

Strategic Plan – Proposed Areas for Focus 2021-2026 and Key Performance Indicators for Covid-19 Recovery

Final Decision-Maker	Council
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Lead Officer and Report Author	Alison Broom Chief Executive Angela Woodhouse - Head of Policy, Communications and Governance Anna Collier - Policy and Information Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report proposes refreshed areas of focus for the Council's Strategic Plan for the period 2021-2026. Consistent with the Council's Vision blended with the continued need for response to and recovery from the Covid-19 health pandemic.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the proposed refreshed areas of focus for the Council's Strategic Plan for the period 2021-2026, set out in Appendix C be considered and feedback is provided on any changes required before consultation is conducted with the Council's service committees.
2. That the proposed Key Performance Indicators for Covid19 Recovery set out in Appendix D are considered and feedback provided on any changes required before consultation is conducted with the Council's service committees.

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	20 January 2021 10 February 2021
Economic Regeneration and leisure Committee	26 January 2021
Communities Housing and Environment Committee	2 February 2021
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	9 February 2021
Council	24 February 2021

Strategic Plan – Proposed Areas for Focus 2021-2026 and Key Performance Indicators for Covid-19 Recovery

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>This report considers the proposed areas of focus for the Strategic Priorities for the next five years and identifies action for progressing the shaping of the areas of focus for 2021-2026.</p>	Chief Executive
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>Consideration has been given to the cross-cutting objectives in formulating the proposed areas of focus for the Strategic Plan</p>	Chief Executive
Risk Management	A review of corporate risk will be undertaken with respect to any changes made to the Strategic Plan areas of focus.	Chief Executive
Financial	The Strategic Plan sets the Council's Priorities and the direction for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Chief Executive
Legal	The Council has a statutory duty to make arrangements to secure continuous	Team Leader

	<p>improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Council's Strategic Plan demonstrates compliance with this duty.</p> <p>This review of the Council's priorities within the Strategic Plan will enable the Council to deliver services in an efficient and effective manner which meets the needs of the borough and aspirations of local inhabitants and stakeholders.</p> <p>In reviewing the priorities, the Council is obliged to ensure that its financial obligations are adhered to. The Council has a legal duty to set a balanced budget and continue to monitor the budget during the course of each municipal year and take remedial action if at any time.</p>	Corporate Governance
Privacy and Data Protection	The recommendations do not have an impact on privacy and data protection. If as a result of the update to the milestones and the emerging MTFS for 2021-2026 changes are required to services involving personal data, then Data Protection Impact Assessments will be undertaken.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment. If as a result of the update to the milestones and the emerging MTFS for 2021-2026 changes are required to services, then an Equalities Impact assessment will be undertaken.	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	One of the Council's cross cutting objectives is that Health Inequalities are addressed and reduced. The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an impact assessment. If as a result of the update to the milestones and the emerging MTFS for 2021-2026 changes are required to services, then a Health Impact assessment will be undertaken.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The recommendations include reviewing the areas of focus for 2021-26 for the Safe, Clean and Green Priority and the actions proposed are included in Appendix C	Head of Service or Manager

Procurement	No direct implications	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report proposes refreshed areas of focus for 2021-2026 consistent with the Council’s Vision and four priorities; it reflects both the long-term ambitions of the Council blended with the continued need for response to and recovery from the Covid19 health pandemic.
- 2.2 In July 2020 the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance presented a report to this Committee which set out progress made against the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan Outcomes (see Appendix A). The report also included a timetable to refresh the outcomes to ensure they reflected the progress that had been made and to respond to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 2.3 The current Strategic Plan was developed involving a wide cross section of Councillors, staff and other stakeholders in 2018 before being adopted in December of that year. The vision and priorities are clear and remain relevant. Considering the pandemic and its significant impact, resources arising from the impacts of the Covid-19 health emergency; the areas of focus for our priorities need to respond to our Covid-19 recovery approach. Work was carried out in the summer of 2020 to enable all Councillors to review our outcomes for 2019-24 and contribute to production of revised priorities and a refreshed set of outcomes for 2021-26.

Context

- 2.4 Covid-19 has had a major impact for our communities, our economy and on the Council’s financial position. The Covid-19 Recovery Consultative Forum have been regularly briefed on the impacts and the Council’s support for residents and businesses in the borough. The Policy and Resources Committee has been regularly briefed on the review of council priorities. It has also been briefed on the scale of the financial impact, for the current financial year and over the term of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). A report elsewhere on this agenda sets out the council’s current financial position and revised MTFS.
- 2.5 In September the Committee agreed the following in relation to shaping the areas of focus:

- There should be further development of the Council's capital strategy and programme including consideration of partnership funding of large-scale projects and infrastructure including consideration of joint ventures and a development corporation.
- A review of planning and economic development services reflecting on the effectiveness of our current services and reconsidering our service delivery model taking into account the changes in the planning system and looking at: expertise, organisational arrangements, including the synergies between planning policy and economic development, our arrangements for delivering/enabling construction projects, and agility.
- A report concerning a protocol for working strategically with the community and voluntary sectors and parishes is progressed initially via the Communities Housing and Environment Committee.
- That the Council initiates dialogue with the Business Improvement District concerning current challenges and future investment in the town centre.
- Officers review the scope of work undertaken and resources allocated to the Community Safety Unit.
- The direction of travel on modernising the arrangements at the museum is now more modest and focuses on making the best use of existing spaces.
- Review of the contribution of the Hazlitt to the town centre economy and consideration of options for its sustainability.
- Reduction of the priority of raising resident satisfaction with cleanliness to maintaining it.
- References to individual projects e.g. Go Green Go Wild are removed from areas of focus in the Strategic Plan; and
- Climate change becomes a cross cutting issue for all services to consider proactively and that an officer is required to lead this work and be proactive in finding funding streams to complement the Council's commitment.

