

Corporate Plan 2024-28



Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	30 November 2023
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Dan Swords, Leader of the Council
Lead Officer:	Andrew Bramidge, Chief Executive, (01279) 446002
Contributing Officers:	Rebecca Farrant, Assistant Director – Corporate Services (01279 446811) Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance (01279) 446228 Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services (01279) 446099 Neil Euesden, Interim Director of Housing (01279) 446416
Key Decision:	Yes
Forward Plan:	Forward Plan number I016016
Call In:	This item is not subject to call in procedures as it stands as a recommendation to Full Council
Corporate Priorities:	All priorities
Wards Affected:	None specifically

Recommended that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

- A** The Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028, attached as Appendix A to the report, is adopted.
- B** The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, prepare a delivery programme for the duration of the plan.
- C** The review of the Corporate Plan achievements, in future, form part of a report monitored by Cabinet annually.

Reason for decision

- A** A robust Corporate Plan is a central component of the council's business planning and is underpinned by the council's financial planning set out in the new Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2024-28. The Plan provides the council with a framework for decision making and allocation of resources. Approval of the Corporate Plan is reserved to Full Council

Other Options

- A** Considerations of other options do not apply; the agreement of policy framework for the council is laid out in the Council's constitution and is a matter for determination by Full Council

Background

1. A new plan document needs to be adopted by Full Council in advance of April 2024 when the current plan expires. The new Corporate Plan, covering the period 2024-2028, has a focus on issues that have arisen from the recent residents' survey, the council's own priorities and work with the LGA to develop a corporate narrative for the council.
2. A thematic approach to the new corporate plan has enabled a strategic level approach to service delivery by the council. The narrative focuses on six Corporate Plan missions to:
 - a) Transform Harlow's Housing;
 - b) Renew our Neighbourhoods;
 - c) Rebuild our Town;
 - d) Secure Investment for Harlow's Future;
 - e) Protect our Communities; and
 - f) Deliver High-Performing Council Services
3. The corporate narrative for the council sets out the vision for the duration of the plan. Working with officers from across the council as well as Cabinet members, the corporate narrative has been developed to articulate a common purpose and direction and creates a context for change in the period of the new strategy, including the council's strengths and weaknesses and direction of travel for the future.

Process

4. The council has acted on LGA peer review recommendations to ensure a clear evidence base is in place to support informed decision-making in the development of the new plan document. Relevant data sets held by the council in relation to the three themes have been used to identify issues and opportunities and have been benchmarked against other local authorities and national averages where appropriate.
5. This data mapping has identified datasets which link to each thematic area; data considered relevant included:
 - a) 2021 census data;
 - b) LG Inform benchmarking data;
 - c) Harlow and Essex resident surveys data;
 - d) Staff survey data;
 - e) Council housing tenant satisfaction data;
 - f) KPI data on service delivery;
 - g) Supporting data from the councils' health and wellbeing and economic development strategies; and
 - h) the Safer Harlow Partnership strategic assessment.
6. The recently completed residents' survey has also widely informed the drafting of the document in terms of the council's proposed priorities. Officers have taken key findings from the survey which show that Harlow performance is generally comparable to the national average in terms of satisfaction, value for money, council responsiveness and trust. 77% of Harlow residents are 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their local area as a place to live, and close to three-in-five are satisfied with the way that the local council runs things. Full details of the survey can be found here: [Residents survey | Harlow Council](#)
7. The survey has flagged that tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is viewed as the main priority for Harlow Council by residents, followed by providing a range of housing. Additionally, the other most important local issues were shown to be:
 - a) Improving council services;
 - b) Securing investment into Harlow;
 - c) Restoring pride in Harlow;

- d) Providing activities and support for younger people; and
 - e) A regenerated town centre.
8. Workshops between Cabinet members and council officers were used to consider the key issues demonstrated through the data and identified priorities linked to these.
 9. Consultation with all council staff has identified synergies in current work which will contribute towards achieving these priorities, alongside new work which could be developed in order to do so. For each priority a number of outcomes to demonstrate what residents, businesses and visitors to the town can expect to see have been set out.
 10. Member consultation via Scrutiny Committee took place on 31 October 2023.
 11. Consultation with key strategic partners has been undertaken, alongside additional public consultation both online and in person in the town centre.

Issues/Proposals

12. The plan document sets out the council's vision and priorities for a four-year period and ensures that everyone in the council is working towards the same outcomes. The document will inform service and team planning through to be developed annual delivery plans, as well as individual staff performance plans.
13. The new Corporate Plan will cover a four-year period (2024-28) which is a move away from the previously conventional three-year strategies. The new plan will also be coupled with the new MTFP covering the same period to ensure the plan is fully costed and deliverable. The decision to move to a four-year period is in line with the Local Government Association (LGA) recommendations and the electoral cycle.
14. Measuring and monitoring the success of the plan through KPIs and milestones will demonstrate the council has delivered what it set out at the end of the four-year period. Additionally, once the plan has been approved by the Council, yearly delivery plans will give clear milestones in each of the plan years.
15. Annual reporting on the achievement of milestones and performance against performance indicators across the preceding year will be brought to Cabinet.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

A full equality impact assessment has been undertaken on the strategy document. The resident survey dataset has been weighted across demographic information so that it provides a representative sample of responses. Carrying out the equalities impact assessment ensures

the priorities set by the council support the Council's equality objectives while maintaining compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Individual actions required to deliver the plan will be subject to their own equalities impact assessment.

Climate Change

The Corporate Plan includes further work to be undertaken by the council in the next four years to underpin and set a framework to its emerging Climate Change Strategy.

Communities and Environment

Priorities have been set in conjunction with outcomes set for the next four years in existing strategies relating to health and wellbeing, community safety, economic development and community engagement.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Finance

The Corporate Plan has been set in conjunction with the council's new MTFP.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Governance and Corporate Services

The plan is aimed for adoption by the council during December 2023. Once approved, an annual delivery plan will set out actions in each year of the plan to meet the proposed outcomes.

Public and stakeholder consultation as well as a data led approach has aided in the shaping of the plan.

Approval of the Plan, part of the policy framework set out within the Council's Constitution is a matter for the Full Council to determine.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

Housing

Priorities have been set in conjunction with outcomes set for the next four years in conjunction with housing strategy and policy documents.

Author: Neil Euesden, Interim Director of Housing

Strategic Growth and Regeneration

The Plan identifies the Regeneration and Growth agenda as being at the heart of the council's activity for the next four years. Delivery of this will be essential to the future success of the town.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Chief Executive

Appendices

Appendix A – Corporate Plan

Background Papers

Report to Scrutiny Committee – Corporate Plan (31 October 2023) –

<https://moderngov.harlow.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=119&MId=2643&Ver=4>

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

KPIs – Key Performance Indicator

LGA – Local Government Association

MTFP – Medium Term Financial Plan