

**Agenda Item No: 4**

**Report to:** Cabinet (Budget)

**Date of Meeting:** 17 February 2014

**Report Title:** Draft Corporate Plan 2014/15 - 2016/17

**Report By:** Neil Dart  
Director of Corporate Resources

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To present the feedback from the consultation on the draft Corporate Plan and Budget for the period 2014/15 - 2016/17 for Members consideration.
2. To present a draft of the Corporate Plan 2014/15 - 2016/17.

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### **Recommendation(s)**

1. That the Cabinet recommends to the Council, that the content of the attached Part I and Part II documents form the basis of the Council's Corporate Plan 2014/15 - 2016/17, subject to the proviso that any significant amendment made to the Council's draft Budget be reflected in the final Corporate Plan text.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Corporate Resources, after consultation with the Leader of the Council to make further revisions as is considered necessary to the attached plan prior to publication to reflect decisions made on the Council's Budget, and to improve the design, layout and to use non-technical, user-friendly language.
3. That Part III of the Corporate Plan be produced to include a retrospective year-end report on performance and the actual Performance Indicator information for 2013/14; that this information be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in May, prior to consideration by the Cabinet in June 2014; and that the Council be asked to delegate authority to the Cabinet meeting on 9th June 2014 to agree Part III
4. That all who submitted views as part of the consultation process be thanked for their contributions.

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

The Council needs to approve the Corporate Plan as it is a statement of Hastings Borough Council's strategic direction to the end of 2016/17. It sets out how we will ensure that we successfully address our priorities, meet the needs of our communities, and ensure we have a strong dedicated and motivated workforce to deliver our

strategic priorities and the long-term goals of the Hastings and St Leonards Sustainable Community Strategy. Good practice requires that the Council refresh its rolling 3 year plan each year alongside its Budget.

## Introduction

1. The outcome of the Council's annual strategic and financial planning processes is the attached draft Corporate Plan for 2014/15 - 2016/17 which consists of two parts:

Part I - This sets out the strategic overview and financial context within which the Council will be operating over the next three year period and sets out the corporate priorities we will seek to deliver.

Part II - This sets out the targets for services to achieve during 2014/15 in pursuit of the corporate priorities

2. The Budget Council on 26th February will be asked to approve the attached draft Parts I and II of the Corporate Plan at the same time as the Budget which supports these plans. These documents together with the draft Budget papers formed the basis of consultation outlined below.

### Developing the Corporate Plan and Priorities

3. Back in September 2010, the Council's political leadership formally began a ['Big Conversation'](#) consultation with staff and local residents outlining the challenge of spending cuts and seeking views on priorities in the difficult financial climate.
4. Since then local people have consistently told the Council through subsequent consultations that quality of life issues remain key priorities and that the breadth of Council services are valued.
5. The most recent phase of consultation was the [Local Place Survey](#) that took place in autumn 2013. This survey sought the views of residents on their perceptions of the town, their neighbourhoods and local services.
6. The survey results confirmed that levels of satisfaction with the town and services have remained broadly consistent with 2011 findings. This is encouraging given the continuing difficult financial climate and the challenge of spending cuts.

### Consultation

7. Specific comments on the draft Corporate Plan and Budget have been sought from: residents via the Council's website, a joint meeting of the Council's two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Council's Staff and Management Forum, the Chamber of Commerce, the Young Persons' Council, Hastings Intercultural Organisation, Hastings Community Network, the Seniors Forum, the Disability Forum; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community representatives, and partnership organisations on the Hastings and St Leonards Local Strategic Partnership.

8. The deadline for receipt of comments on the draft Corporate Plan and Budget was after the publication of this agenda (noon on the 14th February). While the majority of consultation meetings have taken place, further submissions of views may be expected and will be reported to members at the Cabinet meeting.
9. A summary of the responses received is set out below. The bulk of responses received from consultation with groups did not highlight specific amendments to either the draft Corporate Plan or Budget.

### **Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

10. A joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees was held to seek Members comments on the draft Corporate Plan and Budget. The following comments and responses directly relate to suggested amendments to the Corporate Plan and Budget only. The minutes from this meeting detail broader areas of discussion and are available here:
11. [http://www.hastings.gov.uk/decisions\\_democracy/council\\_meetings/meetings/](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/decisions_democracy/council_meetings/meetings/)

Question: Under the cross cutting target for Corporate Equalities (4), measure (e), can the timeframe for the Council's work with its contractors enabling them to achieve living wage accreditation be firmed up?

Response: Not at this stage, work to consider associated financial implications would be required before a timeframe could be brought forward.

Question: Can the Organisational Development Group cross cutting target (5) be amended to reflect the Council's ongoing progress towards 'Customer First' and 'One Team'?

Response: Target amended.

Question: Should the Seafront Strategy cross cutting target measure (e) concerned with improved pedestrian access be broadened to include cycling provision?

Response: Not at present, the current mixed use facilities on the seafront appear to be working well. Members were invited to comment on the East Sussex County Council cycling strategy currently out for consultation.

Question: Can the 'Town Centre' referenced in the first target under Environmental Services be pluralised to reflect work in this area in all of the borough's town centres?

Response: Target amended.

Question: Can the first measure of target 5 concerned with meeting the new bathing water quality standard and the role of the executive group under Amenities Waste and Leisure Services be strengthened?

Response: Target amended.

Question: It was requested that previous years performance indicators be made available under the Regeneration and Planning Policy Service to enable comparison?

Response: Performance Indicator description details to be listed only, in keeping with the presentation of all other performance indicators. Comparative performance indicator data will be provided at 2014/15 Scrutiny committee meetings following approval of Part III of the Corporate Plan in June.

Comment: Substitute 'successful' to 'high quality' in target 7 of the Marketing and Communications services.

Response: Target Amended.

Question: In addition to the performance indicator detailing visits to the borough's websites under Marketing and Communications Services, can a greater basket of indicators be drafted to cover transactional use of the website?

Response: Point noted. Work is in progress to improve this and associated indicators.

## Chamber of Commerce

12. Councillor Birch addressed the Chamber of Commerce at their late January Breakfast meeting. The following comments/questions were raised:

Question: Clarification sought on the 60% government grant reduction quoted, was this 60% of the overall budget?

Response: The 60% reduction quoted refers to 60% of Government Grant.

Question: Does Cllr Birch agree that the transitional grant awarded to the Council is an opportunity to improve or is it perceived as more of a threat?

Response: The receipt of this grant coincides with ongoing Council efforts to be more efficient and take opportunities to do things differently, better and with others. The Council's joint waste and building control arrangements are examples of this and have resulted in substantial savings. The Council will continue to explore opportunities for such efficiencies, but the scale of reduction of government grants feels more of a threat than an opportunity.

Comment: Aquila House on the seafront was felt to be in poor condition and creating a bad impression.

Response: The point was noted. The audience were informed that the building is currently leased to the Council and that work had been undertaken to repair the building's front letter signage.

Question: In reference to the 60% government grant reduction previous discussed, is this not more like 30% in total?

Response: The Council is an agent for the payment of benefits which means that significant sums go through the Council's finances for this provision. These monies can be used for benefit payments only and are included in the gross rather than the net Council budget presented.

Question: What are the plans for the West Marina (old bathing pool) site?

Response: Plans involve scope for mixed use and the Council is open to options for use on this site. The Council will market the site subject to sufficient improvements in the economy.

Question: Cllr Birch's view was sought on the centralising of Council frontline contact at the Town Hall and implications for surrounding businesses in Priory Meadow?

Response: The Council has saved £200k by locating and centralising all frontline customer contact (with the exception of tourism) into the Town Hall. Benefits and Housing inquiries are taken here and the size of the Council's gross budget reflects the demand for such services. The fact that high demands for these services exist and are met here at the Town Hall hasn't deterred major investment in Priory Meadow through the impending arrival of H & M.

Question: Comment sought on using parking income to remove black and red top tarmac?

Response: The Council is working with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to use monies from the parking surplus from on street parking to remove black and red top tarmac in the town centre.

Comment: It was suggested that railings outside Greggs, Sainsburys Local and ESK are in poor condition.

Response: Point noted and action will be taken.

Question: What is the latest position with the Pelham roundabout?

Response: A planning application for an art structure at the roundabout has been defeated. The Council is committed to working with ESCC to maintain the upkeep of the roundabout through use of the parking surplus.

Question: In the case of bad weather what are the Council plans for providing grit and salt to the town's industrial estates and how will the Council communicate this to businesses there?

Response: The Council will focus efforts on those 'hostage roads' where there is only one entrance. In these cases salt will be provided. While the Council would certainly intend to communicate this with those businesses effected Cllr Birch suggested he would need to seek clarification from Council officers on how this would be done.

## Staff and Management Forum (SMF)

13. The Leader of the Council addressed the SMF at their January meeting and sought comments on the draft Corporate Plan and Budget. While there were no specific comments on the content of the draft documents the following questions were raised:

Question: Is it possible to set an 'unbalanced' budget?

Response: No, the Council is legally obliged to set a balanced budget and it is the responsibility of the section 151 officer to advise the Council to ensure a balanced budget is set.

