

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13 February 2017

Report Title: Draft Corporate Plan 2017/18 – 2019/20

Report By: Jane Hartnell
Director of Corporate Services and Governance

Purpose of Report

1. To present the feedback from the public consultation on the draft corporate plan and budget for the period 2017/18 - 2019/20 for Members consideration.
2. To present a draft of the corporate plan 2017/18 - 2019/20.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. That the Cabinet recommends to the Council, that the content of the attached documents form the basis of the Council's corporate plan 2017/18 - 2019/20, 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 Services and Governance, 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.**
- 3. That all who submitted views as part of the consultation process be thanked for their contributions.**

Reasons for Recommendations

The Council needs to approve the corporate plan as it is a statement of Hastings Borough Council's strategic direction to 2020.

Introduction

1. The outcome of the Council's annual strategic and financial planning processes is the attached draft corporate plan for 2017/18 – 2019/20. This confirms the strategic direction for the Council, the associated corporate priorities and key areas for activity and associated measures during this period.
2. The Budget Council on 22nd February will be asked to approve the attached draft of the corporate plan at the same time as the supporting budget. These documents together with the draft budget papers formed the basis of consultation outlined below.

Consultation

3. Specific comments on the draft corporate plan and budget have been sought from: residents via the Council's website, a meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council's Staff and Management Forum, the Chamber of Commerce, the Youth Council, Hastings Intercultural Organisation and HOPE G, 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.
4. The deadline for receipt of comments on the draft corporate plan and budget was after the publication of this agenda (Midday 10th February). While the majority of consultation meetings have taken place, further submissions of views are expected (Hastings Community Network and the Staff and Management Forum) and will be reported to members at the Cabinet meeting.
5. 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.

Hastings Youth Council

6. Councillor Forward and Councillor Davies met with the Youth Council on 19 January 2017. The following items were discussed:

Question: will the council still provide support to Hastings Youth Council?

Response: The council will continue to provide an officer post to support the work of Hastings Youth Council, there are no plans to reduce funding at this time. The recent work by the Youth Council to attract external sources of funding to support its activities is to be welcomed. The Youth Council is widely recognised in the local community, and members should continue to take every opportunity to promote their activities. Over the next year, Youth Council members may also wish to consider new ways of working, including reducing the number of printed meeting documents, to help them reduce their costs further.

Question: what does the seasonal closure of public conveniences in Alexandra Park and Rock-a-Nore mean?

Response: The seasonal closures at Rock-a-Nore and Alexandra Park mentioned in the draft budget only apply to public toilets. Rock-a-Nore and Alexandra Park itself will remain open throughout the year. The toilets identified in the draft budget for seasonal closure have been chosen because they are considered to have the least impact on members of the public.

Question: where are the properties which pay the highest band of council tax located?

Response: there are a small number of private properties in the town which pay the highest level of council tax.

Comment: I am concerned about the future of the volunteer programme in the council's parks and open spaces. Due to reductions in the council's funding last year, the ranger service has been reduced and the volunteer service disbanded. Since then, there have been sporadic attempts to re-convene groups of volunteers to work on specific projects, but this has not been very successful. As a result, work which was previously carried out by volunteers is being undertaken by the council's landscape contractor.

Response: as a result of reductions to funding and the loss of key staff, the council was unable to ensure the health and safety requirements for its previous volunteer programme could be met. The council is still keen to work with volunteers on key projects in its parks and open spaces, and the comments about the new arrangements will be referred to the relevant officers. The council always carries out an impact assessment of any changes to services made as part of the budget setting process.

Question: does the lease of space at the Town Hall to East Sussex County Council generate additional income for Hastings Borough Council?

Response: following the transfer of the council's civic and democratic functions from the Town Hall to Muriel Matters House, part of the building was leased to East Sussex County Council for use as a Register Office. This arrangement does generate additional income for the council, and ensures the Town Hall building is well maintained and remains accessible for use by the local community.

Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce

7. Councillor Chowney attended the Chamber meeting on 26 January 2017. The following questions were asked:

Question: In terms of the green energy initiatives and potential income generation is the council looking at community energy schemes such as 'Ethics'?

Response: Yes, the council is scoping a range of options in this area and the council has recently employed a new income generation manager to assist with this and other potential areas for income generation.

Question: Are there any plans to 'Grot-bust' the Carlisle pub?

