

NORTH NORFOLK CORPORATE PLAN - REVIEW OF DELIVERY FEBRUARY 2020 – OCTOBER 2022 AND AGREEMENT OF PRIORITY OBJECTIVES FOR THE PERIOD TO THE FULL COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN MAY 2023

Summary:

Following the District Council elections in May 2019 the Council developed and agreed a Corporate Plan in November 2019 and a Delivery Plan in February 2020, which detailed the authority's key priorities and objectives over the four-year period to 2023.

Soon after agreement of the Delivery Plan the COVID pandemic spread to the UK and much of the Council's focus during 2020 moved towards a response to this unprecedented situation supporting our residents and businesses. Over the following two and a half years the Council has balanced its response to the pandemic and new and emerging situations including delivery of the Homes for Ukraine programme locally and the rising cost of living pressures whilst delivering against the Delivery Plan objectives and maintaining core service provision.

During this time the Cabinet has reviewed the Delivery Plan objectives and actions in October 2020 and November 2021 reviewing progress and setting priorities for the forthcoming twelve months.

This report details the progress made in delivering against the Delivery Plan and outlines where priority focus will be directed over the next six months – ie until the Full Council elections in May 2023, following which the newly elected Council will have an opportunity to develop a new Corporate Plan.

Options considered:

Given the changing context in which the Council has needed to operate over the period since March 2020 due to COVID and issues arising as a result of the war in Ukraine, the Council could have resolved not to progress any of the Corporate Plan objectives because of the need to direct capacity and resources in responding to those unprecedented world events.

However, the Cabinet has considered the capacity of the Council to take forward actions detailed in the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan, sometimes over extended timescales, reflecting the changed context in which the Council has had to operate.

The alternative options considered were:-

- do nothing to re-profile the Delivery Plan actions, or
- agree to “pause” all Delivery Plan actions and concentrate on the COVID, Homes for Ukraine and cost of living pressures responses and Business As Usual service provision.

Conclusions:

The report details a practical and measured response to the Council prioritising its Delivery Plan actions for the remaining period of this Council administration – ie through until May 2023.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is asked to review and comment on the progress made against the original and revised Delivery Plan objectives and agree those objectives where they would wish focus to be directed over the period to May 2023.

Reasons for Recommendations:

To reflect the changed circumstances in which the Council has operated over the period since March 2020 in seeking to balance its Corporate Plan priorities against unforeseen developments such as COVID and the war in Ukraine.

Cabinet Member(s) Cllr Tim Adams, Leader of the Council	Ward(s) affected All
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Following the May 2019 District Council elections, the Council adopted a new Corporate Plan, for the period through until 2023, in November 2019. The Cabinet then agreed a detailed Delivery Plan detailing the specific actions which would be undertaken to deliver the Corporate Plan objectives at its meeting of 3rd February 2020.
- 1.2 The Corporate Plan has six priority themes, with actions proposed in the Delivery Plan under each of these theme headings:-
- Local Homes for Local Need
 - Boosting Business Sustainability and Growth
 - Customer Focus
 - Climate, Coast and the Environment
 - Financial Sustainability and Growth
 - Quality of Life

In total some 39 objectives were to be delivered through 90 detailed actions over the period through until 2023.

- 1.3 Within a matter of weeks following agreement of the Delivery Plan, the rapidly developing Coronavirus pandemic situation meant that national and local focus turned to responding to this unprecedented event. At that time the Council's focus moved to strategic partnership working and frontline community response in supporting our residents who were shielding and self-isolating, and local businesses, which had to close during the national lockdown(s).
- 1.4 Whilst the demands on the Council in responding to the COVID pandemic initially reduced over the summer / autumn of 2020 allowing a re-prioritisation of the Delivery Plan actions in October 2020, incidences of COVID rose during the 2020/21 winter months (December 2020 – February 2021) and then again with the Omicron variant in the winter of 2021/22 (November 2021 – February 2022) meaning that the Council has had to direct resources and capacity to the pandemic response for a period of almost two years of the four-year Council term.
- 1.5 Further, in Spring 2022, the worsening security situation in Ukraine saw the UK Government offer refuge to people fleeing Ukraine and asked local authorities to assist with this situation through managing local delivery of the Homes for Ukraine programme. This has involved the Council's Environmental Health and People Services teams supporting our local response through undertaking property inspections and providing advice and support to hosts and guests with a range of issues including initial settlement advice, access to public services and, as time has passed, offering move on housing advice to some guests looking to remain in the UK for perhaps longer than initially anticipated as the situation back in the Ukraine remains uncertain.
- 1.6 This report therefore reviews the progress made against the original Corporate Plan and Delivery Plan objectives. This review is set in the context of wider reporting against the Council's Performance Management Framework and identifies those actions and projects upon which focus will be maintained over the remaining period of this Council administration – ie through until the District Council elections in May 2023.

