
Subject: STATE OF THE DISTRICT 2014

Meeting and Date: Cabinet – 7 July 2014

Council – 23 July 2014

Report of: Councillor Paul Watkins, Leader of the Council

Decision Type: Non-Key Decision

Classification: Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To note the annual State of the District and any significant movement from previous years.

Recommendation: Recommend Council note the report and actions being taken through the Corporate Plan 2012 – 2016 and Cabinet.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The State of the District report was first introduced to Council in May 2010 with the revised Interim Corporate Plan; when it was requested the report be produced annually.
- 1.2 This report is the annual backward look at the state of the district, highlighting key information under the headings of Population; Housing; Economy, Business and Employment; Budget, Funding and Investment; Education and Skills; Regeneration Delivery, Transport and Infrastructure; Health and Wellbeing, Deprivation and Poverty, Community Safety and Quality of Life.
- 1.3 Some national information is not collected annually and where there are no updates available this has been highlighted within the report. In addition, periodically the process of capturing information is changed, this in turn makes year on year comparisons and trends difficult to assess, where this has happened it is noted in the report.
- 1.4 There was an expectation this year that the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation would be updated for inclusion in this report, however the Department for Communities and Local Government has advised this update has now been delayed until 2015.
- 1.5 The annual Health Profile, published by Public Health England (PHE), has been included in this report to Council. However, as it was not released until 08 July 2014, it is only possible to include the headlines and health summary chart from the profile. Health and Social Care maps, produced by the Kent and Medway Public Health Observatory, and other information sources, have not been updated since the PHE release.
- 1.6 Not all information captured in the report is aligned to services the Council is responsible for, however where possible, through working in partnership the Council aims to deliver, influence or facilitate/support service delivery improvements for all residents, workers and visitors to the district.

- 1.7 This report also enables the setting of future direction along with other relevant information and knowledge.
- 1.8 Overall the local picture is one mainly of improvements and previous reports have highlighted where development work in the district has continued to be driven forward, bucking the national trend. With the national economy showing signs of improvement the district has also seen increases in employment, business survival rates and business investment, and house building / bringing empty properties back into use. Stronger relationships have been and continue to be developed with regards the health and wellbeing of residents and progress has been made in taking firm steps against environmental crime. A number of community projects have also been supported/facilitated and funding into the district remains positive. When compared with other districts there are still areas for improvement, notably around unemployment rates and skills levels, although it is hoped that with some of the larger projects coming forward there will be improvements in these areas.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The key information in the report is linked to the aims and ambitions in the Corporate Plan through the Executive Summary. This is to highlight the on-going actions being taken (the Corporate Plan is to 2016) and the ambitions of the Council and partners to address the key challenges of the report. The report this year also builds upon the SIMALTO budget modelling process and Council decisions taken in year to support areas of development identified through the report.
- 2.2 The Corporate Plan was refreshed and approved by Council in March 2012 and sets the direction for the Council, working in partnership, for the period 2012 – 2016.
- 2.3 In August/September 2013 Research for Today undertook a public consultation to assist the Council in determining the budget for the next 3 years. The method used was SIMALTO (Simultaneous Multi Attribute Level Trade Off) this uses forced choice questions enabling respondents to make informed choices about service provision and, within a realistic budget limitation, where services should expand or reduce to meet their needs and the constrained budget. This information can be used for up to five years following the consultation.
- 2.4 The feedback from the consultation concluded:
- There is a marked improvement in overall satisfaction with Council services from the 2004 and 2006 surveys.
 - Across all respondent groups the main consistent message is the priority to improve town centres.
 - 68% of respondents would prefer the following optimum budget allocation, further resources to:
 - Allocate additional funding/resources to the improvement of town centres.
 - Further invest in health and wellbeing.
 - Increase the number of apprenticeships available.

