TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

07 March 2023

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1   CORPORATE STRATEGY – COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This report provides an update on the Corporate Strategy Community Consultation which was undertaken during January – February 2023, and seeks approval to make final amendments to the Corporate Strategy ahead of it being finalised.

1.1   Background:

In December 2022, Report C22/108 set out progress on developing the emerging Corporate Strategy and provided details on the upcoming community consultation. With the community engagement now completed, analysis work of the responses has now been carried out and improvements to the strategy have been identified that are proposed for the final draft of the document.

1.2   Corporate Strategy – Community Consultation

1.2.1   Following feedback received from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, members of staff and Cabinet, a consultation draft of the Corporate Strategy was produced (see Appendix 1). This formed the basis for the Community Consultation that was undertaken from 06 January 2023 – 10 February 2023.

1.2.2   On the day of the launch, direct emails went out to Borough Councillors, Parish Councils, community groups, housing associations, schools and colleges. A reminder was also sent half-way through the consultation. In addition, the consultation was promoted through the council's social media channels on a regular basis and the business bulletin.

1.2.3   For residents that wanted to engage with the consultation, but were unable to use the technology in order to fill in the online survey, hard copies of the draft Corporate Strategy and the survey form were also made available at the Kings Hill reception and Tonbridge Castle.

1.2.4   A virtual public meeting also took place on 17 January 2023 to encourage engagement. In total 29 people attended this meeting, with a recording of the meeting also being made available online for people that were unable to make it on the day.

1.3   Community Consultation - Feedback:

1.3.1   In total, there were 229 responses to the consultation exercise. The survey asked some questions relating to the demographic make-up of the people responding, as well as some information about where they lived and their thoughts on their local area. Table 1 provides an overview of this contextual information:

Question	Feedback
Where do you live?	Responses came from all over the borough (and some from adjoining boroughs). The biggest response came from resident of Tonbridge (32%) followed by West Malling (11.5%), Hildenborough (8%) and Aylesford (6.5%), although responses were received from 28 different settlements across the borough.
Overall, how do you feel about the area in which you live?	Most people were very positive about the area in which they live with 83% either liking or loving their area. Only 4% don't like or strongly dislike where they live.
What gender do you identify as?	45.5% of people responding said 'woman', 49% said 'man'; 0.5% identified as non-binary and 5% preferred not to say.
What age range group do you fit into from the following?	1.5% of responders were under 24 years old, 19.5% were 25-44 years old, 43.5% 45-64 years old and 35.5% were 65+ years old.
What is your ethnic background?	93.5% stated 'White/Caucasian'; 1% 'Black/African/Caribbean/Black British'; 1% 'Asian/Asian British'; 0.5% 'Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups' and 4% stated 'Other'.

Table 1: Demographic/Contextual Information

1.3.2   The overall conclusions from the above information are that:

- There was a good geographical spread of responses across the borough.

- People that responded were overwhelmingly positive about where the live.

- Whilst the gender and ethnic background make-up of people that responded is broadly in line with the overall population of the borough, the age of responders was skewed more towards people aged 45 years and over.

1.3.3   In terms of feedback about the Corporate Strategy specifically, Table 2 sets out the key messages from the consultation:

Question	Response
Is this the right vision for the Council?	In total, 59% of responders agreed with the vision, 6% did not agree with the vision and 35% were unsure.
Explanation of response about the vision.	A number of positive comments about being positive about the area and supporting residents, but those that were unsure about the vision or didn't agree with it highlighted the following: - Too ambitious given public finances. - Too vague/just words. - Support for vision depends on how it is delivered. - Feeling that council's shouldn't 'lead', that they should listen to residents and focus on delivering core services.
Do you think the values of Innovation, Transformation and Delivery are the right ones for the borough?	44% of responders thought they were the right ones, 10% did not agree with the values, and 46% were unsure.
Explanation of response about the values.	- Need to have values that show we care for residents, for example, inclusivity and equality could be values. - Confusion as to whether innovation and transformation are actually different values. - Would support values if they were implemented but not sure they will be. - A number of people responding wanted more information about what detail/definitions lies behind the values before saying they were supportive. - Concern that delivery means building more housing locally, but if it means delivering much needed infrastructure then supportive.
In what order would you rank the	**Top Priority**: Delivering Efficient Services for all our residents

priorities in this strategy?	**Second Priority:** Sustaining a Borough which cares for the Environment **Third Priority:** Investing in our Local Economy **Fourth Priority:** Improving Housing Options for Local People
Explanation of ranking of priorities.	- Many people responding thought they were all important. - A lot of support for delivering efficient services in particular especially with reference to waste collection. - Some people unclear about what investing in the local economy actually means. - Concern that 'improving housing options' would mean building a lot more housing and lead to overcrowding and an impact on the environment.
Are there any measures missing from this strategy that you think could help the borough council meet its priorities? If so, please explain.	- Recognising the ageing population and the changing needs of people. - Need for more infrastructure to support local people - More community engagement/listening to locals - Greater emphasis on sustainability - Improving public transport - Acknowledge deprivation and cost of living crisis - Safer communities/high streets - Supporting rural communities
Are there any other comments you would like to make about this strategy?	- Residents need to see positive change happen. - Period up to 2025 is too short, should be longer.

Table 2: Community Consultation Feedback

1.3.4 Overall, the feedback received from local residents was broadly positive, however there were a number of points or proposed improvements raised. These can be broadly grouped into the following:

- That the language used is too vague or that there are too many 'buzzwords'.

- The strategy doesn't provide concrete measures that will deliver the priorities.

- The need to ensure that residents are central to the strategy and that their views are heard.

- Need to effectively measure delivery to ensure we are on track to meet our targets.

- Proposed minor amendments and additions.

1.3.5   Regarding the above consultation feedback, the following response is proposed:

Category	Response
That the language used is too vague or that there are too many 'buzzwords'.	Every effort has been made to make the strategy as legible as possible. Following this consultation process a number of minor changes have been made to try and make the document easy to read (see below)
The strategy doesn't provide concrete measures that will deliver the priorities.	This is a high-level document, and it is only once it has gone through consultation and the vision and priorities have been finalised that a short annual action plan can be developed to set out priority actions for delivering the strategy. In addition, sitting under the Corporate Strategy are a number of thematic strategies which set out greater detail.
The need to ensure that residents are central to the strategy and that their views are heard.	This is noted and additional emphasis on the importance of serving our residents has been added through the amendments in the last section of this table (see below)
Need to effectively measure delivery to ensure we are on track to meet our targets.	Agreed. Whilst corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been developed and are already being captured, there is a recognition that these need to evolve once the Corporate Strategy has been finalised, in order to ensure that they reflect the priorities set out in the document. Section 1.4 sets out the approach to KPIs in more detail.
Proposed minor amendments and additions.	Proposed amendments: 'Innovation' definition: "Embracing new ideas and technology, and proactively finding solutions that improve our services to residents"

	'Delivery' definition: "Ensuring we set ambitious targets that we strive to meet, in order to provide high quality public services for our residents" Priority 'Improve air quality in the borough by tackling sources of pollution' expanded to "Improve environmental quality in the borough by tackling sources of pollution" in order to give recognition to other types of pollution. Priority 'Investing in our local economy' expanded to "Investing in our local economy to help support residents and businesses and foster sustainable growth" Merge last two bullet points on page 8 to state "Further move the borough council forward so its services are delivered innovatively and in the most cost-effective and efficient way" On page 9, change 'Deliver climate change plans which focus on cutting emissions, increasing biodiversity and facilitating healthy and active lifestyles' to 'Deliver climate change plans which focus on cutting emissions and increasing biodiversity' as 'healthy and active lifestyles' is already picked up in the priority 'Efficient services for all residents, maintaining an effective Council' on page 8. On page 10, change text to "We will bring forward plans to help people onto the housing ladder…..focus on affordable housing in the borough *whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance"* in order to provide additional emphasis. On page 11, change text to "Local businesses have faced tough challenges in recent years and continue to do so. We want to support businesses which are the lifeblood of the local economy and help them adapt and grow in the future"

Table 3: Incorporating resident feedback into the consultation document.

1.3.6   In addition, given the comments received about the short timescale covered by the consultation draft document, it is suggested that the period covered by the Corporate Strategy could be extended to 2023-2027. However, the views of Cabinet are sought on how long they consider the strategy should be adopted for.

1.4   Key Performance Indicators

1.4.1   As mentioned earlier in the report in Table 3, with the completion of the community consultation and resultant proposed changes to the Corporate Strategy, the timing is right to review the current Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are used by

the council to measure and manage performance. The main emphasis being on ensuring that the KPIs are measuring the council's priorities in the most effective and straightforward way possible.

1.4.2   Appendix 2, sets out a Gap Analysis of KPIs, which identifies the areas where there are no measures to provide oversight of our priorities, and also where there are KPIs that are currently measured but don't directly relate to a specific priority.

1.4.3   As a result of this exercise, the following potential changes are identified:

- A slight reduction in the overall number of KPIs from 72 to 68 – specific areas where there were a number of KPIs covering one particular area have been a focus for rationalisation.

- Each priority in the Corporate Strategy has at least one KPI linked to it in order to demonstrate improved alignment between the aspirations of the council and the activities it is measuring. New KPIs arising through this gap analysis work have been highlighted in bold red italics in the 'Overall New KPIs' column.

- There are also a small number of KPIs that do not fit directly under a specific action in the Corporate Strategy, but are nonetheless useful in assessing performance (predominantly in Planning, Customer Services and Licensing). As such it is proposed to retain these for information unless it is felt that these would be better shared via different means.

1.4.4   Specific KPIs will then be shared as a standing item with the scrutiny select committees and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (as illustrated in Appendix 2). The KPIs will also become a standing item at Management Team and Service Management Team meetings in order to ensure that they are embedded within the day-to-day running of the Council.

1.5   Annual Action Plan

1.5.1   Appendix 3 provides a high-level annual action plan setting out some of the key activities that will be required in order to contribute towards the delivery of the Corporate Strategy.

1.5.2   This action plan will be reported to Cabinet on a 6-monthly basis, providing a RAG rating for each strategic project, along with some narrative to explain progress.

1.5.3   It will be reviewed on an annual basis throughout the course of the Corporate Strategy.

1.6   Proposed Next Steps

1.6.1   Subject to the approval of Cabinet, the Corporate Strategy will go to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 06 April 2023, before going back to Cabinet and then on to Council at dates to be determined (but likely to be in June 2023):

Meeting	Date
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	06 April 2023
Cabinet	June 2023 (TBC)
Council	June 2023 (TBC)

Table 4: Decision-making Timetable

1.7 Legal Implications

1.7.1 The matters raised in this report are considered to be routine, uncontroversial or not legally complex and a legal opinion has not been sought on these proposals.

1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.8.1 None arising directly from this report.

1.9 Risk Assessment

1.9.1 Reputational risk if the Council fails to meet targets set out in the Corporate Peer Review Action Plan and undertake the recommendations suggested by the Peer Team.

1.10 Policy Considerations

1.10.1 Business Continuity/Resilience

1.10.2 Communications

1.10.3 Communities

1.10.4 Planning and Housing

1.10.5 Environment

1.10.6 Economy

1.11 Recommendations

1.11.1 That the report **BE NOTED.**

1.11.2 That the Corporate Strategy as set out in Appendix 1, but including the suggested amendments set out in Table 3, **BE ENDORSED**.

1.11.3 That the period covered by the strategy, as referenced in 1.3.6 **BE CONSIDERED.**

1.11.4 That the proposed new Key Performance Indicators, as set out in Appendix 2, **BE ENDORSED.**

1.11.5 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee **BE INVITED** by Cabinet to consider views on the Corporate Strategy 2023/24 Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 3.

1.11.6 That delegated authority **BE GRANTED** to the Chief Executive in liaison with the Leader of the Council to approve any necessary further minor changes to the Corporate Strategy that may be required solely for reasons of clarity or presentation.

Background papers:

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