

Policy & Resources Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	20 March 2024
Report Title	Corporate Plan 2023-2027
EMT Lead	Larissa Reed – Chief Executive
Head of Service	Philip Sutcliffe – Communications & Policy Manager
Lead Officer	Janet Dart – Policy & Engagement Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To discuss, endorse and propose the Corporate Plan for adoption by Council.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following the close of the public consultation on the draft corporate plan, this report seeks the Policy & Resources Committee endorsement of the final version of the Corporate Plan for recommendation to council.

2 Background

- 2.1 Since the May 2023 borough election, the new administration have been meeting to discuss their vision and ambition for the borough and to consider what their priorities for the Council should be for the period 2023-2027. Committee chairs and vice-chairs have been working with senior officers to develop a new corporate plan which is a living document setting out the vision of the council and the strategic, corporate priorities.
- 2.2 The council's corporate plan establishes the political and managerial priorities on which the organisation will focus over a medium-term period. Without attempting to cover in any detail all of the objectives to be pursued by every department, it sets the tone for future resource allocation, establishing which activities and objectives are priorities.
- 2.3 In an era of constrained and diminishing resources, it is important to have a plan that is linked to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which should inform the key decisions of the council.
- 2.4 The plan is central to the strategic framework which links to departments' operational service plans and to individual officers' objectives. It establishes clear priorities while also providing a steer for all teams to link their work to the overall ambitions of the council.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The committee is asked to endorse the final version of corporate plan (appendix I), and the draft equality impact assessment (appendix II,).

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Not have a corporate plan. There is a legal requirement for councils to have a definite policy framework, however there is no specific requirement for a corporate plan. However, the absence of a plan is likely to result in a lack of clarity about the organisation's priorities and less coherent decision-making by members, and is therefore not recommended.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Swale Borough Council members, town and parish councillors and members of the public were consulted at the September 2023 round of Area Committee meetings to seek feedback on the five priorities and their definitions.
- 5.2 The detailed objectives within each priority were taken to all-staff briefings and the staff engagement group in October 2023. A workshop was held with external partners to seek their feedback on the priorities and the proposed vision statement. Political group leaders were also consulted to seek their views.
- 5.3 The administration met to consider the feedback and used it to finalise the draft corporate plan.
- 5.4 An 8-week public consultation was conducted on the draft version of the corporate plan ending on 25 January 2024. This was predominantly by means of an online survey, but key stakeholders were written to individually, including all of Swale's parish councils. The consultation was advertised on social media and through channels such as the business bulletin, as well as internally through staff communications.
- 5.5 The consultation generated 29 responses. The first part of the consultation survey asked if responders agreed with each of objectives under the 5 priorities and the vision statement. The majority of responses were supportive of all (Appendix III).
- 5.6 The second part of the consultation was a free-text box for responders to provide any comments. The majority of responses included only general indications of support or the opposite, some included specific suggestions for changes. An analysis of responses has been carried out and classifying responses as supportive, unsupportive or neutral, six can be read as supportive, four as unsupportive and 23 as neutral.
- 5.7 Following discussions with the administration, the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee has considered the consultation responses and is recommending the following amendments be made to the draft Corporate Plan.

- 5.7.1 Under the Economy priority, replace the last two bullet points with “*Support modal shift and partnership bases solutions to key issues countering sustainability and congestion.*” This change would allow for wider lobbying and advocacy activity.
- 5.7.2 Under Values and behaviours, change the text to read “*We are also developing a member/officer protocol to improve levels of collaboration, mutual understanding and tone of communication between members and staff.*” The removal of the words “*some elected*” better reflects that the member/officer protocol applies to all members and officers.
- 5.7.3 Under Challenges and achievements, the following text has been added “*Swale Borough Council has been awarded a Safer Streets grant from the Home Office, in partnership with the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner for Sittingbourne and Sheerness. Initiatives include CCTV; cutting back trees; installing extra lighting; bystander training; street marshalls during the school holidays; and additional sessions at the County Youth Club in Sheerness. We have also purchased advanced Hollie Guard Apps which will be available to the most vulnerable people in Swale.*”
- 5.7.4 Some photographs and graphics have been changed to better support the text.
- 5.8 The above recommended amendments have been incorporated in the draft Corporate Plan (Appendix I).

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The draft plan at appendix I will replace the existing plan on adoption by council.
Financial, Resource and Property	The corporate plan complements the MTFP, in that it sets out in broad terms what the council aims to achieve given the resources established by the MTFP. It is anticipated that the activities required by the plan will generally be funded within the resourcing framework established in the MTFP.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The legal status of the corporate plan as a component of the statutory policy framework originates from the Local Government Act 2000 and regulations subsequently made under it. No specific procurement implications have been identified at this stage.
Crime and Disorder	The draft plan at appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to crime and disorder, particularly under priority 1 – Community.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The draft plan at appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to the environment and to the climate and ecological emergencies, particularly under priority 3 - Environment.

Health and Wellbeing	The draft plan at appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to health and wellbeing, particularly under priority 4 – Health & Housing.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	The draft plan at appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults, particularly under priority 1 – Community and priority 4 – Health & Housing.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No specific implications have been identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	The public sector equality duty requires decision-makers to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity right throughout the decision-making process. A preliminary equality impact assessment is attached at appendix II. The corporate plan is in general at too high a level of abstraction for the aims of the equality duty to be relevant in any concrete way, although they are likely to be much more relevant to many of the pieces of work which will flow from it, which will all need to be subject to individual impact assessments. The impact of the plan itself on the aims of the equality duty, without reference to these more detailed pieces of work, is at this stage considered to be low, and nothing requiring the mitigation of adverse impacts has been identified. It is believed at this stage that the plan involves no unlawful discrimination.
Privacy and Data Protection	No specific implications have been identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix I – Draft corporate plan 2023-2027

Appendix II – Equality impact assessment

Appendix III – Responses to draft Corporate Plan survey questions

8 Background Papers

None.