Question: Can the secretary of state for communities and local government make HBC revert back to weekly recycling collections?

Response: Cllr Birch suggested that the joint waste contract that has saved the Council in excess of £650k was put forward as part of our evidence for Efficiency Support grant. HBC has received Efficiency Support grant and an additional £250k reward for efficiencies made. Returning back to a weekly recycling collection (from a fortnightly one) would come at a cost to the Council and would undermine the efficiencies gained through the joint waste contract.

Question: Could the main headlines in the press release for the corporate plan and budget consultation be sent to staff before they appear in the press?

Response: Request noted.

Question: Can a voluntary redundancy list be implemented?

Response: Such a list can raise expectations and the Council may not wish to lose people who put their names forward without sufficient time to succession plan for potential departures. The Council will need to complete service reviews before revisiting this question.

## Hastings Community Network

14. Councillor Birch addressed Hastings Community Network at their January group meeting giving an overview and key details of the draft Corporate Plan and Budget. The following points were raised:

Question: Are there any changes in funding allocations for the Community Partnerships Fund for 2014/15?

Response: No changes as funding arrangements have been agreed for two years.

Question: What is the assessment of the impact of the current council tax support scheme?

Response: Cllr Birch noted that those in low paid employment were most likely to be effected by changes but that there is no local evidence to suggest an increase in poverty as a result of the changes.

Question: Could changes have resulted in less spend within the town?

Response: Changes to particular circumstances are likely to be offset by discounts and exemptions elsewhere.

Question: Has there been any impact on council tax recovery rate?

Response: Targets and collection rates have remained broadly consistent. The in year collection rate has been amended slightly to reflect the particular challenges Hastings faces.

Question: View sought on any Council plans for a licensing scheme for the private rental sector?

Response: The Council's Cabinet is due to receive a report in the spring on the feasibility of such a scheme. There is a financial incentive for the Council through a licensing fee, supported by monies from the anti-rogue landlords project. There is debate on how best to implement such a scheme and whether it should have a particular ward or super-output area focus. Current Council officer advice is not to proceed across the whole borough.

Question: Is there a case for smoothing the use of Council reserves by taking less in 2014/15 and more in 2015/16?

Response: It is a matter of judgement. The New Homes Bonus awarded to the Council enables less to be taken from reserves this year.

Question: Are there any monies forthcoming from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership?

Response: No new monies expected until 2015/16. The Council is very hopeful it will regain Assisted Area Status. This European designation supports local business relocating by providing up to 40% for new investment and equipment costs.

Question: Would the national Government be taking 40% of the Council's New Homes Bonus allocation?

Response: No.

Question: To what extent is the Council engaging with landlords with regards to a potential licensing scheme?

Response: Unsure of the extent of such discussions on this through the Landlords Forum and would need to check with appropriate Council officers.

Question: Are there any updates on the Council's Contact Centre?



Response: The Contact Centre has taken on new staff following changes to waste collection. All staff are in the same place at the town hall which has helped to improve the customer offer. Work continues on avoidable contact and improving the quality of our interactions.

Question/Comment: Could the £20 k in the draft budget allocated for anti-poverty work be used to better coordinate associated activity as it was felt that this was currently poor. Furthermore, would the Council consider becoming more of an enabler than a provider of services?

Response: The suggestion for the anti poverty allocation in the draft budget was noted. Cllr Birch conveyed the intention that HBC continues to be a major provider in its own name and to insure the quality of services provided in its name, giving the Waste contract as an example of the latter.

Question: Could the monies allocated to deliver the anti poverty action plan be used to evaluate the impact of various initiatives so that Hastings could capture the learning of what has and hasn't worked locally?

Response: Point noted.

Question: Is the Council committed to refitting and refurbishing its commercial buildings?

Response: Castleham East has been recently refitted. 'Answers In the Carbon Economy' project funding is enabling low carbon footprint roof-top refurbishment to be undertaken at Theaklin Drive Ponswood.

Question: What about the old Council building in Menzies Road?

Response: The Council did not renew the lease. Planning colleagues are currently looking at the site, although there are no conclusions yet.

Question: Comment sought on the subsidy the Council provides to the White Rock Theatre (WRT).

Response: The Council aim's to reduce this subsidy but is currently bound by contract. Given the theatre's proximity to the Pier it is important that the theatre remains part of the seafront offer as the Pier re-opens. The Pier Trust will be opening the top part of the White Rock Baths as an 'education/information point,' and there are exciting plans for Bottle Alley in the future, subject to funding.

Question: What are Council plans for bathing sea water quality?

