

15 MARCH 2021

JOINT EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

15 March 2021

- * Councillor Angela Gunning (Chairman)
- * Councillor Angela Goodwin (Vice-Chairman)

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| * Councillor Paul Abbey | * Councillor Bob McShee |
| * Councillor Jon Askew | * Councillor Masuk Miah |
| * Councillor Christopher Barrass | * Councillor Ramsey Nagaty |
| Councillor Dennis Booth | * Councillor George Potter |
| * Councillor Ruth Brothwell | * Councillor Jo Randall |
| Councillor Graham Eyre | * Councillor Maddy Redpath |
| * Councillor Andrew Gomm | * Councillor Will Salmon |
| * Councillor Diana Jones | * Councillor Pauline Searle |
| * Councillor Steven Lee | Councillor Fiona White |
| * Councillor Ann McShee | * Councillor Catherine Young |

* Present

Councillors Joss Bigmore, Jan Harwood, Julia McShane, John Rigg, Tony Rooth and Paul Spooner were also in attendance.

23 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

The Joint Executive Advisory Board (EAB)

RESOLVED

that Councillor Angela Gunning be elected as Chairman for this meeting.

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Graham Eyre. There was not a substitution.

25 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND NOTIFICATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests.

26 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Joint EAB held on 7 January and 15 February, 2021, were confirmed as correct records, and would be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

27 CORPORATE PLAN 2021-2025

The Joint EAB was invited to consider a skeleton of the draft Corporate Plan 2021-2025 which set out the Council's vision, mission, values and priorities. The Corporate Plan also outlined some suggested activities to implement the priorities, which would reflect the values, and measures to gauge the success of implementation. The key findings of a supporting consultation survey were also before the Joint EAB to assist with its deliberations.

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By way of elaboration, the Strategy and Communications Manager gave a presentation which provided the background to the preparation of the Corporate Plan and explained the draft priorities developed in January 2020, the public consultations undertaken in February / March 2020 and December 2020 / January 2021, the new draft priorities and the next steps.

The background to the preparation of the Corporate Plan consisted of a Councillor Workshop in respect of corporate priorities in November 2019, approval of draft priorities by the Executive in January 2020 and a public consultation (including a sample survey) in February / March 2020. Following the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, the preparation of the Corporate Plan was delayed for 12 - 18 months, after which a public consultation regarding future spending priorities took place in December 2020 / January 2021 and new draft priorities were subsequently agreed by the Executive Liaison Group in March 2021.

Following the consultations, the following three new draft priorities were developed:

- Empowering Communities and Supporting People Who Need Help
- Residents Having Access to the Homes and Jobs They Need
- Protecting Our Environment

In terms of next steps, the comments of the Joint EAB would be considered by the Executive Liaison Group before further drafting of the Corporate Plan took place for recommendation to the Executive followed by adoption by the Council in May / June 2021. Subsequently, draft Themed Strategies, identifying actions to deliver against priorities and measure success, relating to Community, Regeneration and Economy, and Environment would be submitted to EABs for consideration prior to approval by the Executive.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the Corporate Plan was at an early draft stage and welcomed all comments from the Joint EAB to assist with its development by identifying key corporate priorities.

The following points and views arose from related questions, comments and discussion:

1. Currently the corporate priorities were not ranked in any particular order and consideration may need to be given to their presentation in the Corporate Plan.
2. As the Council was involved in numerous projects and had limited funding available to pursue them, there needed to be a clear focus on priorities.
3. Improving the mental health of residents across the Borough was considered important, particularly following the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Community Wellbeing Team was continuing its work to engage with residents and support them with mental health and wellbeing issues. Although the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been considering the establishment of a Mental Health Task Group, there was uncertainty as to whether this would be progressing owing to a lack of membership and enquiries could be made of the Chairman or relevant officer to clarify.
4. A robust Corporate Plan review process was sought to monitor and evaluate implementation and to identify areas where additional work was required. To achieve this, the Corporate Plan should include a section relating to the delivery of priorities and the identification of success measures. In terms of outstanding actions from the previous Corporate Plan, relevant projects and programmes could be included in the new Corporate Plan or themed strategies. The Performance Management Framework was one element where reporting against implementation of priorities would occur.

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The Programme Governance arrangements were designed to offer a visible means of reporting on progress with delivery of projects and programmes.

5. The Corporate Plan Consultation 2020 (Appendix 1 to the report) had been undertaken in February / March 2020 by a reputable company (SMSR Research) with the necessary expertise utilising a standard methodology which was widely used. The process consisted of a telephone survey and an on-line consultation. The telephone survey featured a representative sample of 750 people across the Borough which offered a 95% confidence that the survey results represented the views of residents across all demographics to a tolerance of minus or plus 3%. The on-line part of the consultation, which had received 363 responses, offered the opportunity for additional residents to take part and express their views if they chose to and had attracted the involvement of more older people than younger people.
6. There was confidence that the consultation responses were up to date and relevant following the most recent public consultation, which took place in December 2020 / January 2021, in respect of future spending priorities as part of the 2021/22 budget consultation (Appendix 2 to the report).
7. One of the priorities to which consultation respondents attached the highest importance was the new priority of Protecting our Environment. It was felt that its sub-priority of encouraging residents and businesses to act in more environmentally sustainable ways should be expanded to include the word 'engage' in reflection of the need to actively encourage and engage with residents and businesses. It was also felt that the wording of this priority should be strengthened and extended in respect of protecting the environment, sustainability and climate change to increase robustness and any suggested changes to the wording from individual councillors or the Climate Change Board were welcomed. A further point was that protecting the environment should stretch to focus future building on brown field sites in order to protect green field sites and the Green Belt from development and the associated negative impacts on biodiversity, transport and air quality. Whilst improving air quality was recognised as a key area, it did not feature significantly in the Corporate Plan as there was a limited amount that the Council could deliver and achieve alone.
8. Although survey respondents indicated that whilst the Council's services were generally highly rated, trusting the Council and being listened to and understood by it were not as high. It was therefore considered that the Corporate Plan should reflect the importance of building public trust and understanding with a view to improving listening and responsiveness to residents' views and concerns in an honest and transparent manner.
9. References to Arts, Culture, Heritage and Tourism should be added to the Corporate Plan in reflection of the contribution they made to Guildford's attractiveness to residents and visitors.
10. In terms of the priority to provide and facilitate affordable housing, it was felt that the housing required by the people most in need in the Borough was social housing and other rented accommodation that was genuinely affordable and which should be distinguished from the Government's definition of 'affordable housing' and the wider interpretation of the expression. Therefore caution should be applied to the use of the word 'affordable' in relation to housing priorities in the Corporate Plan to avoid confusion.
11. Although the Council sought to deliver the most affordable housing possible, this was a costly aspiration which it may not be able to subsidise. There was also a question around the type of affordable housing provision to be pursued as the Housing Strategy was still to be developed.
12. With regard to timing, further drafting of the Corporate Plan was expected to take place following reporting of the Joint EAB's comments to the Executive Liaison Group,

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after which a draft version would be available in May / June 2021 and details would be fed into the Themed Strategies. A discussion between EAB Chairmen and relevant Lead Councillors / officers could be held to discuss the most appropriate manner to progress the Plan with further EAB input within the timescale.

The Joint EAB agreed that the above points should be submitted to the Executive Liaison Group for consideration.

The meeting finished at 8.16 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman