

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE SERVICES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

7 JANUARY 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Report prepared by Georgia Hawkes

1. REFRESH OF THE CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2014-17

1.1 Issue for Consideration

1.1.1 To consider the Council's improvement journey detailed in the draft Corporate Improvement Plan 2014-17 (Appendix A).

1.2 Recommendation of Head of Finance and Resources

1.2.1 That Overview and scrutiny consider the draft Corporate Improvement Plan 2014-17 and make any recommendations to Cabinet.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Council has set the priorities and outcomes for the borough of Maidstone in its Strategic Plan. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out what will be spent and where savings will be made. In order to deliver the priority outcomes and the savings required, a number of key pieces of work and projects will be carried out. These are detailed in the draft Corporate Improvement Plan 2014-17, which ensures the improvement work is aligned with the Strategic Plan and the MTFS and looks at the work required to 2017.

1.3.2 The Improvement Plan 2012-15 was first adopted in February 2012 and refreshed as the Improvement Plan 2013-16 in February 2013. Progress on the Improvement Plan 2013-16 was reported to Overview and Scrutiny with the Strategic Plan Performance Report in December 2013. Some key improvements implemented in the first 6 months of this year are:

- Launch of a new more customer focussed website
- Embedding of the new ICT shared service

- Launch of the new waste contract
- Commercial waste service on target to achieve 150 customers in first 12 months of operation
- Business cases for Environmental Health and Planning Support agreed
- Transfer of Hazlitt Arts Centre to Parkwood Leisure

1.3.3 In this current refresh of the plan, the title has been changed to Corporate Improvement Plan to reflect the need of input from across the Council to deliver the improvement work required. Text from the previous version of the Improvement Plan that has been deleted in this new draft version of the Corporate Improvement Plan is shown as crossed through and any text that has been added is shown in italics.

1.3.4 The three objectives of the draft Corporate Improvement Plan shown below remain sound:

1. A reduction in net cost, through making savings or increased income
2. Improving or maintaining quality: ensuring we deliver excellent services, which means delivering what is promised to agreed standards
3. Identifying and responding to opportunities aligned with the Strategic Plan

1.3.5 However, the workstreams have been changed to reflect the growing need for the Council to become more self-sufficient and viable for the future through being more efficient and effective, bringing in additional income, using our assets wisely and helping our residents and customers to do more for themselves. The enablers have also been revised slightly to make them clearer and align better with the aims and strategic direction of the Council set out in the Strategic Plan and to include appropriate recommendations from the recent Corporate Peer Review. Therefore, the following improvement workstreams (1-4) and enablers (5-8) are proposed:

1. Efficiency and effectiveness
2. Income generation
3. Asset management
4. Empowerment and self sufficiency
5. Organisational culture
6. Councillor assurance
7. Commissioning and procurement
8. Effective use of technology

1.3.6 The other main changes in the draft Corporate Improvement Plan 2014-17 from the previous version are:

- Maidstone Culture and Leisure, Bereavement Services and Environmental Services have been added to the list of priority services for improvement and ICT and Hazlitt Arts Centre have been removed as the ICT shared service is now embedded and the Hazlitt services will now be delivered by Parkwood Leisure
- The major assets improvement project has been broadened to include considerations of long term options for Council accommodation in the future and future use of the Town Hall
- Cross-organisational collaboration has been removed from the improvement projects as arrangements like the Troubled Families joint programme are now in place
- Exploring Right to Bid has been added to the community asset transfer improvement project
- Corporate peer review has been removed as a priority improvement project as the review has been carried out and the recommendations have been reflected in this draft version of the Corporate Improvement Plan
- Information and knowledge management has been added as a priority project rather than an enabler because of the need to focus on the delivery of recommendations from the recently completed Information Management review
- Commercial property investment has been added as a priority project
- Digital inclusion and financial inclusion have been added as priority improvement projects to reflect the need for the Council to support its residents in becoming more self-sufficient