- With the services most important to the public being: Town Centre improvements, Street Cleansing, Envirocrime (prevention and enforcement of littering, dog fouling, fly tipping, etc), Apprenticeships, Health and Wellbeing, Advice and Guidance to Community and Voluntary Groups and Community Safety/Anti-Social Behaviour (working with communities to create safer places and protect communities from the threat and consequences of criminal and anti-social behaviour).
- 2.5 This report highlights how the results of the SIMALTO exercise and Council decisions have been taken into account against the backdrop of the overall state of the district.
 - 2.6 The population profile, as expected, shows very little year on year change, however the forecast trends continue to show an increase in the ageing population. The Council's Local Plan and development agenda for the district to increase business investment and the working age population continue to address this trend. In addition the Council is a lead partner in the Health and Wellbeing agenda (through the South Kent Coast Health and Wellbeing Board), with an Integrated Commissioning Group prioritising work to move to seamless and accessible service provision for older patients and those at risk of health related issues, looking at falls prevention, tele-technology and intermediate care options.
 - 2.7 Economy, Business and Employment, plus Regeneration Delivery, Funding and Investment are key areas worked on with partners to deliver core aspects of the Council's Corporate Plan and rated as important by the consultation process. The 2014 report indicates the Employment Rate has improved, the 3 year business survival rates have improved, with nearly half the district's businesses well established at over 10 years old and there has also been an increase in the percentage of 'professional, scientific and technical' businesses in the district.
 - 2.8 Although the unemployment rate is still very slightly unfavourable when compared to the rest of Kent, the Council, and partners, continue to work hard to improve the attractiveness of the District to businesses and investors. To support business growth at the Discovery Park, including 83 companies and some 1562 jobs created or retained, the Council adopted a Local Development Order to simplify the planning process and support investment and growth. The Council supported the relocation of Multi Panel in Eythorne creating new job opportunities and planning consent granted to Estover Energy to develop a £65m biomass Combined Heat and Power Plant creating 100 jobs plus a Joint Working Agreement to provide a focussed approach to tackling unemployment and reducing out of work benefits (signed by Dover District Council, Dover Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme providers). In addition the development in Dover town continues with the inclusion of The Restaurant Group Plc and an agreement to lease for their Frankie & Benny's brand next to Cineworld.
 - 2.9 The majority of businesses within the district are SME's and the Council is looking at ways to encourage smaller, local, businesses to tender for work.
 - 2.10 During the course of the year, Dover District Council submitted several bids for external funding. It has successfully secured £3.1m grant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund for a major restoration of both Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens. This is largest single funding bid the Council has ever made in respect of the HLF, and will support a range of improvements to these popular parks.
 - 2.11 Also in relation to the Council's objective to realise the potential of the District's heritage assets, the Council was successful in a bid for £100,000 worth of

consultancy advice from the Cabinet Office's 'Delivering Differently' programme (one of only 10 local authorities to be successful). This project will involve working with consultants to undertake a detailed analysis of delivery models for the Council's own heritage assets and tourism services, and how these could work more beneficially with heritage organisations, particularly with regard to the community and voluntary sector. The consultants will provide expert legal advice on trust models of ownership and governance. DDC also supported a successful application by Sandwich Town Cricket Club for £50,000 from 'Inspired Facilities' for the Gazen Salts pavilion.

2.12 During the year, the Communication & Engagement team continued to support voluntary and community groups across the district with advice on funding applications. The team also managed the administration and delivery of the following funding programmes:

- 'You Decide' (DDC & KCC): 42 projects supported (£80,614)
- Community Covenant: 8 projects supported (£102,720)
- Coalfield Regeneration Trust Level One: 7 projects supported (£24,344)
- Secured funding for 'Eat, Sleep, Learn, Play' a Save the Children initiative for £120,000.

2.13 Another key factor, as highlighted by the SIMALTO consultation and within the Corporate Plan is that of health and wellbeing. As well as managing and being a key player of the South Kent Coast Health and Wellbeing Board (SKC HWBB), all council services are a factor in determining the health and wellbeing of residents in the district. The key council roles are through housing, environmental impacts, community engagement and community safety.

2.14 The 2014 report shows the average house price in the district is £194,664 (an increase of 2.76%), this remains an affordable option compared to others, encouraging first time buyers and those looking to relocate. In line with the Council's Local Development Plan, the focus is on building family homes. The first phase of the Buckland Mill regeneration is complete, with 400 new homes underway. The Sholden Fields development is now complete with families moving in. Aylesham and Whitfield developments are also underway. The Council has also approved the development of 3 new homes in Elvington, a pilot scheme for the Council's wider plans to develop social and affordable housing. There has not only been new houses developed, but empty properties brought back into use – in 2013/14 a record 54 homes were brought back into use and returned to the value of more than £2.3 m, through the Council playing an active part in the No Use Empty initiative. The report also shows youth homelessness has gone down from 30 cases in 2013 to 6 cases in 2014.

2.15 Through the SKC HWBB the Council, as a partner, is working to improve the relationships between health and housing, looking at how people can remain in their own homes safely for longer and what flexible accommodation requirements can be developed to support this approach, including longer term planning requirements for future population changes.

