

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF RECOMMENDATION OF THE CABINET TO COUNCIL

Recommendation Made: 9 February 2011

STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-15

Issue for Decision

To consider the Draft Strategic Plan for 2011-15 which sets out the Council's priorities and outcomes for the next 4 years. The Plan also sets out how we will measure performance including draft performance indicators.

Recommendation Made

That the proposed Strategic Plan 2011-15 be adopted, subject to:

- i) the addition of a foreword from the Leader and an introduction from the Chief Executive; and
- ii) delegation to the Chief Executive to make minor amendments, in consultation with the Leader, as required.

Reasons for Recommendation

The Draft Strategic Plan, attached at Appendix A, sets out the Council's vision and priorities for the next four years aligned with, and in parallel to, the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The priorities and outcomes in the plan have been developed over the course of the current municipal year taking into account the national, local and economic context in which the council operates.

The Development of the Plan

In developing the priorities for the next four years Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team have been clear that the Council needed to reduce its priorities to ensure it had a focused approach to service delivery. This has followed feedback from the Improvement and Development Agency during a recent peer review that the Council needed to be clearer on what was and what was not a priority and communicate this to staff and residents. An early part of the work involved reviewing the Council's frontline services in a "pairwise" analysis as set out in the priorities section of the Plan. Following this exercise, Cabinet then reviewed national policies and local data considering residents' views from sources such as the Place Survey and statistical information regarding the current picture of Maidstone.

As the plan has developed, careful note has been taken of the emerging priorities of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Ambitions for Kent to ensure there is synchronicity with the Council's partners and avoid duplication.

Nationally there have been a number of actions and proposed legislative changes that have impacted on the plan and the Council's future direction. This has included substantial cuts in our budget and changes to our powers and freedoms. The Localism and Bill outlines 6 areas of action to create the Big Society:

- 1) Lift the burden of bureaucracy
- 2) Empower communities to do things their way
- 3) Increase local control over public finance
- 4) Diversify the supply of public services
- 5) Open up government to public scrutiny
- 6) Strengthen accountability to local people

The Draft Strategic Plan outlines the Council's role; working with others to build the big society. There are a number of actions that we have taken that support the six areas identified in the Bill. We will be publishing all our financial transactions from January 2011. The public were consulted regarding the budget for discretionary services and we have listened to them when reviewing how we deliver these services and how resources are allocated. The Draft Strategic Plan outlines service principles which aim to encourage and support the diversification of services and we will be holding our own localism events in the new year to consider what it will look like for Maidstone.

We have taken note of the government's review of national indicators, the withdrawal of the place survey and Cabinet and the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee's wish to reduce what we measure and report as a Council. We have significantly reduced our priorities, actions and performance measures. In an effort to ensure we look outwards and not upwards to measure our success the plan indicates that we will monitor the satisfaction with the public's priority services.

Vision and Priorities

The Draft Strategic Plan 2011-15 sets out three priorities for Maidstone, each priority has two outcomes identified.

Priorities

1. For Maidstone to have a growing economy

Maidstone will have a growing economy, with a range of employment and business opportunities. In essence, Maidstone is a good place to work and do business.

Outcomes

- a transport network that supports the local economy.
- a growing economy with rising employment, catering for a range of skill sets to meet the demands of the local economy.

2. For Maidstone to be a decent place to live

Maidstone continues to be a clean, attractive, well designed and built environment; a place where people want to live.

Outcomes

- decent, affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures.
- continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the borough.

3. Corporate and Customer Excellence

The Council will have a productive workforce with people in the right place at the right time, delivering cost effective services. Services will be affordable, delivered on time and to agreed standards in an accessible way.

Outcomes

- residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced.
- the Council will continue to have value for money services that residents are satisfied with.

Performance Management and Consultation

Strategic actions and milestones have been developed for each priority outcome. In terms of measuring success, a performance scorecard has been included for each indicator. We have significantly reduced the performance indicators with 59 draft indicators proposed, 24 of which will be reported quarterly, 14 on a bi-annual basis and 21 annually. Staff and residents will be consulted on these strategic actions and measures to ascertain if they are right and if they will deliver the priorities and outcomes set out in the plan.

The results of the extensive budget consultation and comments received regarding savings and services have informed the development of the Strategic Plan, the prioritisation of services and spending. We also held a small customer consultation group to sense check the priorities and outcomes identified. The priorities were supported by the group, transport whilst seen as largely outside the council's control was identified as a priority particularly for the rural areas. Cleanliness was another priority arising from the focus group as well as activities for young people and affordable housing in rural areas. Interestingly some members of the

consultation group also stated that they were looking for opportunities to volunteer.

Consultation events were held with staff in January to inform them of the new priorities and to engage them in developing the council's "strapline" for the Strategic Plan. The straplines will be reviewed by a staff and member panel and the winning strapline included on the final version of the plan. These events involved over 160 staff. At each event staff reviewed the priorities and identified the actions they would be taking to achieve the outcomes in the plan. Council staff will be able throughout February to enter a photography competition, with their photos of the Council priorities. These will be used in the final version of the Plan and in documents relating to the Strategic Plan and its broader dissemination.

The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the plan in January. They recommended that more emphasis be placed on the rural communities, and that the plan reflects the need to protect and enhance the Borough's environment. The text of the strategic plan has been amended to ensure it is balanced between the town and rural communities. The Strategic Plan already recognises the quality environment of the Borough both in the introduction and under priority to be a decent place to live.

Alternatives considered and why not recommended

The Strategic Plan sets out how the Council will deliver services for the next three years. It provides the route map for the council, for managers, Councillors and the public. Without such a plan the effectiveness of the Council would be significantly compromised and reduced.

Background Papers

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Minutes 9 January 2011
Cabinet agenda papers for 22 December 2010