

Report To: Budget Cabinet

Date of Meeting: Monday 7 February 2022

Report Title: Budget and Corporate Plan consultation response and draft Corporate Plan update 2022/23

Report By: Jane Hartnell, Managing Director

Key Decision: Y

Classification: Open

Purpose of Report

To present the draft annual update to the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24. The annual update reflects the changes in the context within which we are now working and summarises some of the key activities the council will undertake in 2022/23.

To present to Cabinet the consultation feedback summary and responses from the exercise to seek local people's views on the draft corporate plan annual update and draft budget

Recommendation(s)

1. That Cabinet recommends to Full Council, to note and approve the draft annual update to the corporate plan 2020-24.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Managing Director, after consultation with the Leader of the Council to make further revisions as is considered necessary.
3. That all those who submitted views as part of the consultation process be thanked for their contributions.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. The council needs to approve the annual update to the corporate plan as its statement of strategic direction for the period 2020 - 2024, mindful of the views received as part of the public consultation.

Introduction

1. The Council agreed its [Corporate Plan \(2020-24\)](#) and budget (2020-21) back in February 2020. Shortly after, COVID-19 spread with unprecedented impacts across the globe.
2. The [2021/22 Corporate Plan update](#) reflected several new activities, roles and responsibilities the Council took on to support our communities through the pandemic with our partners.
3. This report presents the draft 2022/23 Corporate Plan update (appendix A) and includes a summary of the consultation responses (appendix B) received on both this draft and the draft budget 2022/23.

Draft 2022/23 Corporate Plan Update

4. The bulk of the corporate plan 2020-24 is unchanged, this includes our approach and the three outcomes and six priorities.
5. Where new data is available, the '[Our borough](#)' and '[Your council](#)' sections have been updated to provide the latest figures. These set the local scene and give the demographic context for the key work we are doing.
6. The draft Corporate Plan 2022/23 annual update is set out in appendix A.
7. This update continues to reflect the impact of the pandemic that has exacerbated those budgetary and resources challenges the Council faced pre pandemic.
8. The headline key activities proposed for 2022/23 include:
 - a. Ongoing actions -including those paused or delayed by the pandemic or which were not expected to be completed in 2021/22
 - b. New or changed activities that reflect refocussing to address resource and budgetary challenges.
9. Following approval of the draft annual update, further work will be undertaken to firm up milestones and measures for each key activity so performance can be tracked via the Council's [performance management](#) arrangements.
10. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor performance quarterly against our milestones and measures and these meetings are streamed live on our website.

Consultation

11. Comments on the annual corporate plan update and draft budget have been sought from residents, council staff and a range of community and business organisations.
12. The consultation closed at 9am on the 7th February 2022 after publication of this report. A summary of the responses received prior to publication of this report is attached below at Appendix B. All other comments will be published as a supplementary item just before the meeting.

Equalities

13. The draft assessment of equality impacts on the service changes proposed is included with the draft budget proposals for 2022/23 within Appendix K2

Options

14. No alternative options were considered. Regular performance monitoring is required to ensure the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can undertake its scrutiny function as set out in the Constitution.

Timetable of Next Steps

15. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Corporate plan annual update finalised and published on the council's website	Updates approved	1 st March 2022	Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager
2022/23 performance milestones and measures integrated into performance dashboard	Dashboard refreshed.	1 st April 2022	Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager
2021/22 yearend performance data collated and used to propose draft Performance Indicator targets for 2022/23 for consideration by O&S and Cabinet	Cabinet report	July 2022	Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager

Wards Affected

(All Wards);

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score:

Have you used relevant project tools: Basic scope, SWOT

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

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Y
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Y
Risk Management	Y
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	Y
Economic/Financial Implications	Y
Human Rights Act	Y
Organisational Consequences	Y
Local People's Views	Y
Anti-Poverty	Y
Legal	Y

Additional Information

Appendix A – Draft headline key activity updates 2022/23

Appendix B - Consultation feedback summary and responses

Officer to Contact

Officer Mark Horan (Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager)

Email mhoran@hastings.gov.uk

Tel 01424 451485

Draft Corporate Plan update and draft Budget Consultation feedback summary

Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce

16. Councillors Forward and Barnett attended the chamber meeting on 27 January and presented the updated corporate plan and draft budget. The Assistant Director for Finance and Revenues also contributed responses where appropriate.

17. Councillors Forward and Barnett attended the chamber meeting on 27 January and presented the updated corporate plan and draft budget. The Assistant Director for Finance and Revenues also contributed responses where appropriate.

a) Question: Please can you comment on the £6 million reserves and how these maybe replenished?

Response: Councillor Barnett responded to say that the Council's Chief Finance Officer advises that the Council should not fall below this threshold. One way to replenish these is to sell off Council assets and use the receipts to avoid borrowing costs, thus freeing up the revenue streams - but any such sales would need to be very carefully considered.

b) Comment/Question: Chamber members expressed some frustration with the planning process at HBC... What can be done to make the planning process easier to enable businesses to expand, grow and recover from the pandemic?

Response: Councillor Barnett suggested the need to grow and retain our own planners in house to meet demand. There is a national shortage of planners, and this makes recruitment and retention challenging. Councillor Barnett urged Chamber members to feed into the Council's developing new Local Plan, so their views and ideas can help influence and shape this document and local policy where appropriate.

Councillor Forward gave an open invite to the Chamber members to meet with the political leadership and key officers to identify and work to resolve any specific planning relating issues causing frustration.

c) Questions: How do we help regenerate the town and support the business community in terms of inward investment...We understand CHART funding is coming to an end...what might come next?

Response: Councillor Barnett responded that the CHART project had another year to run and this is demonstrating good partnership working between private companies and the voluntary sector through training and skills provision. However, this will stop and leave a gap. This leaves the challenge of how to address the skills gap having lost the University in the town, with schools and other education partners struggling to recover from the pandemic. The Council will with partners need to arrive at a local solution as there is currently a lack of national guidance, steer, or resource. The Council is open to new ways of working including its approach to regeneration as a whole. Councillor Barnett is keen to hear from the business community in this regard

and similar to Cllr Forward, offered a meeting to take this forward with those Chamber members interested.

d) Question: What can be done about the Queensway Gateway debacle leaving access problems for the Ridge and Conquest hospital and how can the Council put pressure on Seachange to improve the situation?

Response: Councillor Barnett responded that he now sits on the Seachange Board as the HBC representative. He has asked that details should be shared about the proposed solution and that as a result a press release was issued recently.

Councillor Forward echoed the lack of clear information available to the public and concurred that what had been originally promised is seemingly not what is to be delivered.

The Council's Chief Finance Officer advised that the Council originally held the freehold to the car showroom site which was sold to Seachange in order for it to develop the road, reiterating the need for both a practical short- and long-term solution.

The Chamber representatives proposed that both East Sussex County Council and HBC assume a more forceful role on the Seachange board to ensure a solution and keep the public apprised.

e) Question: What role does HBC take in resolving wider transport issues?

Response: The Council is keen to intervene and work collaboratively on wider transport issues. Councillor Barnett is in talks with the County Highways department to remodel traffic flows through the town centre to ensure this space is more people and business friendly. Mention was made of the pending delivery of cycle paths that are very welcome but delivered too slowly. The Council works closely with Rother District to lobby for transport improvements and has recently put forward joint proposals for bus planning improvements. A better bus service has been identified as a key priority to councillors on the Hastings and Rother Transport Advisory Group (HARTAG) by constituents.

f) Question: What will HBC do to facilitate improvements to the Town Centre and what is the Council's view on the potential second term of the Hastings Business Improvement District (BID)?

Response: Councillor Barnett outlined the cultural shift away from the traditional retail offer towards online shopping, accelerated by the pandemic. He suggested that in discussions with those responsible for the management of Priory Meadow and the previous Debenhams building that there is an appetite to diversify the town centre offer. Exciting proposals for the development of a gym and jobs centre in the old New Look building and a play/leisure offer in the previous Debenhams building were given as examples.

In terms of voting on the potential second term of the Hastings BID, Councillor Barnett suggested that the vote is a chance for businesses to have their say on this and the Council will support whatever businesses decide.

The Council leadership conveyed that they were keen to have further dialogue with the business community to work together to transform the town centre and are open to

continued and ongoing dialogue with regards to any areas of interest Chamber members wish to raise.

Hastings Youth Council

18. Councillor Forward was scheduled to meet the Youth Council on the 20th of January in the Council Chamber. Unfortunately, this meeting did not take place and it was not possible to schedule a further meeting within the consultation timeframe.
19. The Youth Council were forwarded the presentation and invited to comment on the drafts.
20. The Leader also extended an invitation to meet with the Youth Council to pick up on any issues they wished to discuss throughout the year.
21. At the time of writing the Council has been advised that the Youth council intend to submit a written response. As with any response received after the publication deadline of this report and within the consultation timeframe, these will be summarised and published as a supplementary item for Cabinet consideration.

Staff and Management Forum (SMF)

The Staff and Management Forum met with the Leader, Deputy and Senior Officers on 27th January. Feedback from this meeting will be included with the consultation information to be tabled and published as a supplementary item.