2.0 The revised (November 2021) Delivery Plan priorities:-

2.1 The following objectives were identified by Cabinet under a re-focussed Delivery Plan, for delivery in the period November 2021 - October 2022.

2.2 Local Homes for Local Need

- Investigate the viability of methods to help reduce fuel poverty amongst vulnerable local residents in the context of rapidly rising fuel prices and the climate change / Net Zero Carbon agenda.
- Investigate ways to support and assist affordable housing providers, including the potential for a Council loan scheme for Registered Providers, to facilitate a supply of affordable homes for our communities, whilst supporting the Council's financial sustainability.
- Explore ways to help households into owner-occupation, including consideration of mortgage facilitation schemes; lending to allow people to buy their own home, meaning that more local people can remain in the communities that they call home.
- Increase the provision of Housing with Extra Care schemes in the District to provide increased choice and better quality outcomes for independent living by older people in the District.

2.3 Business Growth

- Develop a new Economic Growth Strategy for the District
- Re-purposing the High Street – to include leadership of the North Walsham Heritage Action Zone programme

2.4 Customer Focus

- Establish a training and development programme to enable all employees to deliver excellent customer focused services aimed at delivering the Customer Charter. This will give our teams, the skills, abilities and tools to deliver on our service commitment.
- Establish a Youth Council to give a stronger voice for younger people in Council decisions, specifically to:
 - better understand the views of younger people in the community
 - reflect opinions
 - identify actions
 - inform policy development
- Development of an Engagement Strategy to:
 - help define and design local priorities and policies
 - deliver and evaluate services
 - inform council decision-making in areas that impact on our residents lives

2.5 Climate, Coast and the Environment

- Ensure that the carbon impact of all activities are evidenced in all relevant decisions by establishing new processes/procedures for decision making and report writing
- Develop and implement targeted campaigns to educate and influence the consumption and waste practices of residents, communities and local businesses.
- Continue to develop and roll-out more rapidly the Council's programme of tree-planting in support of the stated ambition to plant 110,000 over the four-year term of this Council

2.6 Financial Sustainability and Growth

- Implement the outcomes of the Zero-Based Budgeting process
- Review the Car Parking Policy in order to maximise the revenue generated from car parking income, as an important source of funding for council services
- Explore options to expand Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) pilot following a review of the success of the EVCP pilot and expand it as required, based on the assessment of a business case

2.7 Quality of Life

- Develop a new Quality of Life Strategy for the District
- Deliver a minimum of 4 new Changing Place facilities in the District as part of the Council's objective of inclusion and accessibility for all
- Maintain and develop the quality and offer of our beaches, woodland and open spaces

2.8 The progress made in respect of these 18 priority objectives, as well as the original 39 Corporate Plan objectives agreed in February 2020 is reported in detail Appendix 1 attached to this report.

3.0 Priorities for the period to May 2023

3.1 Having reflected on the progress made against the priority objectives agreed in previous years (as per the appendix to this report); Cabinet has proposed the following priority objectives and actions to be pursued in the period November 2022 – May 2023.