Response: The council owns the freehold for this building and can take action to ensure its appearance is improved.

Question: In terms of the growing number of camper/caravans around Seaside Road, what can be done to ensure that the road is kept clean and safe?

Response: East Sussex County Council are responsible for the highways. The council does own a patch of land in this area and we are considering introducing parking charges that would deter long staying.

Comment/Question: Cleanliness is also an issue for beach hut owners in this vicinity given the litter that appears to be generated from the camper/caravans...what can be done?

Response: In terms of addressing highway issues these should be flagged with Cllr Carl Maynard at ESCC who has the highways portfolio. If there are environmental health concerns, then HBC Environmental Health team can potentially intervene.

Question: What is the position with alcohol free zones on the seafront?

Response: There have never been alcohol free zones on the seafront. However Police can confiscate alcohol if deemed to cause a nuisance. The use of Public Space Protection Orders will assist in banning alcohol completely in key areas of the town. Work is underway to ensure application of these is legally robust and enforceable. The council is also keen that where these maybe used, particularly among the street drinking community, that there are corresponding opportunities for support and detox.

Seniors Forum

8. Councillor Chowney attended a meeting of the Seniors Forum on 26 January 2017. The following questions were asked:

Question: How does Hastings compare to other authorities in respect of the income it receives from business rates?

Response: there is a high degree of uncertainty in respect of income the council receives from business rates. The government expects all council's do be self-financing from 2021. Council's will no longer receive a revenue support grant from this date, but will be able to retain the business rates they receive. However, a system of tariffs and top ups will be applied to distribute business rate income between authorities. Generally, Hastings has to pay a tariff on the business rate income it receives. The council will also continue to pursue income generation opportunities to help it become self-sufficient.

Question: what can be done to improve transport links to the town?

Response: the council continues to work with a variety of partners, including the local MP, to lobby for improvements to the road and rail connections to Hastings.

Question: £100,000 worth of funding is allocated in the draft budget for the automation of a stage flying system at the White Rock Theatre. Can you provide more information about this?

Response: Councillor Chowney agreed to provide a written response to this question.

Question: what can be done to improve the White Rock area in the future?

Response: the council is considering a number of options to improve the White Rock area, combining new leisure facilities with residential development. A full public consultation will be carried out at an appropriate stage as the plans are developed.

Question: what is being done to maintain higher education provision in the town?

Response: Sussex Coast College Hastings will be providing some degree level courses in partnership with the University of Brighton. The council is also working to secure a long-term higher education provision for the town.

Question: what are the plans for future street cleansing arrangements?

Response: the council is considering a range of options for delivering street cleansing services in the future, including bringing the service back in-house. It is hoped that an in-house option could provide the council with more flexibility about the way it provides the service.

Question: what are the plans for the redevelopment of the former Hastings College site?

Response: the developer now has all the necessary planning permissions in place and intends to develop the site for residential use.

Question: how many council staff will be made redundant as part of this year's budget setting process?

Response: 8.9 full time equivalent (FTE) posts are due to be deleted as part of the budget setting process, with one 1.0FTE new post created (net 7.9FTE loss). Of those posts at risk, 5.7 FTE are vacant. The council continues to explore re-deployment opportunities for these staff, in order to keep the number of compulsory redundancies to a minimum.

Question: there is concern in the local community about the proposed closure of the public conveniences at Harold Place. Would it be possible to introduce a charge in order to maintain this facility?

Response: the building at Harold Place is in need of significant repair, which is likely to create additional costs to the council, if the facilities remain open. A number of alternative public toilets are located nearby, including Priory Meadow and Pelham Place. If the public conveniences at Harold Place are closed, there will need to be new signage installed to direct residents and visitors to the nearest alternative toilets.

Question: what is the total funding allocated for Community Partnership Funding?

Response: the total funding available for Community partnership funding has been reduced in-line with reductions to the council's overall budget. The council has also adopted a new approach to allocating funding, by commissioning specific projects from the community and voluntary sector to meet a number of agreed priorities. The amount of funding allocated for community partnership funding for the next

year will be confirmed by email but of course is still subject to final decision by Full Council on the 22nd February.

Question: who owns the road above the Pelham Arcade?

Response: the ownership of the road is still unclear. However, the council is ensuring that the necessary repair works are carried out to the road, in order to ensure that the restoration of the shops on Pelham Arcade can continue.