1.3.7 The priority services and projects in the draft Corporate Improvement Plan 2014-17 are based on priorities in the Strategic Plan, our current knowledge of any external or internal opportunities and potential for improvement and/or reduction in net cost. The full list is as follows:

- Waste and Recycling
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Maidstone Culture and Leisure
- Customer Services
- Revenues and Benefits
- Planning
- Environmental Services
- Bereavement Services

- Finance
- Building Control
- Corporate Support
- Integrated Transport Strategy
- Major assets review
- Right to bid and community asset transfer
- Mid Kent Improvement Partnership shared services and operational model
- Information and knowledge management
- Commercial property investment
- Digital inclusion
- Financial inclusion

1.3.8 Compiling a Corporate Improvement Plan allows the key workstreams to be brought together and monitored. A working group made up of officers responsible for each of the workstreams and enablers, the Chief Executive, Director of Environment and Shared Services and the Leader make up a monitoring group to ensure the plan progresses and benefits are delivered:

- Leader – provides political leadership and councillor assurance (as defined in the Improvement Plan)
- Chief Executive - accountable for delivery of Improvement Plan
- Head of Finance & Customer Services – responsible for Efficiency and effectiveness and Asset Management workstreams and Commissioning and Procurement enabler
- Head of Commercial and Economic Development – responsible for Income generation workstream
- Head of Housing and Communities – responsible for Empowerment and self-sufficiency workstream
- Head of HR – responsible for Organisational culture enabler
- Head of ICT – responsible for Use of technology enabler
- Head of Change & Scrutiny – essential to ensure alignment to the Strategic Plan and corporate direction of the Council

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 Cabinet could decide not to agree the draft Corporate Improvement Plan for consultation with Overview & Scrutiny. This is not recommended as the Improvement Plan is essential for allowing oversight of a number of different pieces of work across the organisation. It is aligned with the Strategic Plan and MTFs and it is recommended that it is consulted on in the same way as these documents

1.4.2 Cabinet could decide to alter the draft Improvement Plan 2014-17 more fundamentally from the Plan for 2013-16. This is not recommended as it is felt that the few changes already incorporated are sufficient to ensure the Improvement Plan is relevant for the next three years.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The draft Improvement Plan 2014-17 contains projects that will have a positive effect on all the priorities and outcomes for Maidstone set out in the Strategic Plan. However, the priority that it aligns with most is Corporate and Customer Excellence, outcome “the Council will continue to have value for money services that residents are satisfied with”, because of the objectives in the Improvement Plan of reducing net cost whilst improving or maintaining quality.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 The draft Improvement Plan and associated governance minimises the risk that important projects will not be undertaken or will not deliver and that new opportunities are missed.

1.6.2 There is still a risk that the Council does not have the resources, both in terms of staff time or money to undertake the projects envisaged in the draft Improvement Plan. However, the plan minimises the risk that effort will be put into pieces of work that are not deemed to be a priority and will allow corporate resources to be devoted to the priorities stated in the draft Improvement Plan.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

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|----|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Financial | X |
| 1. | Staffing | X |
| 2. | Legal | X |
| 3. | Equality Impact Needs Assessment | |
| 4. | Environmental/Sustainable Development | |
| 5. | Community Safety | |
| 6. | Human Rights Act | |

- 7. Procurement
- 8. Asset Management

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|---|
| X |
| X |

Financial and staffing

1.7.2 An objective of the draft plan is to reduce net cost. This could be by reducing cost, including possibly reducing numbers of staff, or by increasing income, which would have an effect on the work that staff carry out.

Legal

1.7.3 A number of the projects are likely to require legal advice and support.

Procurement and asset management

1.7.4 Asset management is a workstream in the Improvement Plan and procurement is an important enabler in achieving improvement.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix A – Improvement Plan 2013-16 (also contains appendix 1)

1.8.2 Background documents

- Improvement Plan 2012-15
- Improvement Plan 2013-16

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

THIS BOX MUST BE COMPLETED

Yes

No

If yes, this is a Key Decision because:

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Wards/Parishes affected:

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