2.6 The Policy and Resources Committee was updated in October and November 2020; actions arising from the September decisions which are key to achieving a balanced budget for 2021/22 and beyond have also been incorporated into proposals for the budget and the MTFS.

2.7 In June 2020 the Policy and Resources Committee expressed their thanks to; key workers, volunteers, community organisations, Parish Councils and the Council staff who had responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. These contributions were subsequently recognised in the Compassionate Maidstone awards. The Committee noted actions taken by the Council, in response to the community's and businesses increased needs arising from the pandemic. It was also noted that the Council's relationships with residents, the business

community, parish councils, voluntary sector and various other organisations had been strengthened due to the cooperation shown in recent months.

- 2.8 Officers have continued to deliver increased support to residents through the Community Hub, Housing, Revenues and Benefits services. Increased support has also been provided to businesses through the various grant systems established by central government and administered by local government. This has demonstrated agile and cross disciplinary team working while working from home. Our support has been flexed in terms of scale and detailed arrangements according to the stage of the pandemic. We have continued to deliver all core services with a small number of services, including our leisure and cultural offer, closed where government guidance has required this. We have also supported the health system for example in test and trace, the identification of venues for Covid-19 symptomatic and asymptomatic testing and more latterly with respect to vaccination. There has also been an extensive programme of Communication with the public and businesses regarding key public health messages and specific details of local support arrangements.
- 2.9 In June 2020 the Policy and Resources Committee also considered the Council's approach to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and recognised that it was likely that this would be intertwined with episodes of response, and this has proved to be the case. The agreed aim was to deliver a safe, sustainable, managed recovery. The objectives agreed were to:
- To support local businesses to return to successful operation and to survive the significant economic impacts of Covid-19
 - To support residents who have been affected by the pandemic and the restrictions placed upon them and to manage the impact including as protections and support mechanisms are eased and removed.
 - To retain the capability to protect vulnerable people and to react to any move back into response mode if necessary.
 - To maintain and prioritise where necessary the Council's services in line with government advice.
 - To recognise and promote positive outcomes including reduced pollution and congestion, better work/life balance and community spirit
 - To recognise that the Council needs to remain financially solvent and that, with government grant completely removed and Council Tax capped we are increasingly reliant on income generation and there remains the possibility of a tension between this and other objectives.

- To identify long term adverse and positive impacts arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and pick these up through the regular review of MBC strategies for example housing, health and wellbeing and climate change
- To protect the health, safety and well-being of staff and councillors delivering essential public services to our residents and businesses.

2.10 The Council's approach to recovery has been based on four themes: economic recovery, supporting resilience for communities and vulnerable people, adapting the way we work and financial recovery. This has been managed via a core group of officers led by the Chief Executive and both response and the limited work on recovery has been informed by a Member Covid-19 Recovery Consultative Forum chaired by the Leader of the Council.

Strategic Plan – Areas of Focus for 2021 to 2026

2.11 In July, Policy and Resources Committee approved a light-touch review of the Strategic Plan to be centred on the areas of focus for each priority for the next five years. It was also proposed to conduct consultation to identify the impact of the pandemic on our residents to help inform our recovery plans. This survey was conducted, and the resulting summary report is attached at Appendix B and the full results can be found here:

<https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/council-and-democracy/primary-areas/consultations/closed-consultations>

2.12 Appendix C puts forward proposals for reshaped areas of focus for the period 2021 to 2026. This reflects progress made against our priorities since the Strategic Plan was adopted in 2018, changes in circumstances most notably the Covid-19 pandemic (some of which have already led to revised priorities and decisions by service committees) and a rebalancing to reflect the overall level of resources available to the council for the next 5 years period. Members are asked for their feedback. A further report will be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 10 February 2021 which will contain a refreshed foreword, narrative and updated contextual information.

2.13 Appendix D puts forward proposals for a suite of specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to enable monitoring of the recovery from the impacts of Covid-19 for residents, businesses, and the council. This takes into account feedback from the member consultative forum. Further feedback is invited from this Committee; the next steps will be consideration by service Committees and subsequently their feedback will come to the Policy and Resources

Committee on 12th February before recommendations are made to Full Council on 20th February 2021.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee can consider and provide feedback with respect to proposed areas of focus arising from the Strategic Plan, for the period 2021-2026. This is the preferred option to ensure that the work of the council reflects both the Council's overall ambitions, what has been achieved to date and the changed operational and financial environment arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.2 The alternative is that no change is contemplated. This option is not recommended as it would produce a situation which is the antithesis of refreshing actions in the Strategic Plan and which would fail to recognise the significantly changed operational and financial environment which in turn would not respond to changed needs and result in sub-optimal use of resources.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 is recommended for the reasons set out above
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5. RISK

- 5.1 This is referred to within the body of the report. The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework.
- 5.2 A review of corporate risk will be undertaken with respect to any changes made to the Strategic Plan areas of focus.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Councillors have been consulted concerning priorities for the Strategic Plan areas of focus from July 2020 onwards and have taken a range of subsequent decisions which are also reflected in the proposed areas of focus set out in Appendix C. The member Covid-19 Recovery Forum has been consulted on the draft KPIs set out in Appendix D.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Further consultation concerning proposed areas of focus for 2021–2026 and KPIs for Covid-19 recovery with service committees with a subsequent report to the Policy and Resources Committee and recommendations for adoption to Full Council in February 2021.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Progress against outcomes in the Strategic Plan 2019-24
 - Appendix B: Results from the Residents Survey – Impact of Covid-19
 - Appendix C: Strategic Plan Proposed Areas of Focus 2021–2026
 - Appendix D: Proposed Covid-19 KPIs for Recovery
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None