

Agenda Item No: 4
Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting: 11th June 2024
Report Title: Draft Borough Plan 2024-28.
Report Author & Job Title: Charlotte Hammersley. Head of Policy and Performance
Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Heather Hayward
Portfolio Holder for: Performance and Direction



Summary: The Borough Plan provides the overarching strategic vision and objectives to guide the council's Cabinet in planning its work programme over a four-year period (2024-2028). It also sets the performance framework to ensure that the council is on target to achieve its objectives.

The draft Borough Plan has been developed over the past year and has three themes – Planet, People and Place.

The draft Plan is currently subject to a public consultation to further inform its development before being adopted later in the year. As part of the consultation, the views of the Overview and Committee are sought.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: (i)The Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the draft plan.
(ii)Any views expressed by the committee are captured and considered together with the wider public consultation responses to inform the final version that will be submitted to the Full Council.

Policy Overview: The Borough Plan (Corporate Plan) is the main strategic document of the council.

Financial Implications: Achievable objectives have been developed that recognise the need to retain financial stability. The new Plan will ensure the council continues to align its resources with its priorities, and revenue budgets and capital projects will be expected to support and deliver the aims and objectives set out in the Plan. Both the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the objectives will be regularly reviewed to ensure alignment. Larger projects will be brought forward when a sound business case has been completed and will be subject to

individual approvals.

Legal Implications: <i>Text agreed by Solicitor to the Council on 02/04/2024)</i>	Potential Equality Act implications of the plan have been assessed and are included with the report. As individual projects and proposals are developed all necessary legal advice and support will be provided at the appropriate time.
Equalities Impact Assessment:	See attached.
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	The public consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy. An impact assessment is not required as no large-scale personal data processing or surveillance will be taking place.
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	A refreshed Risk Appetite Statement is included within the draft Borough Plan. The level of risk appropriate to each objective will be determined as that objective is brought forward.
Sustainability Implications:	The draft Borough Plan sets out that tackling climate change and encouraging nature recovery are at the core of all objectives. The Planet theme's objectives are directly related to this. In achieving the other objectives, the expectation is that every step will be assessed to understand any impact on the environment. Where a positive impact cannot be achieved and other priorities mean it is necessary to deliver the objective, action to mitigate any adverse impacts will be put in place.
Other Material Implications:	None.
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	<u>Corporate Plan 2022-24</u> <u>Ashford Ambition Report</u>
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Introduction and Background

1. Our Plan for the Borough is the council's corporate plan and apex of the council's business planning process. It describes in strategic terms the council's priorities for the period 2024-2028. From this plan, and from the detail contained in the council's policies and strategies, operational plans and team and personal objectives flow.
2. The council's current Corporate Plan covers the period 2022-24 and is therefore coming to the end of its life. As the main strategic document for the council, setting out the priorities for the next 4 years, it is important that the next Plan is in place before the end of 2024.
3. The current Corporate Plan was in place for a shorter period than normal due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, much has been achieved over this relatively short timescale as demonstrated in the council's Annual reports which track our progress against our objectives.
4. It is intended that some of the themes and projects from the 2022-24 plan will continue into this plan and the new Borough Plan sets out some of our achievements as well as looking forward.

Developing a Draft Borough Plan 2024-28

5. The Cabinet and Management Team have been working together to draft the next Corporate Plan which will be known as 'Our Plan for the Borough 2024-2028'. Referred to in this report as the draft Borough Plan.
6. The draft Borough Plan has been informed by a series of discussions as noted below. The objectives of the plan fall under three themes: Planet, People and Place. The need to tackle climate change, encourage nature recovery and support communities to be sustainable are central to the plan. The importance of these priorities is explained in the text, illustrated with examples of the council's achievements in recent years and expanded upon with the introduction of priorities for the 2024 – 2028 period. These three themes and objectives together with our principles for service delivery will guide all that we do over the next four years.
7. In October 2023, a forward planning session was held for Cabinet Members and Management Team. The session was used to review the previously commissioned Ashford Ambition report which set a vision for the borough to 2030. Within the context of this vision, the current priorities and objectives were considered together with the challenges facing the borough.
8. A revised set of objectives were formed from this discussion.

9. The draft objectives were circulated to the Senior Leadership Team and a drop-in session for Cabinet Members held in January 2024 to further refine the Plan.
10. The draft Borough Plan was informed by these discussions. This draft was circulated to all members for comment in February 2024. The council's new consultation software, Engagement HQ, was used as a trial ahead of it being used for wider public consultation.

Proposal

11. Members of this Committee are asked to consider the draft Borough Plan 2024-2028 (appendix 1) as part of the consultation process. Any views will be captured and considered along with the wider public consultation results.

Equalities Impact Assessment

12. Members are referred to the attached Assessment (Appendix 2). There are no adverse impacts identified.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

13. From October 2023 to February 2024, there has been ongoing discussion with Cabinet Members and Management Team to shape the content of the Borough Plan and its objectives.
14. The Member consultation run in February 2024 has contributed to further refining the draft Borough Plan.
15. An online public consultation is proposed to run from the beginning of May 2024 for six weeks.
16. A presentation to Corporate Management Team (Officers in a management position) will encourage staff to be familiar with the draft Borough Plan and to promote the consultation to external partners through existing meetings and forums.
17. The Plan is currently out for public consultation and this Committee's views are sought during this consultation period.

Equalities objectives

18. A refresh of the Council's Equality Objectives is undertaken every four years and runs concurrently with Borough Plan cycle.
19. Consultees will be asked for comments on the draft Equalities Objectives, that form part of the Plan.

20. Comments received during the public consultation will be used to amend, if necessary, the Equalities Objectives. The council's Equalities Policy will then be reviewed.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

21. Putting forward views as part of the public consultation will help ensure the council is addressing issues and taking forward projects that are important to the local community.

Next Steps in Process

22. The outcomes of the public consultation and any proposed amendments to the draft Borough Plan will be submitted to the Senior Leadership Team for consideration.
23. Present a final draft of the Borough Plan to Cabinet for recommendation to adopt at Full Council.
24. Publish the adopted Borough Plan 2024-28 on the Council's website.

Conclusion

25. Consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will inform the further development of the Plan thus enabling us to set a strategic vision and objectives for the next four years and provide a framework for forward planning and performance management.

Contact and Email

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