

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Council

#### 17 December 2020

*Subject:* **Annual Review of the Corporate Strategy**

*Report of:* **Director of Leisure and Community**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Council's Corporate Strategy 2017 to 2023 sets out our vision and priorities for the Borough. The Council's performance management framework requires an annual review of the strategy, to confirm future priorities and update the wording where necessary.

The Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel considered the review of the Strategy on 8 October 2020 and supported the proposed changes to the Strategy. In addition, one other amendment was also recommended, details of which is included in this report.

The Executive considered the outcome of the review at the 2 November 2020 meeting and agreed the recommended updates and changes to the Corporate Strategy. As well as agreeing to those detailed within the report, the Executive also agreed the recommendation proposed by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel. In addition, the Executive recommended four other changes, details of which are included in this report.

The updated Corporate Strategy 2017-2023 is now presented for adoption by the Council.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) notes the results of the annual review of the Corporate Strategy; and
- (b) approves the updates to the Corporate Strategy.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Corporate Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for the next few years, from 2017 to 2023, and shows how we have planned to ensure Fareham remains a prosperous, safe, and attractive place to live and work.
2. The Council's performance framework requires the Executive to undertake an annual review of the corporate vision and priorities. The purpose is to confirm future priorities and update the wording where necessary. The outcome of the review will influence the budgets for the next financial year.
3. This is the third review of the Corporate Strategy 2017-23, which was adopted by the Council on 14 December 2017. A copy is attached as Appendix A.
4. Any changes to the wording will need to be approved by the Council, because the Corporate Strategy comes within the Council's policy framework under the Constitution.

## **PROGRESS MADE IN DELIVERING THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

5. The Strategy contains a number of Corporate Priorities for improvement. Progress on each priority is listed below:

### **Providing Housing Choices**

- Good progress is being made on negotiating the Welborne Section 106 development agreement with the applicant and Hampshire County Council, so that planning permission can be granted. However, the capital funding gap for the necessary improvements to M27 junction 10 remains and is a key risk to the delivery of the new community. Work continues with the developer and local and national funding partners to address.
- In early 2020 residents were invited to have their say on future developments across the Borough by taking part in a consultation on the new Local Plan. A Local Plan Supplement document was developed following the Issues and Options consultation held during Summer 2019, which sets out how the Council proposes meeting new national housing targets, identifying a small number of new housing sites and policies, as well as potential areas for strategic growth.
- The Council must now create a Publication Plan for submission to the Government for independent review, with the six-week consultation period due to take place in Autumn 2020.
- Following a consultation in Summer 2019, the Council adopted a new Affordable Housing Strategy in October 2019 which sets out how Affordable Housing will be delivered over the next five years, including the delivery of Council housing. The purpose of the strategy is to 'provide more affordable homes, ensuring they are the right homes in the right places for those in need of affordable housing'.
- Construction has begun on the redevelopment of the former Hampshire Rose site. Due for completion early 2021, the development will provide eighteen new one and two-bedroom apartments for social rent.
- Construction also commenced to deliver five affordable home for council tenants

at Bridge Road. The scheme, now called Oak Tree Close, was completed in Summer 2020 and all homes are now let.

- In February 2020 Fareham Borough Council was successful in a bid to help tackle the issue of rough sleeping in the Borough, being awarded £141,450 for the 2020/21 year. This money will enable the Outreach Service to continue and fund two further posts, enabling Two Saints to provide an enhanced service.
- In April rough sleepers in Fareham were moved into self-catering accommodation to keep them safe and socially distanced during the Coronavirus pandemic.

### **Protect and Enhance the Environment**

- Good progress has been made in the delivery of the new open space and play area at Daedalus Common, with the site expected to open towards the end of 2020.
- There have been some delays to the play area works at Abbey Meadows; whilst the open space was opened during 2020, the play area is not due for completion until 2021.
- In May 2020 the Council announced that the Portchester to Paulsgrove coastal defence scheme was unlikely to progress in its current form, as a mutually agreeable method for securing the required contribution could not be identified. Both Fareham Borough Council and Portsmouth City Council remain committed to trying to reduce flood and coastal erosion and will investigate alternative delivery models for the future.
- Fareham celebrated another year of success at the South and South East in Bloom awards, with its 16<sup>th</sup> consecutive winning entry in the Small City category, receiving a Gold Award and was declared Category Winner.
- In October 2019 a working group was set up to enable the development of an action plan to mitigate and adapt to impacts of climate change in Fareham and reduce our carbon footprint. The working group will look at all areas of the Council's services to identify carbon reduction opportunities.

