

## **COUNCIL**

**10 OCTOBER 2019**

### **MEDWAY COUNCIL STRATEGY**

Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Adrian Gulvin, Portfolio Holder for Resources
Report coordinated by:	Phil Watts, Chief Finance Officer
Contributors:	Children and Adults – Directorate Management Team Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation – Directorate Management Team Public Health Business Support

#### **Summary**

The Council Plan 2016/21 was agreed at Full Council in February 2016 and covers the Council's strategic objectives up to 2021. It sets out the Council's three priorities and three ways of working which aim to deliver these priorities.

This report proposes the introduction of a new overarching Council Strategy; which will be a shorter, more outcomes focused document than the current Council Plan, without all of the detailed performance measures and delivery plans explaining how the strategic objectives are to be met.

Following consultation with directorates and initial consideration by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet, this report presents the draft Medway Council Strategy for approval.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1. There is no statutory requirement for local authorities to prepare a Council Plan. The Council Plan 2016/21 was agreed at Full Council in February 2016 and covers the Council's strategic objectives up to 2021. It sets out the Council's three priorities and three ways of working which aim to deliver these priorities. It includes the measures we use to track performance.
- 1.2. The Council Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework, and approval of the Plan is therefore a matter for Full Council following consideration by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. It is proposed that the Council Strategy should be added to the list of Policy Framework documents, alongside the Council Plan.

## **2. Draft Council Strategy**

- 2.1. In business terms, a strategy document identifies what needs to be done to achieve a long term or overall aim, with good organisational strategies being high level documents that set the vision and key overarching objectives. Organisational strategies are typically supported by detailed operational delivery plans that explain in detail how the strategy will be executed. For many years Medway Council has prepared a Council Plan which attempted to be both our strategy and delivery plan. This detailed and fairly lengthy document has set out both the Council's high level objectives and also detailed the programmes of work and the performance measures that will be used to measure its effectiveness in delivering those objectives. The Council Plan did not document the Council's Vision Statement.
- 2.2. Following a review of the corporate reporting timetable involving the Council's key strategies or plans it was concluded that a new overarching Council Strategy should be introduced. This Strategy is intended to set the Council's vision, and be a more outcomes focused document than the current Council Plan, without all of the detailed performance measures and delivery plans explaining how the strategic objectives are to be met.
- 2.3. The Strategy will be supported by the detailed performance measures and delivery plans which will continue to be included in the Council Plan, and this will be considered by Cabinet and Full Council in line with the Revenue and Capital Budgets in February 2020 as in previous years.
- 2.4. The Finance Strategy team have liaised with Communications, the Leader of the Council and the Corporate Management Team on the development of the new strategy document, a draft of which is provided at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.5. Following consideration by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet, the Council Strategy is now presented for approval by Full Council.
- 2.6. Subject to the approval of the Council Strategy, the Council Plan will be presented to:

Business Support O&S Committee	30 January 2020
Cabinet	04 February 2020
Full Council	20 February 2020
- 2.7. A Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out for this Strategy; this did not identify any adverse impacts and as such no additional actions are required. A copy of the Diversity Impact Assessment is presented at Appendix 3 to the report.

## **3. Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 22 August 2019**

- 3.1. The Council Strategy was presented to Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 August 2019 and details of the discussion are set out below.

- 3.2. Members considered a report which proposed the introduction of a new overarching Council Strategy; which would be a shorter, more outcomes focused document than the current Council Plan, without all of the detailed performance measures and delivery plans explaining how the strategic objectives were to be met.
- 3.3. The Chief Finance Officer advised that this was a new document which included the strategic objectives of the existing Council Plan. The latter would contain the measures and targets needed to fulfil those objectives and would be agreed in February. This was part of a broader plan whereby the main strategies of the Council would be agreed in September and aligned together with an annual refresh. The detailed plans would then follow in the revenue budget, capital programme and Council Plan.
- 3.4. Several Members commented that they could see little value in the document, which would be useful for marketing purposes but contained insufficient detail for the scrutiny purposes and was often too vague. Therefore it was not a document which warranted being added to the Policy Framework. Another Member disagreed and felt it was a positive, helpful document.
- 3.5. The Committee agreed to:
  - a) note the draft Council Strategy and forward the Committee's comments, as set out above, to Cabinet, prior to approval at Full Council; and
  - b) note that Cabinet will be asked to recommend to Council that the Council Strategy be added as a Policy Framework document and that paragraph 4.1 of Article 4 (The Full Council) in Chapter 2 of the Constitution be amended accordingly.

#### **4. Cabinet – 24 September 2019**

- 4.1. The Cabinet considered this report on 24 September 2019 and made the following decisions:
  - The Cabinet noted the comments of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee set out at section 3 of the report.
  - The Cabinet recommended the proposed Council Strategy, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, to Full Council for approval (decision no. 102/2019).
  - The Cabinet recommended to Full Council that the Council Strategy be added as a Policy Framework document and that paragraph 4.1 of Article 4 (The Full Council) in Chapter 2 of the Constitution be amended, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report (decision no. 103/2019).
- 4.2. The Cabinet gave the following reasons for decision: The Council Strategy sets the high level objectives for the Council and will be under-pinned by the Council Plan which includes the detailed performance measures and delivery plans explaining how the strategic objectives are to be met.

## **5. Risk management**

- 5.1. As the Council's overarching strategy, risks related to the delivery of the Council Plan (including controls and mitigating actions) are developed through the Strategic Risk Register and the service planning process (in directorate business plans and service plans).
- 5.2. The local government environment is experiencing unprecedented change across multiple agendas – policy, finance, legal, and citizen and customer expectation. Continuing to communicate with key stakeholders through a clear Council Strategy and Plan with appropriate measures is a means to mitigate risks arising from a lack of strategic and corporate planning.

## **6. Financial and legal implications**

- 6.1. The Council Strategy and Council Plan should be developed alongside the budget setting process. This ensures the financial implications are considered during the development of the Council Plan. This is particularly important due to the current financial pressures faced by the Council due to ongoing Central Government funding cuts. This has placed an ever-increasing pressure to focus the Council's resources on areas of greatest need and demonstrate that value for money is achieved through the allocation of scarce resources.
- 6.2. There is no statutory requirement to have a Council Strategy or Plan. Members have decided to retain the Council Plan, as a key document to guide the business of the Council and communicate its direction. The Council Plan remains a Policy Framework document within the Council's Constitution and so a decision on refreshing the Plan's indicator set must be taken by Full Council. As the Council Strategy will sit above the Council Plan then this should also be approved by Full Council and Council should be recommended to add the Strategy to the list of Policy Framework documents.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 The Council is asked to note the comments of Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet as set out at sections 3 and 4 of the report respectively.
- 7.2 The Council is asked to agree the Council Strategy, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 7.3 The Council is asked to agree that the Council Strategy be added as a Policy Framework document and that paragraph 4.1 of Article 4 (The Full Council) in Chapter 2 of the Constitution be amended, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

**Lead officer contact**

Katey Durkin, Head of Finance Strategy, 01634 332355,  
[katey.durkin@medway.gov.uk](mailto:katey.durkin@medway.gov.uk)

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Draft Council Strategy

Appendix 2 – Proposed change to Article 4 of Chapter 2 the Constitution

Appendix 3 – Diversity Impact Assessment

**Background papers**

Council Plan 2016/21

[https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200138/your\\_council/342/the\\_council\\_plan](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200138/your_council/342/the_council_plan)