Question: the Dial-A-Ride service is very valuable service for people who are unable to access other forms of transport. Would the council consider continuing to make a contribution to these costs, particularly as East Sussex County Council have indicated they will continue to fund this service?

Response: the council will look again to see if there is an alternative way of funding the service.

Hope-G

9. Councillor Forward met with HOPE-G on 26 January 2017. The following questions were asked:

Question: why does the council not highlight links to 1066 and the Battle of Hastings more in the promotional materials in produces for the town?

Response: the council is part of the Visit 1066 Country initiative, which promotes a range of events and attractions across the region. Over the past year, a number of cultural events have taken place to mark the 950th Anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. The council is also in the process of developing a new Heritage Strategy to build on the success of these events. The council's Tourism and Marketing team also work to promote Hastings as a great place to visit.

Question: Why were there no events on the pier to celebrate New Year's Eve?

Response: the Hastings Pier Trust is responsible for organising events on the pier.

Comment: the seasonal closures of public toilets in Alexandra Park are likely to have a significant impact on residents, as there is limited provision elsewhere?

Response: the response from the public consultation is likely to determine whether these proposals go ahead, as they achieve comparatively small savings.

Question: could the site of the Harold Place toilets be used for the Albert Memorial Clock, if the existing building was demolished?

Response: the council will consider all possible options for the use of this site.

Question: does the council participate in an apprenticeship scheme?

Response: the council does participate in a government-run apprenticeship scheme and offers opportunities in a range of departments across the organisation.

Question: how much will council tax be increasing by?

Response: Hastings Borough Council's precept of the council tax bill will be increasing by £5 per year.

Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10. A meeting of the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held on 26 January 2017, to consider the draft corporate plan and budget.
11. While no amendments to the draft corporate plan and budget were proposed a number of related issues were discussed and are included in the minutes of the meeting available to view online at:
<http://hastings.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=391&MId=2115&Ver=4>

Email

12. A variety of views have been submitted via e mail, as of the 3rd of February these include:
 - An email was received commenting that the draft corporate plan does not include enough reference to St Leonards, particularly in terms of street cleaning and town centre development.
Response: Views noted and draft corporate plan amended.
 - 15 emails received objecting to the closure of public conveniences at Harold Place and Ore village:
 - Concerns are raised at the lack of alternative provision in Ore village.
 - The planned closures will disproportionately affect older people and people suffering poor health.
 - Alternative uses are suggested for the building at Harold Place, incorporating a smaller number of public toilets.
 - Alternative funding arrangements are suggested to maintain the public conveniences at Harold Place, including charity donations and introducing a charge to use the toilets.
 - An email was received requesting further information regarding the closure times of the public conveniences at Falaise Road and the reduced opening times of the Tourist Information Centre.
Response: Further details have been provided prompting a subsequent request to consider extending opening times.
 - An e mail was received requesting further budgetary detail on proposed toilet closures and contributions to local Fireworks.
Response: Information provided.

Petitions

13. An online petition has been started on change.org, objecting to the proposed closure of public conveniences in Ore village and Harold Place. As of 3 February 2017, the petition has 1,105 supporters. However, because of the criteria applied by change.org to sign the petition, it has not been possible to confirm how many of

these signatories live, work or study in the Borough, as required by the council's constitution.

14. A second petition has been launched on the e-petitions site hosted by East Sussex County Council calling for the public toilets in Hastings and St Leonards to remain open. As of 3 February 2017, the petition had one signature.

Letters

15. Two letters have been received to date objecting to the planned closure of Ore village public conveniences.

Social Media

16. A range of views have been submitted via the council's social media channels including:
- Facebook comment received requesting a shuttle bus service between St Leonards, Hastings town centre and the old town, to support local businesses.
 - Facebook comments received objecting to the proposed increase in Hastings Borough Council's precept of council tax.
 - Tweet received raising concern that the increase in council tax may disproportionately impact vulnerable people
 - Comments received in support of the proposed increase in Hastings Borough Council's precept of council tax as a way of maintaining services.
 - Comments received objecting to the planned closure of public toilets.

Equalities

17. The assessment of equality impacts accompanying the budget proposals for 2017/18 is included with the budget report.

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

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
Anti-Poverty

Yes
Yes

Additional Information

http://www.hastings.gov.uk/my_council/consultations/draf_corp_plan/

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