

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

27 FEBRUARY 2013

REPORT OF THE CABINET HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2013

REFRESH OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-14

Issue for Decision

Council are asked to agree the refreshed strategic plan.

Recommendation Made

1. That the refreshed Strategic Plan 2013-14 (as attached at Appendix A) be approved.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive to make minor amendments, in consultation with the Leader, as required.

Reasons for Recommendation

The Cabinet considered the report of the Leader and Chief Executive regarding the refreshed Strategic Plan 2013-14.

In September 2012 the Cabinet agreed that the Strategic Plan for 2011-15 be retained and refreshed rather than a new plan being produced. The 2012-13 refresh of the Strategic Plan focused on developing and aligning the council's priorities to what matters most for the Maidstone Community and resulted in the Outcomes being increased from 6 to 7. The refresh for 2013-14 was focused on updating the action plans for the outcomes.

The refreshed Strategic Plan attached at Appendix A to the report of the Leader and Chief Executive was approved by Cabinet on 19 December 2012 for consultation. At the meeting Councillor Mrs Gooch requested that information on tourism in the priorities section be updated and that parishes be included in the strategy map. This was agreed by Cabinet and these changes have been incorporated. The report was then presented to Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Attached at Appendix B to the report of the Leader and Chief Executive were recommendations made by the Committee with responses. The majority of recommendations have been incorporated.

The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out a vision for Maidstone which can be distilled into great opportunity, great place and great people. This also reflects the Council's three priorities to have a growing economy, be a decent place to live and achieve corporate and customer excellence. During the past year the council has put in place a programme of employee engagement to engage all staff with the council's priorities in order to achieve the outcomes set out in the strategic plan.

The Council will continue to face tough economic challenges over the forthcoming years, the priorities and outcomes identified in the Strategic Plan are aligned with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The service planning process then allows these objectives to be translated into actions for each team in the Council. Financial resources distributed by central government to local government for 2012/13 will be further reduced. There will also be changes in funding mechanisms, for example the move from rate support grant to localisation of business rates which introduces uncertainty and increases risk for the Council. Changes to the arrangement for council tax benefits discount also increase uncertainty and risk for the Council. The Chancellor's Autumn Statement set out that Local Authorities will be exempt from the 1% reduction on Departmental Resource Budgets in 2013-2014. However there will be a 2% reduction in funding for Local Authorities in 2014-2015. As a District Council it is likely that the funding cut in real terms will be significantly more than 2%. A budget strategy report is also included on the Cabinet Agenda.

The refreshed Strategic Plan 2013-14 attached at Appendix A, includes:

- Changes to the national context section in light of the implementation of the Localism Act and other changes such as the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Updates to the local context section as a result of the resident survey.
- Revised dates and updated actions for the action plans relating to each outcome where appropriate.

The performance targets and measures will be reviewed and updated at the end of the year as part of the annual performance management cycle.

An update on the 26 Strategic Plan Actions was given as part of the mid-year review of performance in November 2012. The majority of actions are on track with progress across all outcomes. Following publication of the mid year update the timetable for Local Development Framework and associated documents has slipped. An update on the timetable was provided for Cabinet and Scrutiny in November 2012 . The following progress can be reported:

- The Core Strategy has been out to public consultation.
- The Economic Development Strategy has been reviewed.
- A revised Housing Allocation Strategy has been agreed for consultation.
- A new waste contract has been procured jointly for Maidstone, Ashford and Swale and integrated with waste disposal arrangements procured by Kent County Council, to take effect in summer 2013.
- A democratic Engagement action plan has been agreed and is being progressed.
- A new correspondence recording and management IT system has been purchased and the complaint handling module has been rolled out.
- The Customer Centricity project, which is reviewing how the Council interacts with our customers, has completed its first phase and potential changes are currently the subject of consultation with the public and councillors.

- Investors in People benchmark assessment has been undertaken; which identified five key actions focussed on engagement, learning and development and support for managers.
- The appointment of a business champion and investment in commercial opportunities.

Alternatives considered and why not recommended

Council could decide not to update the Strategic Plan. However, this would lead to out of date information being publicly available and make it difficult for officers to maintain the 'golden thread'. The Council also needs to be able to demonstrate how it is reacting to changes in the local and national context.

Alternatively Council could request the development of a new plan. However, this is not recommended as the development of a new plan would require additional resources and there is a risk it would not be produced in time for the new financial year. There is not a demonstrable need for a radical re-think of the Council's priorities and strategic direction as our focus remains on economic development as a number one priority for the residents of Maidstone.

Background Papers

None