Response: Sea water quality remains the same despite changes in forthcoming EU measures. Cllr Birch chairs a meeting of partners including, East Sussex County Council, Environment Agency (EA), Southern Water and Hastings Voluntary Action to address these challenges. Preventative work with the EA is in progress to de-silt some of our ponds.



## Seniors' Forum

15. Councillor Birch presented an overview of the draft Corporate Plan and Budget to representatives from the Seniors' Forum committee. The following questions and comments were made:

Question: Would HBC be able to support the Seniors Forum with their office accommodation costs?

Response: Cllr Birch agreed that HBC would support these accommodation costs for a further year.

Question: In terms of over 50% funding reductions how does this translate into the Council's budget?

Response: HBC sets a net budget made up council tax and government grant. The reduction is over 50% in cash terms already.

Question: Although there are no plans to increase parking charges hasn't Hastings already lost out on parking revenue to East Sussex County Council (ESCC)?

Response: The termination of the parking agreement with ESCC has come at a management cost to HBC. ESCC are obliged to spend parking surplus locally. Some of this local surplus will contribute to things like local public transport and improvements to pavements.

Question: What is the relationship between HBC and Amicus Horizon?

Response: Amicus are responsible for HBC's previously owned council houses. In the central St Leonards area, HBC has also borrowed money to lend to Amicus to buy up empty properties or properties in poor condition to be refurbished and let to local people in employment.

Question: What work will the Council do to ensure maintenance and upkeep of properties?

Response: The work of the 'grotbuster' team will continue this year to improve the external appearance of properties. The housing renewal team will continue to focus on the internal condition of homes. This work is supported by the sum of 200k from the anti-rogue landlord's project.

Question: Are there Council plans to licence privately rented accommodation?

Response: The Council's Cabinet is due to receive a report in the spring on the feasibility of such a scheme. There is a financial incentive for the Council through a licensing fee, supported by monies from the anti-rogue landlords project. There is debate on how best to implement such a scheme and whether it should have a particular ward or super-output area focus. Current Council officer advice is not to proceed across the whole borough.

Question: Are benefits paid directly to the landlord?

Response: In the main it is paid by the tenant. The onset of Universal Credit will mean recipients will need good computer skills to be able to apply. The Council is supporting the Reach project through the Community Partnership Fund to help benefit claimants build these skills.

Question: Are Kier doing a good job as the new waste collectors?

Response: The aim is to achieve 50% recycling and doorstep glass recycling should boost this. HBC would like to hear from residents if Kier are felt not to be doing a good job.

Question: Is there a good return on recycled glass?

Response: Kier sell on recycling materials as part of our contract with them. They also take on the associated risk if demand for recycling materials falls.

Question: If Kier are responsible for recycling should they pay for a recycling officer?

Response: Point noted.

Question: What is the Council's role in the Clean Seas campaign?

Response: The Council coordinates activity to improve bathing water quality and Cllr Birch chairs a meeting of partners including, East Sussex County Council, Environment Agency (EA), Southern Water and Hastings Voluntary Action. Preventative work with the EA is in progress to de-silt some of our ponds.

## **Other consultation responses**

16. A meeting between Cllr Birch and the Hastings Young Persons Council took place after the publication date for this agenda. These comments alongside any further comments received after the publication of this report within the consultation period (close noon on the 14<sup>th</sup> Feb) will be tabled.

## **Policy Implications**

### **Equalities**

17. The assessment of equality impacts accompanying the Budget proposals for 2014/15 is included with the Budget report at Appendix O.

### **Next Steps**

18. Part III of the Corporate Plan, containing a retrospective report-back of performance in 2013/14 and proposed performance indicator targets for 2014/15 - 2016/17 will be drafted in April, after the end of the current financial year, and will be agreed and published in June 2014.

19. The 2013/14 year-end achievements and PI data will be made available to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and to the Staff and Management Forum in May and will be reported to Cabinet on the 9th June.
20. The 26th February Council will be asked to approve that delegated authority be given to the Cabinet to agree Part III of the Corporate Plan prior to publication.

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### **Wards Affected**

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

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### **Area(s) Affected**

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

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### **Policy Implications**

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Yes
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Yes
Risk Management	Yes
Environmental Issues	Yes
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	Yes
Organisational Consequences	Yes
Local People's Views	Yes

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### **Background Information**

[http://www.hastings.gov.uk/decisions\\_democracy/voting\\_petitioning\\_having\\_your\\_say/consultation/past\\_consultations/place\\_survey/](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/decisions_democracy/voting_petitioning_having_your_say/consultation/past_consultations/place_survey/)

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