

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of Meeting: 21st January 2020

Report by: Linda Haysey, Leader of the Council

Report title: Developing a new Corporate Plan

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:

- a) That the new Corporate Plan is considered by the Executive and recommended for adoption by Full Council.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The council's current Corporate Strategic Plan runs from 2016/17 to 2019/20. The Plan sets the strategic direction for the council, and the priorities that guide the council's work. Progress and updates regarding the current Corporate Strategic Plan priorities are regularly reported to the Performance, Audit and Governance Oversight Committee (PAGO).
- 1.2 The current Corporate Strategic Plan is due for review. This report:
 - outlines the approach taken towards the development of new corporate priorities;
 - presents the priorities which will form the basis of the new Corporate Plan.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Since the development of the last Corporate Strategic Plan in 2016 progress has been made in different areas alongside various changes locally and nationally. Major capital projects such as investing in Hertford Theatre, Old River Lane and leisure services are proceeding at pace, the District Plan has been adopted and we are anticipating the applications for Harlow and Gilston Garden Town in 2020.
- 2.2 Externally, the landscape regarding sustainability and climate change is gathering momentum. Many councils, including East Herts, have made significant sustainability commitments which build on the work undertaken over the past few years.
- 2.3 Digital transformation and innovation shape to an even greater extent the ways in which we lead our lives, and the ways in which our customers prefer to access services. The council has already made significant advances in its provision of online services, meaning that our residents and businesses can access and receive information about our services in ways that best suit them.
- 2.4 At the same time, local authorities continue to face increasing pressure on services with limited resources, meaning that it is vital for the council to continue to pursue its efforts in the following areas:
 - o Developing our commercial approach and to seek out new and innovative income sources;
 - o Encouraging business growth and development across the district;
 - o Enabling our communities to work collaboratively with us and our partner organisations, in order to provide services where they are most needed and where they will make the most difference.

- 2.5 Against this background, Executive Members, with support from partners and officers, have been working to develop the council's priorities for the period 2020 - 2024. The development process began on 6th July 2019 when the administration held an away day, during which initial priorities for the council were identified. Since then a number of smaller workshops have taken place to refine these priorities further. Discussions involved senior officers and partners (including the Council for Voluntary Services, the Citizen's Advice Service, the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor, The Digital Innovation Zone and the Local Enterprise Partnership).
- 2.6 This development process has defined an overarching vision, underpinned by four cross-cutting themes. Each of the themes have an associated set of actions and priorities which will be delivered. The draft corporate plan can be found at Appendix A. The rationale and background for each of the theme is explained below:
- 2.7 **Sustainability at the heart of everything we do - rationale**
- Residents of East Herts and the council have a good track record of reducing our impact on the environment. Our recent declaration on climate change emphasised our appetite to continue doing so in future. We know, though, that there is a great deal more that we could all do to reduce our environmental impact. We need to promote behaviour change to reduce reliance on cars to get around the district, improve air quality at certain traffic pinch points, and increase our use of sustainable materials as well as recycling more. We are committed to providing good quality housing with a sustainable travel infrastructure which will support the needs of our communities while maintaining the highest environmental standards. Making sustainability one of

our cross-cutting themes will demonstrate the council's commitment to addressing this global challenge.

2.8 Enabling our communities - rationale

The quality of life on offer in East Herts – from good schools, the mix of urban and rural space, historic market towns and excellent connectivity to London and Cambridge, make it an ideal place for residents and businesses to prosper. At the same time we know the population is estimated to grow by another 27,600 people by 2041. This means we will be creating new communities as well as enabling and supporting our existing communities. We recognise that services are better when they are shaped by those who use them, and at the same time we understand that we are one service provider amongst many partners working in the district. We want to work with our partners to ensure that residents have a say in the future of their local area and that the council can be an effective leader of place, enabling those who most need our support. Investing in major projects such as theatres and leisure services is about making our towns and places more attractive destinations for people to live, visit and invest. This theme demonstrates the council's commitment to creating communities not housing estates.

2.9 Encouraging economic growth - rationale

We recognise that the prosperity of East Herts depends to a large extent on London and some of the large employers and supply chains in and around Stansted, Harlow and Stevenage. However, as well as providing highly skilled workers who commute every day we have a large number of micro-businesses operating across multiple sectors within the district. We are committed to continuing to support local businesses and listening to their needs, through providing flexible working and grown on space for businesses, creating opportunities

for networking and supporting the application of new technology. We understand that providing the right space for local businesses is critical to growing our local economy. We realise that to enable future prosperity we must plan for it - our District Plan both protects existing employment space and plans for more of it through future development. This theme demonstrates the council's commitment to supporting businesses through its regulatory powers but also ensuring that much needed housing growth is delivered alongside the right infrastructure.

2.10 Digital by design - rationale

East Herts is made up of many different towns, villages and communities. We are focused on providing the best possible services for all our residents and businesses, whether they live in towns or rurally, and see digital connectivity as a key to this aim. The way people work, interact, buy goods and access services is changing rapidly. Connecting people with ideas and information can be a powerful and enabling force, and has the opportunity to help us address some of the district's more difficult issues – such as social isolation and access to services in rural areas. We want to put the right foundations in place for digitally enabled communities (particularly where they are new such as Harlow and Gilston Garden Town). This is particularly significant in a district like East Herts when much of the funding for digital infrastructure is directed towards large urban centres. Working with key partners such as the Digital Innovation Zone will be a key part of realising the priorities in this theme. Alongside the council needs to continue transforming its own services so they are more customer responsive and maximising use of digital technology.

- 2.11 Each cross-cutting priority will be led at an operational level by a member of the council's Leadership Team, and delivered by a group of appropriate officers across

the organisation. Please see the Appendix A for further details on these priorities.

Appendix A –Draft Corporate Plan

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 To seek Executive Committee members' views on the new Corporate Plan, to enable the council to take such views into account in setting its strategic direction.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 The new Corporate Plan priorities have been developed through a process involving officers, members and key partners. No alternatives are currently being considered, as to do so would disregard the development process which has been undertaken.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 There is no legal requirement for councils to develop a corporate plan, however, should the Council fail to adopt new corporate priorities the risks arising may be organisational and reputational.
- 5.2 The impact of these risks would be moderate, and the likelihood unlikely.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 The new Corporate Plan priorities will guide the organisation's work over the coming four years. They will be reviewed on a regular basis.
- 6.2 Informal consultation on all the draft priorities has taken place with key partner organisations working across the district.
- 6.3 The priority 'Sustainability at the heart of everything we do' will ensure that all the Council's work is considered from an environmental and sustainable perspective.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

Yes

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix A –Draft Corporate Plan

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