

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

06 July 2021

Report of the Chief Executive and Management Team

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1 CORPORATE STRATEGY – ADDENDUM UPDATE

This report provides an update on the first-year addendum to the Corporate Strategy which was adopted in June 2020 in order to provide a framework for the Council’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 On 03 June 2020, Cabinet agreed an Addendum to the Corporate Plan. This addendum set out a framework to help structure the Council’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic at a time when there was a considerable degree of uncertainty, and to work towards recovery.

1.1.2 The addendum was framed on a thematic basis - covering ‘Economy’; ‘Infrastructure’; ‘Communities and Health’; ‘Environment’ and ‘Running the Council’ - and underpinned by three key themes:

- Review – how did we respond to the pandemic emergency, and what have we learnt from this?
- Re-orientation – how might we reposition the Council’s finances and operations to be fit for purpose in the ‘new normal’?
- Recovery – how do we work with others to encourage recovery in our communities and economy, in adapting to both the transition period and into the ‘new normal’?

1.1.3 Because the addendum was produced during a period of rapid change, it was recognised at the time of its production that it could never be an ‘absolute and fixed’ plan, but rather a framework to help guide the thinking of the Council and to ensure that there was a strategic overview to guide its plans. Despite this, the update does show there has been significant progress on a wide number of the actions identified within the addendum.

1.2 First-Year Addendum – Progress

1.2.1 As set out in Appendix 1, there has been a considerable amount of activity by the Borough Council as it has moved through the 3 key themes, and worked towards a recovery. The following provides a summary of some of these actions:

1.2.2 **Economy:** the economic impact of the covid-19 pandemic has been immense, with many sectors grinding to a halt for a considerable length of time, and others having to adapt to a new business environment. Whilst a considerable amount of Council resource has been spent on the effective distribution of over £35 million of grant funding to local businesses, work has also been undertaken to review and re-orientate the Council's economic development activity, most notably through the adoption of a new Economic Recovery Strategy 2021-2023. The activities prioritised to help the borough's economic recovery over the next two years are set out in the associated Action Plan.

1.2.3 **Infrastructure:** whilst next steps regarding the Local Plan are being given consideration, there have been a number of key strategic projects in the borough that have progressed over the past year, most notably the Advanced Horticultural technology Zone at the East Malling Research Station.

The Council's Active Travel Strategy is currently being produced and will be consulted upon during Summer 2021, with a view to adopting the strategy at the end of the year.

Work is also ongoing to tackle 'digital deprivation' and reduce the level of empty properties in the borough.

1.2.4 **Communities and Health:** the need for a strong and resilient community and voluntary sector has been more essential than ever over the past 15 months, and the Council has been central in providing funding support to key local groups and co-ordinating the community hub. Work is now being undertaken to provide ongoing support to vulnerable residents.

1.2.5 **Environment:** during the covid-19 pandemic, the Council has maintained a focus on ensuring its Climate Change aspirations are progressed. A Climate Change Strategy has now been adopted and an Action Plan for 2021/22 has been endorsed.

The Council has also supported the Leisure Trust through the crisis to ensure its financial sustainability and has worked with them to consider new delivery arrangements during the recovery phase.

1.2.6 **Running the Council:** the Council has had to adapt to a hugely challenging and changing environment that has seen considerable financial uncertainty and a need to function in a very different way. Having successfully built up our resilience through the use of technology to enable homeworking and to undertake meetings remotely, the Council has now adopted a Transitional Working Arrangements Policy that will be in place for a 12-month period from September 2021. Work has been ongoing

on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to ensure the financial sustainability of the Council and preparations are also being made to adjust priorities in line with Fair Funding Review once it has been undertaken.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 None arising directly from this report.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 None arising directly from this report.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 The Council's Strategic Risk Register has been regularly updated and was last reported to Audit Committee in April 2021. A further report will be presented at the next Audit Committee meeting on 26 July 2021.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.7 Policy Considerations

- Community
- Business Continuity/Resilience
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Climate Change
- Asset Management
- Customer Contact
- Health and Safety
- Human Resources

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That the report **BE NOTED**

1.8.2 That the production of a second-year addendum, for approval at a future Cabinet meeting, **BE AGREED**

Background papers:

Nil

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