2.16 The Council has a range of projects designed to keep the District clean and attractive, this includes the Environmental Crime team working in partnership with local primary schools giving educational talks and also on-going enforcement and educational activities carried out on a regular basis to improve the street environment

in the Dover district. In 2013/14 this included routine patrolling by enforcement officers, educational school talks, targeted domestic waste and commercial waste campaign, attending local events and holding dog micro chipping days. This has resulted in more enforcement through fixed penalty notices, prosecutions and domestic waste enforcement notices. In order to support waste and recycling, encouraging a cleaner and greener district the Council, and partners have carried out an extensive promotion for the Garden Waste Service including a door-to-door mail out and roadshow for residents, plus a number of presentations/talks to various resident and local groups on waste and recycling. The Recycle for Dover Twitter and Facebook pages have been launched and are becoming well used by residents and the Council is currently participating in the #LoveKent campaign which is coordinated through the KRP - tackling issues of litter in the District including a campaign on dog fouling where officers spray painted fouling and promoted this through Twitter, Facebook and press releases.

- 2.17 As a partner with the Community Safety Partnership, the Council is committed to ensure the district is a safe place to work, live and visit through a range of projects, including a second clean-up of Clarendon alleys in Dover, Operation Clean Sweep in Dover Town Centre, linked in with alcohol awareness week and Barton Path clean up. The Partnership has also been instrumental in a number of campaigns, including: Reduce The Strength; Road safety projects in vicinity of primary schools; Challenger Troop, and also continues to support the Troubled Families programme.
- 2.18 Apprenticeships, and in general, opportunities for education and skills was also highlighted as an area for further investment in the SIMALTO consultation and is also in the Corporate Plan to 'raise aspirations, educational attainment and skills'.
- 2.19 In the previous year's report NVQ4 attainment had slipped, however there has been a huge improvement reflected in the 2014 report. Still a concern is the number of residents with no qualifications, this has increased very slightly and also the number of NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training) which has also seen a very slight increase.
- 2.20 The national recommendation is that a school is considered under-performing if fewer than 60% of pupils achieve Level 4 at year 6 in reading, writing and maths. Dover district schools achieved over 60% in all but 2 schools.
- 2.21 With regards Good Level of Development (pupils achieving at least the Expected level in the prime Areas of learning plus Literacy and Mathematics Early Learning Goals) in Early Years, Dover district is above the Kent and National levels.
- 2.22 Level 4+ Reading, Writing and Maths results in the Dover district have improved from 61% in 2011 to 76.4% in 2013.
- 2.23 During the year the Council has increased the number of apprenticeships offered and also works with local young people on work experience placements and training programmes.
- 2.24 With assistance from the Council Viking Recruitment secured funding to develop a new £6.5m Maritime Skills Academy and is already offering specialist courses for the maritime industry. In addition a £10.9m investment at Dover Christchurch Academy will see the school extended to offer specialist and vocational teaching spaces.
- 2.25 The SKC HWBB is developing an approach to integrated children's services to enable all children to receive the right physical and emotional health access and

support, locally and at the right time. The Board has also supported KCFN to deliver a Teenage pregnancy education and awareness project.

- 2.26 It is recognised that a large number of people in the district take part in events/cultural activities, although as such there is no central recording system to analyse if this is increasing. However, the Council supports/facilitates community projects and events, such as the Royal Marines Band Concert on Walmer green and the Christmas in Dover community event. In addition the Council offers advice and guidance with grants available from the Neighbourhood Forums ('You Decide') and Coalfield Regeneration Trust funding, the Council also continues to support voluntary and community groups to access funding not available to local authorities and remains a financial supporter of the Citizens Advice Bureau in the district

3. **Identification of Options**

- 3.1 Continue with an annual State of the District report in its current format. Not all information is collated annually and therefore some information is repeated.
- 3.2 Discontinue the State of the District report and only update on an ad hoc basis as the information becomes available.

4. **Evaluation of Options**

- 4.1 The State of the District is a useful and valuable resource identifying key factors of growth, challenges and development within the district, it is a useful tool when considering forward actions and ambitions and when applying for external funding. The preferred option is therefore to continue with the report.

5. **Resource Implications**

- 5.1 Actions to address key factors within the State of the District are contained within the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan has been set with the Medium Term Financial Plan.

6. **Corporate Implications**

- 6.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Finance has been consulted on this report and has no further comments to add.
- 6.2 Comment from the Senior Solicitor: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 6.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: The Equality Officer has been consulted during the development of this report and has no further comments to make other than to remind members that in discharging their responsibilities they 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>

7. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – State of the District 2014.

8. **Background Papers**

- The State of the District 2013
- The State of the District 2012

- The State of the District 2011
- The State of the District 2010

Contact Officers: Michelle Farrow, Head of Leadership Support
Caroline Hargreaves, Leadership Support Officer.