

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE EXECUTIVE

Decision Made: Wednesday 27 July 2022

Corporate Planning Timetable

Issue for Decision

- 1.1 To approve that the strategic plan milestones for 2021/26 should be refreshed for 2023/2028 to ensure alignment with the priorities of the administration and changes in the short to medium term context for local government services including the Levelling Up White Paper and the evolving financial environment including the impact of significant inflation.

The strategic plan continues to provide an appropriate overall framework.

Decision Made

That the Strategic Plan 2019-2045 milestones for 2023-28 be refreshed and the corporate planning timetable at 3.5 of the report be approved.

Reason for Decision

- 2.1 The Strategic Plan is a core element of the Council's corporate planning. The priorities and outcomes in the Strategic Plan are developed alongside the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to ensure consistency between priorities, service delivery and budgets. Service Planning allows the Council to convert high level priorities from the Strategic Plan into actions for each directorate, service or team across the Council, which then feeds into individual staff priorities.
- 2.2 In previous years the Policy and Resources Committee and the Executive have been asked annually to consider whether to refresh the existing Strategic Plan, create a new one or leave it as is. A timetable of activity is then planned around this and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Process. The proposed timetable of activities includes a period of public consultation on the 2023/4 budget as required by law, it also includes the resident survey undertaken every three years (previously undertaken in 2017, disrupted by COVID-19) and reports to Policy Advisory Committees (PACs), the Executive and Council on the Strategic Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget.
- 2.3 The current Strategic Plan was adopted in December 2018 and covers the period until 2045. The plan was agreed after careful analysis and consultation. The decision was taken for it to be a 26-year plan to ensure continuity, and a basis on which all other Maidstone Borough Council plans and strategies could be developed. It was last updated in 2020 with a review of the areas of focus for 2021/26, the main changes agreed were:
 - A focus on delivering those actions in the new Economic Development Strategy (EDS) that will promote economic recovery from COVID-19

- Delivering a sustainable and vibrant leisure and cultural offer
- Working with community groups and parish councils to develop community resilience and pride in our Borough
- Promoting inward investment; and
- Identifying opportunities with partners to reduce health inequalities in the Borough.

2.4 It would be timely to revisit the outcomes the Council aims to achieve in the areas of focus for the next five years including the performance indicators used to measure progress of the Council's priorities due to a number of factors arising from change in context set out below.

2.5 A review of the strategic plan areas of focus would allow the council to consider national and local changes of importance including and not limited to:

- Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: The Bill seeks to put into place a robust framework for levelling up through:
 - Providing a legal basis for the setting and reporting against the levelling up missions
 - Devolving powers to all areas in England that want them, providing more control over budgets, transport and skills
 - Empowering local leaders to regenerate towns and cities and restore local pride in place
 - Improving the planning process
- Financial Inclusion and the cost-of-living Crisis The cost-of-living crisis is an issue affecting the borough's residents and businesses. Teams across the Council have been working to provide both its own and central government initiatives in supporting local residents. This is evidenced through the Council's Recovery and Renewal Plan following the Covid-19 pandemic, the Financial Inclusion Strategy, ongoing development of the Town Centre Strategy and the Mid-Kent Skills Hub. The Discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme as introduced by Central Government is also in the process of being administered.

- Financial Resilience of the Council

The Council will need to consider how it reconciles its strategic objectives with the requirement to maintain financial resilience and set a balanced budget given the risk of continued high inflation and negligible (or negative) economic growth.

- Kent County Council (KCC) Strategic Statement – "Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy 2022-2026". The Strategy sets four priorities for Kent, a refresh of our own strategy milestones will consider whether and how we align to these priorities including opportunities to work together:
 - Levelling up Kent "This includes strengthening the county's economy, helping people gain the skills they need, continuing to support schools, a particular focus on improving life in deprived communities in coastal areas and working with our partners to improve the health of Kent's population."

