
Subject: CORPORATE PLAN 2023 to 2027

Meeting and Date: Council - 29 November 2023

Report of: Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive

Classification: UNRESTRICTED

Purpose of the report: To present the Council's revised Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027.

Recommendation:

- (a) That Council approve and adopt the Council's revised Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027.
- (b) That Council authorise the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any necessary minor textual changes following full Council.
- (c) That Council authorise the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree final design and artwork before publication.

1. Summary

- 1.1 Following the local elections, which saw a change in administration, a new Corporate Plan has been prepared, setting out the Council's revised vision and priorities for the next four years. This has been developed based on the aspirations of the new administration for the district.
- 1.2 The Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027 replaces the Corporate Plan 2020 to 2024.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan (Plan) sets out the vision, aims and priorities for the district and the Council over the next four years. The Plan is the Council's main strategic document, providing a framework for the delivery of services, and provides the context for all other strategies and plans that may be produced.
- 2.2 The Plan directs and guides the development of service plans, the budget, and the direction of the Council and is a key component of good governance. Ensuring that efforts and resources are directed to the right areas is particularly important given the scale of financial challenge and resource restraint the Council is experiencing and the challenges facing the district.
- 2.3 The Council's vision is "**Building a better and fairer future**". To deliver this, four strategic themes are needed, summed up as follows:

- 1. **Improving our housing.**
- 2. **Growing our economy.**
- 3. **Protecting our environment.**
- 4. **Supporting our communities.**

A fifth ambition for the Council underpins these strategic themes: **Modernising our Council**.

- 2.4 The strategic themes are interdependent, allowing for alignment across the themes and ensuring that no theme operates in isolation. Under each strategic theme are actions that will be the focus over the term of the Plan.
- 2.5 The Council will review its Performance Management Framework (PMF) to track delivery against the new Corporate Priorities. The first set of reports on these will be from the start of the next financial year (i.e., from April 2024 onwards). The PMF provides the Executive (the Cabinet), Corporate Management Team, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the public with the necessary assurance that performance management is being undertaken rigorously and transparently, with appropriate oversight and reporting of performance in place.
- 2.6 Activities within the Corporate Plan are subject to individual risk and equality impact assessments where applicable.
- 2.7 The priorities outlined in this Plan deliver on the issues and challenges facing the district highlighted in the Dover District Profile report and cover the manifesto commitments made by the new administration.
- 2.8 The Plan will be kept under review, particularly in circumstances where the Council is facing new challenges or opportunities, whether these are local, regional, or national.
- 2.9 At the time of drafting the Plan, there are several external unknowns that could have a significant impact on local government. These unknowns include, but are not limited to, economic uncertainty, demand and cost pressures, review of local government finance, devolution, exit from the EU and measures being introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

3 Identification of Options

- 3.1 Approve and adopt the Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027, as is, and communicate the priorities and actions contained.
- 3.2 Approve and adopt the Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027, with minor changes, and communicate the priorities and actions contained.
- 3.3 Not approve the Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027, leaving the Corporate Plan 2020 to 2024, as the main Plan guiding the Council. As the Corporate Plan is an identified document in the Council's Policy Framework, a new Corporate Plan would need to be adopted prior to the end of 2024. If Members choose not to approve the new Corporate Plan, it would be helpful to officers for Members to identify areas of concern that can be addressed.

4 Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 The recommended option is to approve the Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027 (as is or with minor changes). The Corporate Plan is important in setting out the Council's priorities for the next four years and focusing our resources and energies on the right priorities. With the change in political leadership, there is a desire to set a new vision and priorities for the next four years and deliver on the pledges made to residents and the community in the election manifesto.
- 4.2 Failure to approve a revised Corporate Plan would not allow clarity of priorities, nor would it address the current Plan being approved under the previous administration. The existing Corporate Plan expires in 2024, and a new Plan will be required to bring together the Council's priorities and activities.

5 Resource Implications

- 5.1 The Corporate Plan is aligned with the forthcoming budget and the objectives and goals set out in the Plan will help to guide future resource allocation decisions, over the next four years. All financial implications of the Council's priorities and approach will be considered as part of Budget discussions and decision-making.

6 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 6.1 The Corporate Plan is aligned with achieving net zero for council operations by 2030. The objectives and aims set out in the Plan will support the overall district to decarbonise for the 2050 net zero target. Over the next four years the plan will provide opportunities for collaborations to support the district moving towards a circular economy with higher reuse and recycling rates.

7 Corporate Implications

- 7.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: "As recognised in the Corporate Plan, all local authorities are under significant financial pressures with unprecedented numbers of s114 reports being written or considered. This is due to a combination of factors. In some cases, councils have made imprudent decisions. However, for the great majority of councils the underlying causes include inflation, increasing demand for services and a system of local government finance that is now volatile, incoherent, no longer functional and transfers the bulk of the risk onto individual councils rather than spreading the risks across the sector. Dover District Council is not immune to these pressures. The Council continues to manage its budgets and reserves prudently but will have to adjust the services that it provides from the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account, and the capital programme in accordance with the limitations of its financial resources. This will be reflected in the 2024/25 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan" (MD).
- 7.1 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: "The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make" (HR).

7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: “This report seeking approval to adopt the Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027 does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>” (KM).

8 Appendices

Appendix 1: Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027.

9 Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Caroline Hargreaves, Leadership Support Officer.