

## **REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**13 JANUARY 2022**

### **MEDWAY 2037 STRATEGY REFRESH**

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#### Summary

The Council is undertaking an intensive programme of strategy refresh and development spanning regeneration, economic development and employability and skills.

This report, and the SQW presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, will provide an update on the progress made to date, direction of travel and a programme for the completion of this work.

#### 1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1. The Council secured funding from the Additional Restrictions Grant Fund (ARG) to aid with the refresh of Medway 2035. SQW were successful during the Invitation to Quote tendering process and are now leading on the stakeholder consultancy for Medway 2037 on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2. The Medway 2037 strategy refresh will ensure Medway Council's core growth agenda responds to, and is aligned with, significant socio-economic, environmental, and technological challenges and opportunities, whilst also ensuring the Council is positioned to capitalise on both existing and emerging funding opportunities for the economic regeneration of Medway and delivering growth for all.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1. This programme of work commenced on 19 October 2021 and will be completed by 31 March 2022. A draft of the suite of strategic documents will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2022 before being taken to Cabinet on 5 April 2022.
- 2.2. A short presentation will be given by SQW at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 January 2022.

## **Overview of the existing strategy suite**

- 2.3. *Medway 2035, Skills and Employability Plan 2035* and the accompanying action plans were previously adopted by Medway Council. This scope of work will entail a refresh and update rather than a full-scale re-write.
- 2.4. The Council adopted an *Innovation Strategy* in 2014 which principally focused on the way the Council's innovation assets could proactively deliver innovation outcomes and support SMEs. It is proposed to substantively re-write the *Innovation Strategy*.
- 2.5. A draft *Town Centres Strategy* was prepared in 2018 which included SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) assessments of each of Medway's principal town centres and the identification of priority objectives and actions to support the strength, growth, and resilience of each town centre. This strategy was never formally adopted although has been used as a reference point by the economic development team.
- 2.6. The Council does not have either a draft or an adopted *River Strategy*, so this has been commissioned in its entirety.

## **Progress update**

- 2.7. Post inception, SQW have:
  - Developed detailed scopes for each strategy workstream
  - Facilitated a strategy workshop with Service Managers
  - Undertaken detailed review and analysis of existing strategies
  - Reviewed wider initiatives and policy agendas
  - Undertaken various consultations with internal and external stakeholders
  - Worked with officers to identify priority projects and prospective funding opportunities.

## **Key drivers**

- 2.8. One of the driving reasons for refreshing and developing the Council's strategy suite is the need to respond to key societal, socio-economic, and political agendas which are now highly material to Medway's growth agenda. These include:
  - Climate change – the net zero transition; opportunities presented by hydrogen
  - Levelling up – needs to be considered from local, regional, and national perspectives (White Paper from the Government expected in the new year); consider strategic funding alignment
  - (Post-) Covid impacts – changing patterns of living, working and consuming presenting both challenges and opportunities
  - Innovation – an increasingly prominent driver of economic growth; need to embed this throughout the Council's growth agenda

- Growth for all – growth that works for all people and places, building resilience
- Changing perceptions – continue to challenge perceptions and reflect Medway's City ambitions

2.9. It is important that the *Medway 2037* strategy suite responds to the inherent opportunities following the securing of £170m of HIF funding which will be transformational for the Hoo Peninsula and should form a core part of the Council's growth and economic development agenda.

### 3. Proposed Medway 2037 Structure

3.1 During this stage of the strategy refresh process, the principal options being considered relate to the overarching structure of the proposed strategy suite, alignment between strategies, key priorities, and objectives. This will be discussed in more detail during the presentation.

3.2 The core structure and six key priorities of *Medway 2035* are proposed to be largely retained. The majority of identified priorities remain strong and relevant. However, it is proposed that 'innovation' should be replaced as a priority by 'town centres'; additionally a small number of cross-cutting themes have been identified which it is proposed should be embedded throughout all six priorities: innovation, climate change & net zero, and growth for all.

3.3 It is proposed that this structure retains the strength and clarity of *Medway 2035* whilst ensuring that key policy and socio-economic drivers and agendas are embedded in the Council's economic development and growth strategy suite. This will enact a requirement of Medway Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2021.

3.4 Similarly, the strategy suite will include explicit alignment and interlinkages between the component strategies with a single, consolidated action and delivery plan which will be focused and streamlined with an emphasis on deliverability.

3.5 The proposed *Medway 2037* strategy suite will be aligned with all other relevant strategies and pick up on any relevant interlinkages to ensure growth for all. This will include embedding the principles of the Climate Change Action Plan 2021 throughout the strategy suite and linking to the Medway Cultural Strategy, Child-Friendly Medway initiative, emerging Medway Tourism Strategy, and emerging Sport Strategy.

#### **Identification of priority projects**

3.6 SQW are working closely with Duncan Ray, the Council's Interim External Investment Manager, to develop tools which can be easily used by the Council on an ongoing basis to ensure the Council is ready to respond to future funding and partnership opportunities.

3.7 The proposed tools will comprise two components:

- A project pro forma template setting out clear project information requirements to enable consistency for comparison and provide the baseline for future business case development. These tools will be developed in alignment with the HM Treasury Green Book guidance for business case preparation which forms the basis for all Government funding bid templates
- A prioritisation tool with a weighted scoring system to compare projects and identify priorities for the Council in terms of pursuing prospective funding opportunities

#### 4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 This report has provided an interim update of the progress being made concerning this programme of strategy refresh and development across the areas of regeneration, economic development, employment, and skills.
- 4.2 At this stage feedback is sought from Members regarding the following points:
- 4.2.1 General comments concerning the analysis and indicative direction of travel presented for each strategic document.
- 4.2.2 Initial thoughts on embedding the cross-cutting themes spanning all priorities: climate change & net zero, innovation, growth for all and 'Child-Friendly Medway'.
- 4.2.3 Member perspective on the principal challenges and opportunities relating to skills and employability.
- 4.2.4 Priority objectives and projects Members want to see delivered in Gillingham and Rainham town centres to complement the investments and interventions already underway and delivered in Strood, Rochester and Chatham.
- 4.3 The strategic documents will embed Medway Council's ethos to eliminate unlawful discrimination, actively promote equality of opportunity, growth for all, and foster good relations between different sections of the community through improving the quality of life and opportunities for everyone. Diversity Impact Assessments will be incorporated at key junctures to ensure all requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 are satisfied.

#### 5. Consultation

- 5.1 Targeted consultation is being undertaken for all workstreams including internal stakeholders within Medway Council, inclusive of relevant officers and Members. A full list of consultees has been agreed by the officer leads for each workstream. Public consultation is not proposed as part of this programme of work.

## 6. Climate change implications

- 6.1 In April 2019, Medway Council declared a climate change emergency. The council is committed to making Medway carbon neutral by 2050 and has developed an action plan to facilitate making a 'clean and green environment'. The aim is to ensure that climate change is incorporated and embedded into all relevant policies, strategies, plans and contracts.
- 6.2 This programme of strategy refresh and development is responding to Medway Council's adopted Climate Change Action Plan, specifically Key Priority Action 2 (Public Sector Decision Making) which includes a sub-action to embed climate change in all relevant Council plans and strategies.
- 6.3 Work is ongoing with Council Officers and SQW to embed climate change throughout the Medway 2037 strategy suite.

## 7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Approval was granted to use £100,000 of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) received from Central Government to fund the cost of the Medway 2037 Strategy. However, it is imperative that any payments allocated to the ARG funding are incurred prior to the 31 March 2022 when the use of this funding stream finishes.

## 8. Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications for this report.

## 9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Comments from Members are welcomed on the proposed suite of Strategies.

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## Appendices

None

## Background papers

Medway 2035

[https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200177/regeneration/455/medway\\_regeneration/2](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200177/regeneration/455/medway_regeneration/2)

Skills and Employability Plan 2035

[https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200341/medway\\_for\\_business/941/skills\\_and\\_employment](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200341/medway_for_business/941/skills_and_employment)

Medway Innovation Strategy 2014 – 2019 <https://innovationcentremedway.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/strategy.pdf>

Cultural Strategy 2020 – 2030 <http://medwayculturalstrategy.co.uk/the-strategy/#:~:text=Medway%E2%80%99s%20Cultural%20Strategy%20runs%20from%202020%20to%202030,them.%20It%20is%20based%20on%20two%20core%20beliefs%3A>

Local Plan -

[https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200149/planning\\_policy/519/new\\_medway\\_local\\_plan](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200149/planning_policy/519/new_medway_local_plan)

Chatham Town Centre masterplan (November 2019) –

[https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/4524/chatham\\_town\\_centre\\_masterplan](https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/4524/chatham_town_centre_masterplan)

Gillingham Town Centre masterplan (November 2019) –

[https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/4525/gillingham\\_town\\_centre\\_masterplan](https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/4525/gillingham_town_centre_masterplan)

Strood Town Centre masterplan (December 2019) -

[https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/4523/strood\\_town\\_centre\\_masterplan](https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/4523/strood_town_centre_masterplan)