Hastings Community Network (HCN)

22. Councillor Forward and Barnett attended a meeting of the Hastings Community Network on 28 January. Questions, comments and responses will be published as a supplementary item to be tabled at Budget Cabinet on the 7th of February as the meeting took place on the same day as agenda publication.

Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23. A meeting of the Council's overview and scrutiny committee was held on 26 January, to consider the draft corporate plan update and budget.
24. The Committee contributed a range of views, comments and questions on the draft documents and these can be found in the draft minutes of the meeting at the following link:

<https://hastings.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g4537/Printed%20minutes%2026th-Jan-2022%2018.00%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

25. The draft corporate plan update has been amended to reflect the desire of both the Overview and scrutiny Committee and lead Councillors at the meeting to continue to lobby to keep as many specialist units at Conquest Hospital as possible. This is now included in the last bullet in Appendix A (draft Corporate Plan update 2022/23).

Other Consultation responses

26. The council received a range of consultation responses via the council's consultation e mail address outlined below.
27. A response was received suggesting more emphasis could be placed in the corporate plan update with regards to the Council championing, leading and representing the local community where appropriate.
28. These comments are noted and the council's leadership, partnership and place shaping intentions are covered in the final bullet under the 'Ensure the council survive and thrive into the future' theme in the draft corporate plan update.
29. A response was received that expressed personal views on a range of areas with suggestions received on tackling homelessness, retaining the unique character of the town and keeping it safe.
30. These comments have been noted and shared with the appropriate service areas.
31. A response was received suggesting that exploring the sales of civic regalia would be a mistake.
32. In response, budgetary challenges facing the Council require reviewing our use of all assets and resources, to ensure the Council can continue to provide key services to residents, as outlined in the budget report.
33. Responses were received with regards to the Link Road and proposed housing development in Harrow Lane, Bulverhythe and on part of White Rock Gardens with the suggestion that these are at odds with Council aspirations to minimise environment and climate harm in all we do.
34. In response the Council must carefully balance meeting housing needs with climate aspirations and seeks to ensure these considerations are addressed as part of the business cases for associated developments.
35. A response was received in support of the vision set out for the town outlined in the original corporate plan 2020-24.
36. A response was received that suggested there was: little mention of public consultation across the aspirations in the corporate plan and budget documents, with a lack of emphasis on supporting local business; or specific funding to support drug and alcohol addiction, that if funded could reduce costs elsewhere.
37. In response, the Council consults throughout the year seeking local views on existing and new initiatives as well as more generally with regards to the draft corporate plan and budget consultation. Much of the Council's recent role in supporting local businesses has involved disseminating business grants in response to the pandemic and supporting them safely reopen and work safety. These are outlined in the new key activities section of the corporate plan update.
38. In terms of supporting Drug and Alcohol addiction support, these are funded by the Council through the Rough Sleepers Initiative and more recently through some additional public Health funding. The Council will shortly be reviewing arrangements

for partnership working with the Street Community which includes Drug and Alcohol support services.

39. A response was received requesting to flag work the Council is undertaking on securing the long-term management of Hastings Country Park, ongoing work to ensure a first-class environmental hub at the Bale House visitor centre and to encourage walking and cycling across the town
40. Response – plan updated to reflect said commitments.
41. A response was received suggesting the Council consider adapting empty homes for use as affordable rented housing and the need to regulate to minimise second homes and Air B & Bs in preference for affordable long-term accommodation.
42. Although the Council has reduced specific officer capacity to focus on empty homes in previous budget rounds, officers continue to work to secure additional funding through the rough sleeper accommodation programme, other Homes England initiatives and through Town Living. The Council also continues to work with partners such as YMCA to signpost and feed into their empty homes strategies.
43. The Council currently has little scope through legislation to tackling the use of Air B & Bs and notes the points made with regards to empty homes. Should capacity allow, the council will review the approach other councils have taken to second homes (e.g. Cornwall) to explore associated good practice.
44. A response was received highlighting the need for focussed inward investment in the likely absence of Government assistance given the ongoing costs of the pandemic. This response acknowledges the challenge of unemployment, poverty and homelessness and implies that ‘caring policies and investment in homeless’ could be a ‘drawing in’ factor.
45. The response continues suggesting a need to encourage investment in the town centre and seafront and prioritise street cleaning in these areas. It is felt that: the seafront attractions such as the fountains could be improved by coloured lighting to improve their attractiveness and Instagram potential; that White Rock Theatre funding reductions should be reconsidered; the need for closer working with the police and reintroduction of CCTV be reviewed. The response concludes suggesting the Council better capitalise on the move out of cities and focus on investment and prosperity, rather than a ‘managed decline.’
46. Response – The Council notes these points. Through schemes such as our Town Deal the Council continues to attract inward investment and encourage prosperity while managing a challenging financial situation.