- Infrastructure for Communities “This includes taking an ‘Infrastructure First’ approach to new development, improving digital connectivity and access, supporting our rural areas, ensuring people have access to safe and efficient travel options and that all communities can benefit from a strong social infrastructure.”
- Environmental Step Change “This includes protecting and strengthening our natural environment, working with our partners towards Kent being Net Zero by 2050, exploring options for carbon zero energy production and use, and ensuring that the county is well placed to adapt to climate change.”
- New Models of Care and Support “This includes integrating our social care and public health services with our partners, supporting vulnerable children and families, helping adults who draw on social care to lead the lives they want to live and improving the way we design and deliver our care and support services.”
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Maidstone Local Investment Plan prioritises building the reputation of our town and pride in place through promotion of the town centre with investment in events, lighting and greening with increased heritage and culture.
- Ambitions were already identified by the Leader in the speech to the Annual Council meeting for a review of key strategies and policies including development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy, Policies and Plans relating to the Local Plan including the Integrated Transport Policy, Community Infrastructure Levy, Social Housing Allocations Policy. Alongside a commitment to acquiring at least an additional 1,000 affordable homes was reiterated as well as a commitment to expand financial inclusion and promoting and restoring pride in our Borough.

3. Policy Advisory Committee Feedback

- 3.1 This issue was considered by the Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee on 13 July 2022 and the following recommendation made:

‘That the Strategic Plan 2019-2045 milestones for 2023-2028 be refreshed and the corporate timetable contained within 3.5 of the report be recommended to the Executive for approval’.

4. Alternatives considered and why rejected

Option 1 – Retain and refresh the existing strategic plan.

- 4.1 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 relevant.
- 4.2 In-light of the significant impact of the pandemic, the new priorities of the administration, national changes and projects underway within the Council work will now need to be carried out to refresh our outcomes for 2021/26 to a refreshed set of outcomes for 2023/28 in the plan. This will not mean rewriting

our vision or priorities, work will be focused on the actions for the next five years.

4.3 A refresh of the Strategic Plan would include:

- Review and amendment of areas of focus for 2023/28
- Refresh of any contextual information in the document such as statistics
- New foreword.

4.4 Outlined below is a proposed timetable for updating the Strategic Plan and development of budget proposals.

Corporate Planning Timetable

Date	Action
27 July 2022	Executive consider the corporate planning timetable
July 2022- August 2022	Resident Survey – Using Bang the Table and Roadshows
September 2022	Informal Executive Away Day (budget and strategic plan focus)
September 2022	Budget Survey – Using Bang the Table
August - December 2022	Work on refreshing the Strategic Plan and detailed budget proposals/priorities (Executive and Wider Leadership Team)
December 2022	Strategic Plan Proposals considered by Policy Advisory Committees formally at Committee Meetings
January 2023	PACS consider the final proposals on the Budget and Strategic Plan for recommendation to the Executive
February 2023	Executive approve the Strategic Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy to be considered at full Council on 22 February 2023

Option 2 – Create a new Strategic Plan

4.5 creating a new Strategic Plan would have a substantially greater impact on resources. The timetable proposed would need to be revisited and this could have an impact on work elsewhere as this would take substantially more time and involvement from the Executive and Senior Officers.

Option 3 – Amend or create a new timetable for a new strategic plan

4.6 The timetable proposed could be amended for the refresh of the plan. Members would need to consider the impact that this would have on other priorities. The corporate planning timetable proposed includes the development of the MTFS which is also included on this agenda.

Option 4 – Do not refresh the strategic plan

4.7 Councillors may identify that the current plan does not need refreshing. Whilst the vision, priorities and cross cutting objectives are long-term and therefore would not need redrafting; this would miss the opportunity to look again at the shorter-term outcomes we want to achieve to determine if they are fit for purpose in light of the impact of COVID-19, national and local priorities and the changing context.

Background Papers

None.

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.



Signed: _____
Leader of the Council – Councillor David Burton

Full details of the report for the decision and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#).

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm 4 August 2022**