### **Strong, Safe and Inclusive and Healthy Communities**

- The extension to Holly Hill Cemetery completed in June 2020, providing an additional 350 burial spaces for the Western Wards.
- A review of the Council's approach to Community Safety and CCTV is currently underway, with Executive approval for the new model due to be sought in Autumn 2020.
- All four sustainable measures supported as part of the Council's 'Let's Clear the Air' campaign were implemented by early 2020. Over the next couple of years there will be an annual automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) traffic survey on the A32 to establish whether these measures have been successful in keeping the nitrogen dioxide levels compliant.

- The Coronavirus pandemic saw the local community coming together to help those that needed it most. The Council worked with local organisations including Acts of Kindness, One Community, Waypoint Church, Community First Wessex and Citizens Advice to help vulnerable residents in the borough with things including shopping, prescription collections and friendly chats. The Council also worked with hundreds of volunteers who all played a crucial part in supporting residents in need at this difficult time.

### **Maintain and Extend Prosperity**

- Businesses in the Fareham Borough benefited from grants support, as part of a package of measures announced by the Government to help businesses affected by the Coronavirus. As of mid-September, the Council had paid out more than £19.6 million in grants to businesses in the Borough (£18,725,000 on Small Business, Hospitality and Leisure Grants and £912,500 as part of the Discretionary Grant Scheme).
- In September 2020 the Council's Executive approved a series of proposals to the Council's parking service which included upgrades to existing car parks to benefit users and support local shops. It was agreed to freeze parking charges in the town centre. It was also agreed to not charge in any other car parks (apart from coastal car parks) including shopping area car parks within the next five years. In addition, a Pay-by-App option will be introduced for All Pay and Display car parks in the Borough and new Pay-on-Foot machines are to be installed in the town centre barrier car parks. These new measures aim to continue to encourage people back into the shops, whilst providing a range of payment options for customers. It was also agreed to install new solar-powered pay and display machines in all coastal car parks and to introduce a charge of £1 per hour up to a maximum of £6 per day.

### **Leisure Opportunities for Health and Fun**

- Following another successful pantomime season, Ferneham Hall closed in January 2020 in preparation for its major remodelling project. BH Live was announced as the operator for the new community, arts and entertainment venue that will replace Ferneham Hall. The plans for the new venue were approved at the Council's first virtual Planning Committee in May 2020, with a public consultation to choose a name for the new venue launching in September.
- Thousands of people came along to Fareham town centre to join in the festivities at the Victorian Christmas themed annual Christmas lights switch on event. Crowds were entertained by Victorian street performers and local musical groups performed on stage.
- During Autumn 2019, the Council consulted on improvements to four more play areas, as part of the five-year plan of works. These improvements are anticipated to be completed during Spring 2021.

### **A Dynamic, Prudent and Progressive Council**

- A new team was set up to deliver a programme of work under the Opportunities Plan, to enable the Council to generate additional revenue, reduce costs and respond to service pressures and opportunities.

- Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Council was left with a £1.14m shortfall, with an emergency mid-year budget being approved in September 2020 and the Council looking at new ways to bring in revenue.
- A Parking Service review was undertaken and in September 2020 the Executive agreed to the introduction of coastal parking charges within the Borough.
- Plans for a new chargeable garden waste collection service, which will allow residents to dispose of more garden waste, is also due to be considered in September 2020.

## **EXTERNAL IMPACTS**

6. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on both the services and the finances of the Council and work on some of the priorities contained within the Corporate Strategy will have stalled during the Covid-19 pandemic.
7. During the pandemic the Council has had unforeseen costs with its Covid-19 response whilst also seeing declines in income as a result of:
  - Parking charges being suspended
  - Demand for trade waste collections reduced
  - Concessionary payment terms for commercial property tenants
  - Reduced number of planning applications received
  - Suspension of market pitch fees
  - Treasury investment income affected by adverse cash flows and reduced interest rates.
8. The pandemic left the Council with a £3.66m shortfall. Government grants and other financial support is only expected to cover around two-thirds of that shortfall, leaving the Council with a £1,143,700 deficit.
9. In September 2020, the Council's Executive considered an emergency mid-year budget to manage the predicted £1.14m shortfall.
10. It is proposed that the shortfall for this year is met from the Council's reserves, however a number of other measures, including charging for parking in the Borough's coastal car parks, are being considered to bridge the funding gap for future years.