3.2 Local Homes for Local Need

- Continue to investigate the viability of methods to help reduce fuel poverty amongst vulnerable local residents in the context of rapidly rising fuel prices and the climate change / Net Zero Carbon agenda
- Maintain focus on the numbers of people / households presenting as homeless to the Council to understand causes / reasons for

presentation and develop appropriate responses – cost of living pressures, longer-term accommodation for Ukrainian refugees

- Look to continue to increase the provision of Housing with Extra Care schemes in the District to provide increased choice and better quality outcomes for independent living by older people in the District

3.3 Business Growth

- Publish a new Economic Growth Strategy for the District
- Complete delivery of the North Walsham Heritage Action Zone programme
- Support the work of the High Street Task Force in undertaking community engagement work in Stalham in Qtr 1 of 2023
- Look to deliver the Levelling Up bids (if approved by Government) and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and England Rural Prosperity Fund programmes
- Continue to explore with private sector bodies and investors new investment opportunities in the District including in renewable energy schemes (hydrogen production, Carbon Capture and Storage), film studio proposals, new manufacturing and hospitality proposals.

3.4 Customer Focus

- Delivery of programme of Customer Service training throughout 2023.
- Further develop and embed the new Youth Council arrangements to give a stronger voice for younger people in Council decisions, specifically to:
 - better understand the views of younger people in the community
 - reflect opinions
 - identify actions
 - inform policy development

3.5 Climate, Coast and the Environment

- Progress discussions with DEFRA and the Environment Agency around detailed proposals to be delivered under the Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme
- Make an application to the Public Sector De-carbonisation Programme in seeking to further improve the carbon reduction performance of the Council's main office building
- Submit business case for installation of solar car port development at The Reef to Cabinet
- Conclude consultation on the review of the Glaven Valley Conservation Area

- Deliver the balance of 40,000 new trees during the 2022/23 planting season in support of the stated ambition to plant 110,000 over the four-year term of this Council

3.6 Financial Sustainability and Growth

- Deliver Cost of Living Summit and outcomes from the event which seek to provide support to residents facing hardship as a result of rising energy, food and housing costs
- Prepare 2023/24 Council budget in the face of increasing cost pressures on the local government sector whilst being mindful of our organisational position and the pressures our residents will face in meeting increased levels of Council Tax
- Implement and develop new engagement processes with Town and Parish Councils following introduction of new S106 planning agreement monitoring system so that funds are released in a timely manner to local communities in accordance with key development milestones

3.7 Quality of Life

- Develop policy and programmes with partners as appropriate in response to the Cost of Living pressures faced by the District's residents as a result of rising energy, food and housing costs
- Develop a new Play Strategy for the District
- Deliver new Changing Place facilities at North Walsham and Sheirngam and support development of detailed proposals at Holt and Stalham
- Production and publication of District Accessibility Guide
- Maintain and develop the quality and offer of our beaches, woodland and open spaces

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 The Director of Resources and Finance Team are to present an updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy and draft budget papers for the 2023/24 budget to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meetings in January and February 2023.

4.2 These key reports will describe the progress made in delivering the Corporate Plan objectives over the past three and a half years against the Delivery Plan Reserve and the anticipated costs involved in financing Delivery Plan proposals in the process of delivery and the context of the Council's wider financial position in relation to COVID, inflation and local government funding.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

6.0 Risks

6.1 Given the uncertainties which exist globally and nationally around energy supply and security, inflationary costs and the UK political response in the coming months, and how this might impact on the Council's agreed priorities – especially construction and contract inflation, there might be some risks for the Council in delivering against the Delivery Plan objectives proposed moving forward. However, it is believed that these risks are relatively small in terms of delivery of actions already in progress for the next six months.

6.2 These will however be significant issues for the new Council beyond May 2023 when it develops its Corporate Plan priorities translating manifesto commitments into a delivery programme for the period 2023 – 2027.

7.0 Sustainability

7.1. This report does not in itself raise any issues in respect of sustainability. However, it does detail the priority actions of the Council in seeking to respond to climate change issues within the Climate, Coast and the Environment theme within the Corporate Plan.

8.0 Equality and Diversity

8.1. This report does not in itself raise any issues in respect of equality and diversity. It does however identify key themes of housing, the economy, quality of life and customer service, all of which seek to address equality and diversity issues across the District and within the Council's delivery of services.

9.0 Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations

9.1. This report does not directly raise any issues relating to Crime and Disorder.

10.0 Recommendation:-

Cabinet is asked to confirm the revised Delivery Plan priorities as detailed in Section 3.0 of the report.