - Great places to live and visit
 - Clean and green spaces
 - Rich cultural experiences

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

- This means that the Borough will have:
 - A growing economy
 - Improved education and skills development
 - Job creation and increased employment

The Council plays its part in making sure this is achieved by being a Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve.

- This means that we will make sure that we provide:
 - Financial sustainability and value for money
 - Dedicated and resourceful employees
 - Strong leadership and governance

Performance Reporting

Performance across the Council Plan was reported on a six-monthly basis to Executive Scrutiny Committee. Please see the link:

<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=SCR>

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FINANCE, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SERVICES

Director – Garry Cummings

Services include:

- Finance Services
- Inclusive Growth, Planning & Development Services
- Housing Services
- Strategic Procurement & Governance
- Revenues & Benefits Service

Council Plan 2021-2024

The Council Plan sets out the aims and objectives for all services and is refreshed on an annual basis.

The key 2021-2022 priorities for Finance, Development and Business Services are attached at Appendix 1.

Emerging Issues

Like all areas across the Council, services have continued to be impacted by the Covid pandemic and have provided significant support to residents, businesses and also other services across the Council.

The achievements and emerging challenges and opportunities are summarised as follows:

Finance Services

Key Achievements

- Continually reviewed and updated Medium Term Financial Plan, balanced budget and robust forward plan
- Administered a significant amount of Covid funding, providing reports to members and Government, notably business grants and hardship funds
- Significant work and lobbying around spending review, review of Local Government Finance which was delayed
- Annual Accounts and Governance Statement approved and positive Value for Money Statement

Priorities, challenges and opportunities

- Continued uncertainty around National Funding (Spending Review, Fair Funding Review and Review of Business Rates Retention). This was delayed in 2021 and now expected in 2022 leaving future funding extremely uncertain.
- Continue to maintain robust MTFP in light of inflationary pressures and funding uncertainties
- Reform of Adult Social Care will require significant financial modelling and require incorporation into MTFP.

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Inclusive Growth & Development Services

Key Achievements

- Opened the Employment and Skills hub in a temporary location
- Developed Inclusive Growth Strategy
- Developed the Invest Stockton branding campaign
- Provided significant support (including administering of grants) to businesses through the Covid pandemic
- Provided support to a number of businesses to expand in the Borough and attracted new businesses to the Borough
- Acquired Durham Lane Industrial estate for employment land
- Led on the acquisition of Dunedin House and the accommodation strategy

Priorities, challenges and opportunities

- Continue to work with developers to bring forward key sites to generate employment
- Develop and market Durham Lane
- Develop Employment and Skills hub to support people into employment, both the long term unemployed as well as those affected by Covid
- Undertake a review of Council land and assets, identifying sites for disposal or development (including Housing)
- Develop Dunedin House and lead on the relocation of staff and decant from existing buildings.

Housing Services

Key Achievements

- Secured brownfield funding to support the development of the former Elm House site for bungalows and continued development of Sycamores
- Led on the introduction of schemes supporting Afghan relocation / resettlement s
- Developing a strategy to bring forward affordable and specialist housing
- Significant support to public and particularly vulnerable people through the pandemic
- Contributed to the development of the Fairer Stockton Framework

Priorities, challenges and opportunities

- Develop options for further brownfield funding to bring forward sites
- Finalise options for delivering affordable housing, including joint ventures
- Review of supported housing deliver options
- Further / ongoing support to ensure the successful resettlement of those settling in our borough under the Governments Afghan relocation schemes

Strategic Procurement & Governance

Key Achievements

- Provided significant support to Care sector throughout the pandemic, including administering 11 different support funds to the adult social care sector
- Established a brokerage team to organise care packages and validate payments to care providers,
- Administered supplier relief payments to businesses affected by the pandemic

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- Health and safety advice, including risk assessments, to all services including schools
- Developed a revised approach to internal audit and risk management
- Introduced new care fees for Adult Social Care

Priorities, challenges and opportunities

- Negotiate and implement new care fees
- Impact of Brexit on procurement rules
- Adult Social Care reform and impact on the marketplace and our contracted providers

Revenues and Benefits

Key Achievements

- Administered significant number of business support grants
- Administered significant levels business rate relief
- Administered hardship fund supporting 12,000 LCTS clients
- Provided hardship and welfare support to large numbers of residents
- Continued to collect Council Tax and Business rates in difficult circumstances
- Completed review of LCTS scheme
- Developed online access to services
- Review of income collection has commenced

Priorities, challenges and opportunities

- Significant administration of additional business rate reliefs
- Administration of £150 Council Tax Credit
- Continue to provide support for Hardship
- Online access to information will continue to be developed
- Review of income collection will continue
- Preparation for technical changes and revaluation of business rates effective from April 2023

Potential Areas for In-Depth Review

Members are reminded that topics are being sought for the Scrutiny Work Programme 2022-23. Using the information provided as part of the performance updates and this Overview meeting, the Committee is invited to identify potential topics for review within this theme.

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Appendix 1 – Council Plan - Key Priorities - Finance, Development and Business Services

A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed means creating:

We have identified these key priorities for 2020/21 to help us achieve this vision. This year we will:

- Deliver a Place Branding Campaign to encourage inward investment
- Develop options for increasing the supply of employment land
- Work with Tees Valley Combined Authority on improving regional economic and transport infrastructure
- Work with Tees Valley Combined Authority on regional skills development

Making the Borough a place that is clean, vibrant and attractive means creating:

We have identified these key priorities for 2021/22 to help us achieve this vision. This year we will:

- Develop options for further brownfield funding to bring forward sites
- Finalise options for delivering affordable housing, including joint ventures
- Review of supported housing deliver options
- Further / ongoing support to ensure the successful resettlement of those settling in our borough under the Governments Afghan relocation schemes
- Finalise options for delivering affordable housing
- Develop options for further brownfield funding to bring forward housing sites
- Continue to support those who are most at risk of homelessness
- Deliver a range of interventions using Thornaby Towns Deal monies to address poor housing conditions in North Thornaby

Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve This means we will provide:

We have identified these key priorities for 2020/21 to help us achieve this vision. This year we will:

- Review our medium-term financial plan following the national budget changes, including the financial implications of recovery from Coronavirus
- Review office accommodation to ensure maximum cost effectiveness
- Review surplus land and assets, and develop plans for disposal or development
- Improve our online services for Revenues and Benefits customers