

East Herts Council Report

Audit and Governance Committee

Date: 10 February 2021

Report by: Councillor Geoffrey Williamson, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Capital Strategy 2021/22 Onwards

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

The report contains the Council's Capital Strategy and Minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy for 2021/22 onwards.

RECOMMENDATION FOR AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:

(a) That Members review and comment on the Capital Strategy and Minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy for 2021/22 onwards. (*Appendix A*)

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 This report proposes that Members scrutinise and comment on the Council's Capital Strategy for 2021/22 onwards.

2.0 Background

2.1 The East Herts Council Capital Strategy provides a valuable opportunity for engagement with Full Council to ensure that overall strategy, investment ambition, risk appetite and governance procedures are fully understood by all elected Members and other Council stakeholders.

- 2.2 The East Herts Council Capital Strategy is intended to be a strategic corporate document which will both be influenced by and in turn influence policy and decision making in respect of capital investment.
- 2.3 The Strategy will continue to develop and evolve as external influences do and will be updated as required in order that this Strategy is responsive to the challenges, opportunities, priorities and objectives that the Council must consider.
- 2.4 The current capital programme was formulated over the last two years. As the council continues to deliver, review and update the capital programme, it will do so within the context of the council's Climate Change commitments, most notably the commitment to the council itself becoming carbon neutral by 2030. To that end, the council has devised a carbon assessment tool which it is now beginning to use to assess its existing major projects. As new proposals for capital funding come forward, a carbon assessment will be included as an integral part of the business case to inform decision-making.
- 2.5 Progress updates on the council's Sustainability Action Plan are posted on the council's website each month, with greater detail on projects' carbon assessments and the overall assessment of progress against the council's schedule to achieve carbon neutrality to be added shortly.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 Revised reporting was required from the 2019/20 reporting cycle due to revisions of the MHCLG Investment Guidance, the MHCLG Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Guidance, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code. The primary reporting changes included the introduction of a capital strategy, to provide a longer-term focus to the capital plans, and greater reporting requirements surrounding any commercial activity undertaken under the Localism Act 2011.

3.2 This report includes the third capital strategy since the revisions. The first version of the report was welcomed by Members last year and no comments or suggestions for improvement have been received from either internal or external audit.

4.0 Options

4.1 Update the Capital Strategy as required, at least once annually.

5.0 Risks

5.1 Risks are discussed in detail, within the Capital Strategy, including the uncertainty around future funding.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 No.

Community Safety

Building and refurbishment schemes design out crime and safety issues and public realm works in particular are required to ensure that the community feel safe.

Data Protection

All investment in IT systems are required to check where data is held and that systems comply with data protection legislation.

Equalities

All capital schemes meet the necessary legislation and are subject to access audits. Design also takes into account dementia friendly design elements particularly around colour.

Environmental Sustainability

The council has established a carbon assessment tool that it is beginning to apply to existing capital projects. In the future, a carbon assessment of proposed capital projects will be included within the

overall business case so as to inform decision-making. To date, individual schemes have sustainability features designed into them and may include, for example: meeting BREEAM ratings for buildings and refurbishments; flood resilience and sustainable underground drainage systems; opportunities for renewable energy generation; and carbon reduction such as replacement of the council's internal combustion engine vehicles with battery electric vehicles.

Financial

The strategy guides the capital programme and detailed financial implications are included with that in the budget report.

Health and Safety

All contractors are required to have compliant health and safety policies. Where a health and safety issue requires capital expenditure it will be fast tracked to deal with the issue.

Human Resources

None

Human Rights

None

Legal

A Capital Strategy is a requirement of the Prudential Code which the council is required to follow under the Local Government Act 2003.

Specific Wards

None

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A - East Herts District Council Capital Strategy 2021/22 Onwards

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