## **ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM REVIEWS AND/OR INSPECTIONS**

11. The most recent figure available, estimating the population of Fareham was published by the Office for National Statistics in 2019. The population of the Borough is currently estimated to be 116,233. Between 2017 and 2022 Fareham's population is projected to increase from 116,000 to 120,000.
12. The Annual Review letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman set out the number of complaints and enquiries received and decided

during the financial year 2019/20. During 2019/20 the Local Government Ombudsman received thirteen complaints/enquiries and made decisions on eleven of these. No complaints were upheld against Fareham Borough Council in 2019/20. This meant that there were no remedies that the Council needed to implement.

## **ANNUAL AUDIT**

13. The Council's external auditors, Ernst & Young, provide an annual Audit Results Report which covers the Council's accounts for the previous financial year.
14. Based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, having regard to the guidance issued by the Controller and Auditor General in April 2020, in all significant respects, Fareham Borough Council was found to have put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2020.

## **PROPOSED CHANGES**

15. Overall, the Corporate Strategy remains on track and it is proposed that the Executive recommends that the Council approves the following minor changes to the current Corporate Strategy document, attached as Appendix A:
  - Amend the end of the last paragraph, to reflect Ferneham Hall's closure to read: 'with the building currently closed for refurbishment' (Safe and Healthy, page 6).
  - Replace the football pitch bookings jigsaw graphic with data relating to visitors to Westbury Manor Museum: `19,171 visitors to Westbury Manor Museum between April 2019 and March 2020 (Safe and Healthy, page 6).
  - Update the Abbey Meadows open space opening dates to include the completion of the play area (The Great Outdoors, page 8):  
  
`A new open space, Abbey Meadows, is set to open in 2020 (open space opened in 2020 but awaiting completion of play area in 2021)'.  
  
  - Update the number of consecutive years that Fareham in Bloom has received a Gold Award from 15 to 16 on paragraph 4 (The Great Outdoors, page 8).
  - Add the words `Complete October 2019' to the final bullet point to reflect the completion of the preparation and implementation of a new Affordable Housing Strategy (Providing Housing Choices, page 14).
  - Add the words `Complete June 2020' to bullet point two to reflect the completion of the Holly Hilly cemetery extension (Strong, Safe, Inclusive and Healthy Communities, page 16).
  - Add a new bullet point to reflect the Council's Opportunities Plan:  
  
`Deliver a programme of work under the Opportunities Plan, to enable the Council to generate additional revenue, reduce costs and respond to service pressures and opportunities'. (A Dynamic, Prudent and Progressive Council, page 19).

## **POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL**

16. The Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel considered the report on the annual review of the Corporate Strategy on 8 October 2020 and recommended that the following change be made:
  - Amend the wording of bullet point two to read 'Create 400 new graves as an extension to Holly Hill cemetery to increase the number of burial plots available to residents of the west of the Borough' (Strong, Safe, Inclusive and Healthy Communities, page 16).
17. Subject to the amendment above, the Panel recommended that the proposed changes, as set out in the Executive report, be approved by the Executive, when it considered the item at its meeting on 2 November 2020.

## **EXECUTIVE MEETING**

18. The Executive considered the report on the annual review of the Corporate Strategy on 2 November 2020 and agreed the recommended proposed updates, as well as the recommendation of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel to revise the wording of priority three in relation to the Holly Hill Cemetery extension.
19. In addition, the following four amendments to the Corporate Strategy were also recommended:
  - Amend the reviewed date on the front page from December 2019 to December 2020 to reflect this latest review.
  - Rename 'Entertainment at Ferneham Hall' jigsaw piece to 'Entertainment at Fareham Live' to reflect the new name for the venue (It's the Little Things that Matter, page 13).
  - Amend the Local Plan date from 2036 to 2037 on the second bullet point, to reflect that the Borough's Local Plan will run until 2037 (Providing Housing Choices, page 14).
  - Proposed amendments to the Strategy be clearly identifiable throughout the document when it is presented to Council for approval.
    - All proposed changes have now been highlighted in the form of an asterisk in the top right-hand corner of each page containing an amendment, with the actual amended wording also being shaded.
20. Subject to the amendments above, the Executive approved the recommended changes to the Corporate Strategy and the report can now be presented for adoption by the Council.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

21. Any cost implications of amending any of the Council's priorities would need to be calculated and reflected in the Council's medium-term financial strategy.
22. An emergency mid-year budget has been drawn up to manage a predicted £1.14m shortfall as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **CONCLUSION**

23. This report is a key stage in the Council's performance management framework. The Council is invited to consider the results of the annual review and approve the updated Corporate Strategy 2017-2023.

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Corporate Strategy 2017-2023

**Background Papers:** None

**Reference Papers:** None

**Contact:** For further information please contact Lindsey Ansell (Ext. 4567) or Annette Rickman (Ext. 4418).